

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

ÙGH DARRAS PÀIRC NÀISEANTA A'  
MHONAIDH RUAIDH



## PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

2015-16

# 2015/16 – Performance Highlights

## Development planning and land supply



Local Development Plan **1 yr** old  
Progress **on track** to replace it by 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary



**6.4 yrs** of effective housing land  
**308** new houses built over last 5 yrs



**135 ha** of marketable employment land available

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## Development management and decision making



**100%** of applications  
approved



Pre-application advice given  
on **61%** of applications



**14.6 wks** taken on  
average to determine local  
applications



Processing agreements for  
**71%** of all applications



**0** legacy applications  
remaining at end of year

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## Enforcement



**41** enforcement cases taken up  
**33** cases resolved

## Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Part 1: National Headline Indicators (NHIs).....</b>	<b>3</b>
Key Outcomes .....	3
Context Statement.....	4
<b>Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Quality of outcomes .....	7
Quality of service and engagement.....	8
Governance.....	11
Culture of continuous improvement .....	12
Project focus	
Preserving and enhancing the National Park's cultural heritage .....	13
Supporting social enterprise and innovation .....	15
Enhancing the National Park's visitor experience .....	17
Collaborating on the delivery of strategic infrastructure.....	19
Improving town centre vitality .....	21
<b>Part 3: Supporting Evidence .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Part 4: Service Improvements 2016-17 .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Delivery of CNPA service improvement actions in 2015-16 .....	25
<b>Part 5: Official Statistics.....</b>	<b>27</b>
A: Decision-making timescales .....	27
B: Decision making: local reviews and appeals .....	27
C: Enforcement activity.....	28
D: Context.....	28
<b>Part 6: Workforce and Financial Information .....</b>	<b>29</b>

### OUR COMMITMENT

Our Planning Service is a key part of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) and is committed to the Vision<sup>1</sup>, Mission and Values as set out in the Corporate Plan 2015 to 2018. The Planning Service plays a key part in creating the Park we all want by getting the right development in the right place, by promoting investment, by protecting and enhancing the natural/cultural environment and by creating places that we will value and enjoy.

Further information in our Planning Service Charter at <http://cairngorms.co.uk/>

<sup>1</sup>The Vision for Cairngorms National Park is: "An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together. (Source: National Park Partnership Plan 2012-2017)



## Introduction

The Planning Performance Framework (PPF) was developed by Heads of Planning Scotland in conjunction with the Scottish Government. The framework involves a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures to provide a toolkit to report on and improve performance. It represents a “holistic framework for assessing planning authority performance and improvement” so that planning “can achieve its’ potential in supporting the Government’s Economic Strategy”. All planning authorities prepare PPF reports annually.

This is the Fifth Annual Framework Report (PPF5) for the CNPA Planning Service. Scottish Government feedback about our last Report, for 2014/15, was generally positive and is available online. This Report includes a summary of how we have performed in 2015/16 and looks ahead to 2016/17, highlighting the key areas where we want to improve our practice. We use the Report to feed back to Scottish Government and to significant stakeholders including our Developers Forum and Planning Representatives Network (Community Councils and Associations).

In the Cairngorms National Park, more than in any other part of Scotland, there is a partnership approach to planning – the National Park Authority and the five relevant local authorities all play a key role in making the system work efficiently. The CNPA sets the planning policy for the National Park through the development of the National Park Partnership Plan and the Local Development Plan. CNPA “calls in” and determines the most significant planning applications, generally around 10% of all applications, leaving each of the five local authorities to determine the remaining applications. All planning applications in the Park are determined with reference to the same policy background.



## Part I: National Headline Indicators (NHIs)

Key outcomes	2015-2016	2014-2015
<b>Development Planning:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age of local development plan (years and months) at end of reporting period. <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i></li> <li>Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Y/N)</li> <li>Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? (Y-earlier/Y-later/N)</li> <li>Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year? (Y/N)</li> </ul>	1y, 0m  Y  N  Y	0y, 0m  Y  N  Y
<b>Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established housing land supply</li> <li>5-year effective housing land supply</li> <li>5-year housing supply target</li> <li>5-year effective housing land supply (<i>to one decimal place</i>)</li> <li>Housing approvals</li> <li>Housing completions over the last 5 years</li> <li>Marketable employment land supply</li> <li>Employment land take-up during reporting year</li> </ul>	2521 units 885 units 690 units 6.4 years  235 units 308 units 135 ha Not available	2521 units 885 units 860 units 5.1 years  89 units 293 units 135 ha 0 ha
<b>Development Management</b> <b>Project Planning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice</li> <li>Number of major applications subject to processing agreement</li> <li>Number of applications subject to other project plan</li> <li>Percentage planned timescales met</li> </ul> <b>Decision-making</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application approval rate</li> <li>Delegation rate</li> </ul>	61%  0  N/A 94%  100% 0%	66%  2  N/A 100%  86.9% 0%
<b>Decision-Making Timescales</b> Average number of weeks to decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major developments</li> <li>Local developments (non-householder)</li> <li>Householder developments</li> </ul>	N/A 14.6 N/A	130.9 22.2 11.5
<b>Legacy Cases</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number cleared during reporting period</li> <li>Number remaining</li> </ul>	0 0	11 0
<b>Enforcement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed (months) <i>Requirement: review every 2 years</i></li> <li>Number of breaches identified / resolved</li> </ul>	18 months  41/33	6 months  22/26

## **Context Statement**

### **Development Planning**

Following the adoption of the Cairngorms Local Development Plan (LDP) in March 2015, highlights during 2015/16 included the publication of the LDP Action Programme in June 2015 and the adoption of a suite of statutory and non-statutory Planning Guidance in September 2015. These documents were approved and published in line with anticipated timescales and provide clarity on how the LDP will be implemented and applied. The Action Programme remains a 'live' document, and has been updated throughout 2015/16. Efforts have particularly focussed on improving our understanding of land ownership and working with the landowners/developers of LDP sites to better understand anticipated delivery timescales. This work supports CNPA's focus on maintaining an appropriate supply of effective housing sites throughout the lifetime of the LDP and will be developed further during 2016/17 (see Part 4 – Service Improvements 2016/17).

2015/16 also saw the adoption of a number of Development Briefs for key housing allocations within the LDP. These include: Grantown-on-Spey HI; Dulnain Bridge HI; Kincairg HI; and Newtonmore HI.

The approved Development Plan Scheme confirms the timetable for producing the next LDP within five years of the adoption of the current plan, and project planning is under way to ensure the delivery of LDP2 to the planned timescale.

### **Development Management**

In 2015/16 CNPA "called in" 24 planning applications and determined 36 applications. This compares with 41 applications that were "called in" during 2014/15, and 48 applications during 2013/14. This reduction in the number of applications "called in" by CNPA reflects the continued refinement of our call-in criteria, as outlined in an updated Planning Advice Note on Applying for Planning Permission in the Cairngorms National Park published in December 2015. It clearly demonstrates that CNPA is calling in only those applications that raise issues of particular significance to the overall aims of the Park.

The CNPA's comprehensive use of processing agreements continues to be a good way to provide certainty for applicants and CNPA officers. Processing agreements are now offered on all applications that CNPA "calls in", and their availability is promoted via the CNPA website. The rate of uptake has grown during the course of the reporting period, with 71% of all applications determined by CNPA during 2015/16 having processing agreements<sup>1</sup>. The agreed timescales were met on all but one of these cases and the average time for determining applications with a processing agreement during 2015/16 was 16 weeks.

Overall processing timescales for applications determined by the CNPA tend to be longer than the national average for a number of reasons. In particular, as the CNPA only calls in applications that raise issues of significance to the overall aims of the Park, it does not deal with the simpler cases such as the majority of householder applications. Processing timescales are also affected by the fact that all applications that are "called in" are

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<sup>1</sup> This figure includes all applications and therefore differs from the NHI figure in the table, which only includes major developments

determined by Planning Committee, which meets monthly. In addition, the fact that CNPA deals with relatively low numbers of applications overall means that average determination timescales can be easily skewed by the time taken to determine one or two particularly complex applications.

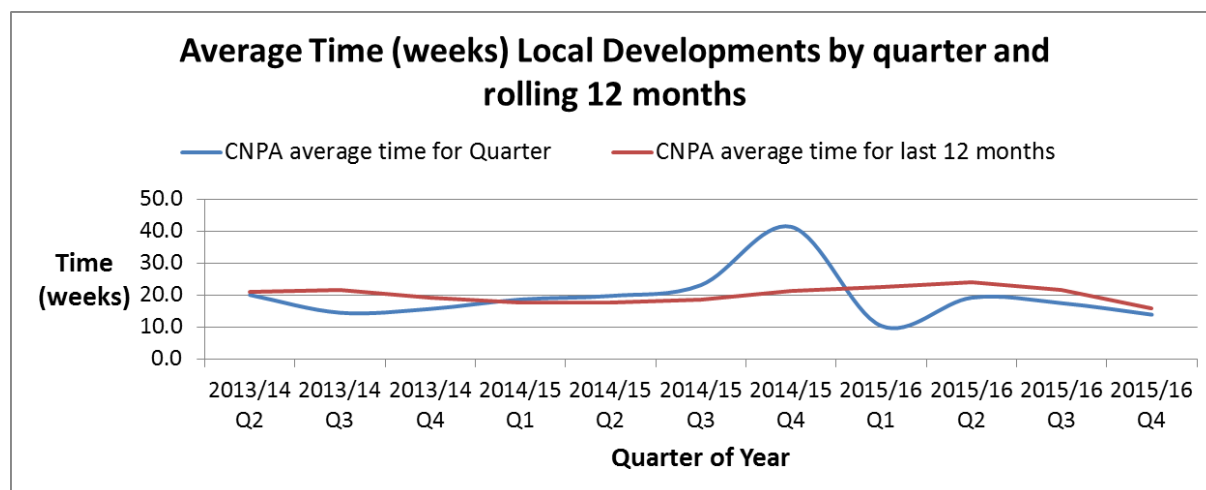
This is acknowledged in the national publication of statistics, which notes that:

*“It should be expected that Cairngorms has a longer average decision time as they have only three householder applications in their case mix. Also Cairngorms do not receive planning applications directly but are notified of applications which have been made to those planning authorities within the national park boundaries. Cairngorms may then decide to call applications in for their determination. Planning applications are likely to have already been in the system for a number of weeks before being transferred to Cairngorms. Due to these reasons average times for Cairngorms applications can be expected to be higher than those of the other planning authorities.”*

Source: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/07/6839/downloads>

Nevertheless, determination timescales have continued to reduce in comparison with previous years, with the CNPA’s average time for determining local applications (which represented all of CNPA’s case load during 2015/16) showing a significant improvement when compared with 2014/15. This reflects, to a large degree, the significant efforts to clear all remaining legacy cases during the previous reporting period.

An internal audit of CNPA’s planning service, which reported in 2015/16, recommended that CNPA use a rolling annual average indicator for internal service performance monitoring. In simple terms, if quarterly average determination times are below the rolling annual average figure then performance is improving. The graph below shows that CNPA’s quarterly average determination times have been below the rolling annual average throughout 2015/16, demonstrating improved performance in comparison with the previous year.



We are pleased that the proportion of applications subject to pre-application advice has remained at over 60%. This reflects our ongoing work in developing new approaches and providing clearer guidance for customers. Our [Planning Advice Note on Pre-Application Advice in the Cairngorms National Park](#), published in May 2015, has helped to provide



clarity on the pre-application advice service which is shared with the five constituent local authorities. The suite of statutory and non-statutory [Planning Guidance](#) that was adopted in September 2015 also now provides clarity on the information that requires to be submitted in support of planning applications. In [December 2015 CNPA's Planning Committee](#) agreed a protocol for Member involvement in pre-application discussions for major applications, which helps provide further clarity and certainty for applicants.

Enforcement activity continues to be a priority, with some 33 breaches being resolved during 2015/16. Whilst the data above refers to the position at 31 March 2016, our [Enforcement Charter](#) was also reviewed and re-published just after the reporting period.

In conclusion, we are pleased with the progress made during the year. The majority of the staff in the planning team are still relatively new to working with CNPA (i.e. less than two years) or are working in new roles, and we have undoubtedly been adversely affected due to some loss of continuity. Nevertheless, the staff team is settling down well and we look forward to continued improvement in the year ahead.



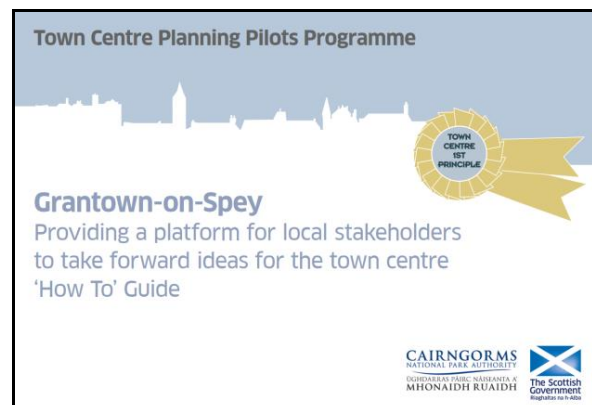


## Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

### Quality of outcomes

#### *The CNPA has:*

1. Adopted a suite of new statutory and non-statutory [Planning Guidance](#) to support the LDP and provide further clarity on the policy framework that will be used to secure high quality development on the ground.
2. Adopted new [Development Briefs](#) for key housing allocations within the LDP, including: Granttown-on-Spey HI; Dulnain Bridge HI; Kincaig HI; and Newtonmore HI. These provide a framework for ensuring the highest standards of design by giving clarity on matters including: community identity; density and diversity; accessibility and links; sustainable building and energy requirements; open space; biodiversity; and developer obligations.
3. Continued to promote good design using [case studies](#), including examples of previous Design Award winners. 2015/16 has also seen preparations being put in place for a [Cairngorms Design Awards 2016](#) competition, which will coincide with the themed year on Innovation, Architecture and Design.
4. Utilised the [Cairngorms Landscape Toolkit](#) as a means of ensuring that development proposals complement and enhance the special landscape qualities of the National Park.
5. Participated in a [Scottish Government pilot project](#) to put into practice the principles of the national Town Centre Toolkit (2015). This provided an opportunity to work with local stakeholders to explore in detail the strengths and weaknesses of Granttown-on-Spey's town centre. It identified a range of potential actions to help improve the vitality of the town centre – a number of which will help to inform the LDP Action Programme and the next LDP. It has also created a framework for future town centre health checks that will be undertaken in 2016/17.
6. Supported the delivery of a range of high quality developments through the planning process. Selected highlights are identified within the Project Focus section of this report.



## Quality of service and engagement

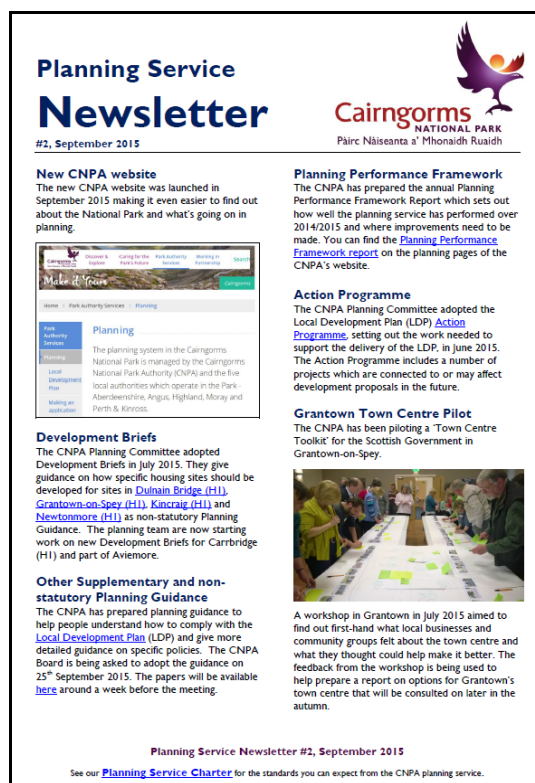
### ***The CNPA has:***

1. Published a [Planning Service Charter](#) in April 2015 to outline the overall purpose of the planning service and our commitments to the service standards that customers can expect.
2. Provided clear guidance on the information that will be required in support of planning applications within the statutory and non-statutory [Supplementary Guidance](#) adopted in September 2015.
3. Used the adoption of the LDP and Supplementary Guidance to clarify expectations in respect of developer contributions. The LDP has a clear policy on developer contributions (Policy 11), and statutory [Supplementary Guidance](#) to support this policy was adopted in September 2015. The Supplementary Guidance refers to the Circular 3/2012 tests and makes clear that contributions will only be sought where the tests are met. In practice there are few large developments that trigger the developer contributions policy within the National Park. However, we have also reviewed the Cairngorms National Park Planning Service Protocol to ensure that the policy is applied consistently by the CNPA and the five Local Authorities who deal with planning applications within the Park. Where relevant, developer contributions are highlighted during pre-application discussions.
4. Reviewed our [Development Plan Scheme](#)<sup>2</sup> to outline the timetable for producing the next LDP and set out our commitments to engaging the public and other stakeholders within its production. Project planning and management structures have been set in place to ensure the delivery of the new LDP within 5 years of the adoption of the existing plan. A programme of pre-MIR engagement with key stakeholders and CNPA's Planning Committee has been developed and will be undertaken during 2016/17.
5. Planned a programme of engagement within local secondary schools, which will be undertaken during 2016/17 as part of the pre-MIR consultation to inform the next LDP.
6. Added to our suite of [Planning Advice Notes](#) which explain the way the planning system operates within the National Park and provide easy to read advice on matters that customers frequently ask about.
7. Published an updated [Planning Advice Note on Applying for Planning Permission in the Cairngorms National Park](#) in December 2015. This clarifies the types of planning applications that the CNPA is likely to call in, and provides applicants with greater certainty over the handling and determination of their planning application.
8. Reviewed the pre-application advice service shared with five constituent local authorities and published a [Planning Advice Note on Pre-Application Advice in the Cairngorms National Park](#) in May 2015. In [December 2015 CNPA's Planning Committee](#) also agreed a protocol for Member involvement in pre-application discussions for major applications, which will help provide further clarity and certainty for applicants.

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<sup>2</sup> Latest update approved by CNPA planning committee just after the reporting period on 15 April 2016

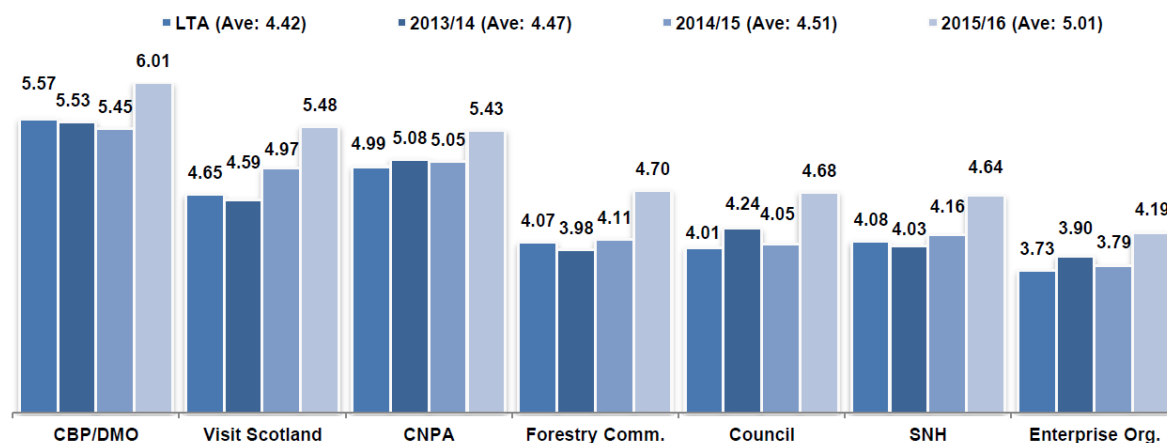
9. Continued to offer processing agreements on all applications that are “called in” by CNPA, and promoted the availability of this service via the CNPA website. Uptake of processing agreements has continued to grow during 2015/16, with 71% of the planning applications determined by CNPA during the reporting period having a processing agreement (compared with the previous high of 60% during the final quarter of 2014/15).
10. Maintained our good working relationships and shared understanding of different customer’s experiences of the planning service through our Developer’s Forum and Planning Representatives Network (Community Councils and Associations). Our Planning Representatives Network meeting in March 2016 was used to gain feedback on the consultation and engagement processes that were used during the production of the LDP. This will be used to inform future engagement on the next LDP.
11. Produced regular Planning Service Newsletters targeted at our Developers’ Forum and Community Planning Representatives Network who met regularly throughout the year.



12. Launched a new CNPA [website](#) in September 2015, incorporating comprehensively improved planning content.
13. Reviewed our customer feedback process, and launched a new targeted [customer satisfaction survey](#) in March 2016.
14. Continued to maintain our strong reputation with local businesses, with evidence from the survey undertaken by the Cairngorms Business Partnership - the private sector destination and business organisation. CNPA is regarded by businesses as being

generally effective in supporting business within the Park, especially compared to other public sector organisations, and performance is improving over time (see graph below).

**Perceived contributions of organisations towards business in the Cairngorms National Park (scale of 1=very poor to 10=very good)**



Source: [Cairngorms Business Barometer 2015-16](#)

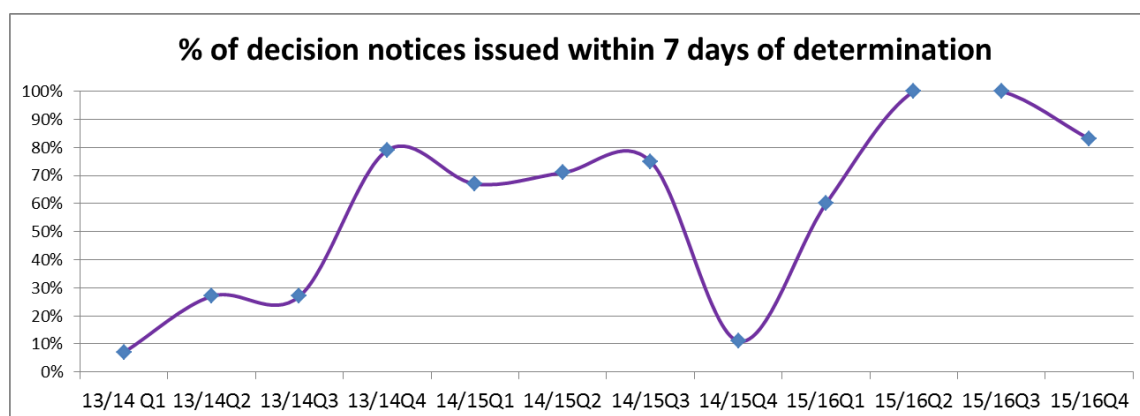
15. Collaborated with Aberdeenshire Council and SEPA to develop and implement pragmatic, fast-track processes for handling planning applications for flood related activity in Deeside to address the issues associated with the unprecedented flooding from Storm Frank (29-30 December 2015).



## Governance

### ***The CNPA has:***

1. Undertaken an internal audit of the planning service. The audit report made eight minor recommendations, covering procedures, communications, service monitoring and benchmarking which have now been implemented.
2. Undertaken a comprehensive review to simplify and strengthen the Cairngorms National Park Planning Service Protocol – the voluntary agreement between the CNPA and the five Local Authorities who all work together in the exercise of planning functions within and affecting the Park.
3. Collaborated with key partners through our Planning Delivery Group (made up of senior managers from Highland Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Highlands and Island Enterprise, Forestry Commission Scotland, Transport Scotland and Scottish Water) to prepare and implement the LDP Action Programme. This group will also be used to guide the preparation of the next LDP (including pre-MIR engagement which will take place during 2016/17).
4. Continued to implement the [procedure](#) introduced in 2013/14 for review of applications post-determination where outstanding s75 legal agreements delayed the issue of decision notices.
5. Continued to maintain a pattern of issuing swift decision notices following planning committee meetings (where there are no requirements for s75 legal agreements to be concluded). In Quarters 2 and 3 of 2015/16 all decision notices were issued within 7 days of the Planning Committee's decision, while in Quarter 4 83% of decision notices were issued within 7 days (see graph below).



6. Strengthened the planning service by creating a new fixed-term Planning Technician post, and recruited new staff to both the development management and development planning teams.

# Culture of continuous improvement

## The CNPA has:

1. Continued to use routine quarterly performance reporting to monitor performance barriers at Management Team with six monthly updates for Planning Committee.
2. Continued to participate in the North of Scotland Development Plans Forum, which allows the sharing of experiences, best practice, skills and knowledge amongst peers.
3. Continued to participate in the Heads of Planning Scotland's Development Planning and Development Management Sub-Committees.
4. Defined and agreed with CNPA's Planning Committee a programme of further service improvements for 2016/17, including consolidation of delegated authority provisions and creation of standard templates for frequently used legal agreements. The identified improvements respond to feedback received from stakeholders, including through the National Park's Planning Representatives Network and Developers Forum, and will build upon progress that has been made in previous years.

**Cairngorms Planning Advice Note**  
**Planning Permission and Permitted Development Rights for Agricultural and Forestry Tracks**  
Published: April 2015

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**The planning system and private roads, tracks and paths**  
Private roads, tracks and paths are an essential part of the infrastructure of the National Park. They help land managers to do their work and the public use them for recreation and enjoyment.  
  
All private roads, tracks and paths that are not on agricultural or forestry land and are not for agricultural and forestry purposes need planning permission to be formed or altered.  
  
Tracks that are for agriculture or forestry are classed as 'permitted development' in planning law and don't normally need planning permission to be formed or altered. However, the planning authority must be told about the proposed tracks on agricultural or forestry land before they are created or changed and can decide that it needs to approve the proposed track before any work can take place.  
  
**Ask your planning authority**  
The rules about planning permission, permitted development and tracks are complicated so you should always speak to your local authority about what you'd like to do before you act. Your local authority planning team can explain whether your proposal is likely to need planning permission or other consents.  
  
If you undertake work without the correct approval or consent, the planning authority may take enforcement action. This could cost you significantly more time and money than if you had followed the correct process.

**Prior notification**  
It is a legal requirement<sup>1</sup> for anyone who intends to form or alter an agricultural or forestry track to make a 'prior notification' application to the local planning authority. A prior notification application must include a description of the proposed development including details of:

- the design;
- manner of construction;
- materials to be used; and
- a plan indicating the route of the track.

The planning authority will use that information to decide whether 'prior approval' is needed. You can continue with your development if you don't need prior approval and you:

1. get written notice from the planning authority confirming that prior approval is not needed; or
2. have not had any response from the planning authority within 28 days of the date they received your application.

  
*Although the 'maintenance' of tracks does not require prior notification, many relatively small alterations to a track, including widening, re-routing and changes to drainage may require it so you should get advice from your planning authority before undertaking maintenance to an agricultural or forestry track.*  
  
**Prior approval**  
If the planning authority decides you need prior approval, they will tell you within 28 days of receiving your prior notification application and  
  
<sup>1</sup> under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Order 2014

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**Cairngorms Planning Advice Note**  
**Pre-application Advice in the Cairngorms National Park**  
Published: May 2015

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**What is Pre-application Advice?**  
Pre-application advice is advice given to someone who wants to make a planning application before they do so. It should help the applicant:

- find out whether or not they are likely to get planning permission;
- consider all the things that will be relevant to their application and plan a good development;
- make sure they know what information they must provide in order for the application to be determined; and
- is likely to lead to a faster decision on the application by the planning authority.

**Where to get Pre-application Advice?**  
The local authority covering the area that your proposal is in will, upon your written request, provide you with pre-application advice. You will make any planning application to the same local authority. All advice given will be based upon the policies and advice set out in the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015 (LDP).  
  
Some planning applications that are for 'major' developments have a formal process to go through before a planning application will be accepted. For most developments, you will be asked to provide some information in writing before the local authority planning team will give you advice. The local authority may charge you for advice.

**Pre-application advice and the CNPA**  
The CNPA give pre-application advice directly to the local authorities to whom the applicant is directed in the first instance, rather than to the applicant. This makes things simpler and more focussed for the customer, and ensures they receive all required advice and not just that of the CNPA who do not otherwise provide pre-application advice directly to applicants.  
  
If you ask for pre-application advice from your local authority, they will ask the CNPA to comment if the development is one that the CNPA is likely to 'call-in'. In those cases, the CNPA will provide a written response to the local authority setting out the relevant points that any application would need to consider. If the local authority thinks a meeting with the person looking for advice is needed then the CNPA staff may attend that meeting.  
  
The local authority will then respond to the person who made the request with advice from the CNPA and, where relevant, from other parts of the local authority such as the Roads or Environmental Health departments. This means that the advice that you get from the local authority covers as many relevant matters as possible.  
  
**Getting the most from Pre-application Advice**  
The quality and usefulness of the pre-application advice you get from your local authority planning team will depend on the quality of information you provide. For accurate advice, you need to provide accurate information about the development you are planning. Some local authorities will have a form for you to complete and asking for information you will have to provide. Most local authorities will not give advice unless you provide information including:  
  
<sup>1</sup> Refer to Cairngorms Planning Advice Note: Applying for Planning Permission in the Cairngorms National Park, at footnote 4 below.

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## PROJECT FOCUS

### Preserving and Enhancing the National Park's Cultural Heritage

#### Fife Arms, Braemar

The Fife Arms Hotel is an imposing B Listed Building, located within the Braemar Conservation Area. An important element of the area's social history, it is evidence of the expansion of Braemar's tourist trade in the wake of Queen Victoria's visits and the coming of the railway to the area.

Originally constructed by the Duke of Fife in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the hotel had been subject to less sensitive modern additions prior to being listed in 1991.



Fife Arms Main Frontage –  
2015/0386/DET Design Statement

As part of proposals to refurbish, re-model and extend the hotel, formal pre-application discussions were undertaken in September 2015, incorporating input from both CNPA and Historic Environment Scotland. The applicant also undertook a number of public consultation events in and around the village to inform interested parties of the nature of their proposals and a presentation was made to the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership.

Proposals involved the sensitive restoration of the main frontage, remodelling of ancillary buildings, and the welcome removal of flat roof extensions with their replacement by an attractive courtyard, covered in heather and constructed from timber and other traditional materials.





Applications for planning permission and listed building consent were submitted in late November 2015. The applications were subsequently “called in” for determination by CNPA and were subject to a processing agreement. The high quality nature of the applicant’s submission, informed by the pre-application discussions, led to the proposals being supported unanimously by CNPA’s planning committee and the processing agreement timescales being met. Planning permission and listed building consent were issued in February 2016, just 10 weeks after CNPA “called in” the applications.

The re-modelling and very significant refurbishment will ensure this landmark building is preserved and enhanced, and that it continues to make a major contribution to the economy of both Deeside and the National Park as a whole.





## PROJECT FOCUS

### Supporting Social Enterprise and Innovation

#### Braemar Community Hydro

The CNPA granted planning permission for this 100 kW run-of-river hydro scheme in January 2014. The proposal was submitted on behalf of Braemar Community Council and is a social enterprise scheme initiated by Braemar Community Hydro Ltd to generate funds for further community projects in the area.

The project includes the construction of two intakes which draw water from the Corriemulzie Burn on the outskirts of Braemar and convey it via a buried pipeline to a powerhouse below the Corriemulzie Falls. The location was selected on the basis of its combination of catchment and head (the drop of altitude over the scheme length), along with the presence of a redundant historic hydro scheme/dam in the locality.



In considering the application, CNPA ensured there would be no adverse environmental or landscape impacts – particularly in relation to the River Dee Special Area of Conservation and the National Scenic Area – by securing appropriate mitigation measures and requiring construction to take place in accordance with an agreed method statement. The potential for the scheme to bring additional benefits was also maximised by requiring the installation of interpretive material explaining how the scheme works and identifying other features of localised interest including the historic dam and Corriemulzie Falls.

Following the grant of planning permission, Braemar Community Hydro Ltd raised capital to progress the project by offering members of the local community the option to acquire shares in it. This resulted in around 200 members acquiring shares in the project over two rounds in March 2015 and May 2015.

Construction and installation of the project commenced in Autumn 2015. The system has now been commissioned and is generating clean, low carbon electricity which is exported and sold to the local grid.

It is envisaged that the scheme will generate some £500,000 over its lifetime, which will be held within a community fund and ring fenced for undertaking further community projects.

The project demonstrates how the planning system can successfully ensure environmental protection whilst supporting development that delivers economic and social benefit. It also shows how the planning system can help to support social enterprise and community empowerment. The project's success is evidenced by the fact that it stimulated a Park-wide review of hydro potential in the Park – led by the Association of Cairngorms Communities. a number of hydro schemes have been progressed and installed in other locations within the National Park.



Planning Committee visit during construction



## PROJECT FOCUS

### Enhancing the National Park's Visitor Experience

#### The Snow Roads Scenic Route Initiative



**'The Watchers' – Corgarff**

In March 2015 the CNPA granted planning permission for the installation of four cowled metal seats at a site at Corgarff on the Allargue Estate. The installation, called 'The Watchers', provides a viewpoint feature overlooking the Cairngorms Mountains and forms the first phase of The Snow Roads Scenic Route initiative in the National Park. Work at the Corgarff site was completed in December 2015.

The Scenic Routes programme is being funded by Scottish Government and takes inspiration from the development of similar tourist routes in Norway. It intends to provide a number of pilot architectural interventions along Scottish scenic routes, with the aim of providing an economic stimulus to the tourism sector whilst enhancing the country's cultural and landscape strengths.

The CNPA has been working with a range of partners to develop The Snow Roads Scenic Route, a mountainous road linking Blairgowrie (A93) to Grantown-on-Spey (A939) via Braemar and Tomintoul. The route forms the highest public road in Britain and offers a quiet and spectacular alternative to the A9, traversing the eastern Cairngorms through wild and breathtaking landscapes.

Planning permission was granted by CNPA in February 2016 for the next phases of the initiative. The famous Devil's Elbow at Glenshee will see the construction of a viewpoint seat, path and visitor information point, whilst the former Craighaulkie Quarry on the outskirts of Tomintoul will see the installation of an elevated viewpoint feature designed to facilitate views up Glen Avon.





## PROJECT FOCUS

### Collaborating on the Delivery of Strategic Infrastructure

#### CNPA's Role in A9 Dualling

Transport Scotland is delivering a project to upgrade 80 miles of single carriageway along the A9 between Perth and Inverness in one of the largest and most challenging infrastructure projects in [Scotland](#). This very significant partnership partner project presents long and short term issues and opportunities for the Cairngorms National Park.



CNPA has been working in collaboration with Transport Scotland and other public agency partners to:

- ensure that the upgrade of the A9 supports delivery of the Cairngorms National Park aims by providing a dual carriageway, associated infrastructure, and visitor experience worthy of a National Park; and
- ensure that the environmental, social, and economic impacts and opportunities associated with the upgrade – both during and post construction – are identified and addressed.

The project is currently at the stage where potential route options are being considered (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Stage 2 Assessment). Transport Scotland are undertaking informal consultation with a range of public bodies on potential route and junction arrangements in order to provide information to help Scottish Ministers identify preferred options.

To avoid duplication of work and to add maximum value to the project, CNPA's comments at this stage are focused on matters relating directly to our remit and expertise and specifically those matters that are not already being addressed by other partners. These include:

- outdoor and non-motorised access (CNPA is the Access Authority);
- landscape;
- ecology (particularly in relation to non-designated sites, as SNH is providing input in respect of designated sites); and
- community and private assets

CNPA's Planning Committee is provided with regular project updates at all stages, and is responsible for considering CNPA's responses during the informal consultation stage. The informal responses also provide advice on the matters that are likely to require further consideration at the subsequent stage when detailed route and junction proposals are developed and subjected to statutory public consultation (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Stage 3).

The involvement of CNPA's Planning Committee at this early stage in the process helps to ensure that matters of particular significance to the National Park are appropriately considered and addressed during the development of preferred route options. This public scrutiny helps the remaining stages of this key strategic infrastructure project to progress as efficiently and swiftly as possible.

## PROJECT FOCUS

### Improving Town Centre Vitality

#### Granttown-on-Spey Town Centre Pilot Project

The Granttown-on-Spey Town Centre Pilot Project was undertaken as part of a Scottish Government funded trial to put into practice the principles set out in the national Town Centre Toolkit (2015). The pilot focused on the 'Making it Happen' part of the toolkit, which explores how local communities, businesses and organisations can work together to improve their town centre.

The project involved the planning team undertaking a town centre health-check to help build a picture of current activity within the town centre. Whilst basic health-checks had been undertaken previously, the opportunity was taken on this occasion to test a finer-grained approach collecting more detailed information.

Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS), an organisation supported financially by CNPA to promote community-led projects, were commissioned to facilitate community engagement in the pilot project. They organised a workshop in Granttown to allow local community groups, businesses, and representatives of the Highland Council to explore the town centre's strengths and weaknesses in detail and to collectively identify opportunities for improvement. The health check information provided a focus and stimulus for discussion during the workshop.



**Granttown-on-Spey –  
Town Centre Project workshop**

The outcomes of the workshop led to the production of a draft report, which was published for consultation during January and February 2016. The report was amended in response to the comments received and a final report of the project was published in April 2016.

The final report sets out:

- What local stakeholders value about Grantown's town centre;
- Current projects being carried out by local communities and business groups;
- A collection of issues and possible actions to help improve the vitality of the town centre; and
- 'Actions for Planning' which could help to address the identified issues – these will inform the LDP Action Programme and the next LDP

The range of community groups saw the issues and opportunities for Grantown town centre and could see the importance of their role in addressing issues. The project has helped create momentum for taking forward existing projects and pursuing new opportunities with support from CNPA and other organisations including VABS.

The project has shown that the Town Centre Toolkit can be used successfully in a community of the size of Grantown. Although the CNPA planning team led the pilot, the overall approach could be used by other organisations or a community themselves with a little support.

The planning team's development of Our Town Centre Health-check process has been successful and will be used as a framework for undertaking health-checks of the other town centres within the National Park during 2016/17. The better quality of information we have gained improves our monitoring activity and will inform the next LDP. It also provides information that can be understood by the community and can be shared with and used by them and other groups.





## Part 3: Supporting Evidence

*Part 2 of this report was compiled drawing on evidence from the following sources:*

Cairngorms Business Barometer

[http://visitcairngorms.com/assets/files/Cairngorms-Business-Barometer-2015-16---Annual-Report---Final.pdf?utm\\_source=NewZapp&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=July%202016%20Members%20E-news](http://visitcairngorms.com/assets/files/Cairngorms-Business-Barometer-2015-16---Annual-Report---Final.pdf?utm_source=NewZapp&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=July%202016%20Members%20E-news)

Local Development Plan

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/planning/local-development-plan/>

Design Case Studies

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/authority/publication/343/>

Landscape Toolkit

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/landscape-toolkit>

Planning Service Charter

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/publications/30042015/CNPA.Paper.1966.Planning%20Service%20Charter.pdf>

Cairngorms Planning Advice Notes

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/authority/publication/341/>

Planning Service Performance Reports to Planning Committee

- May 2015

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/15052015/150515Item8InfoPaperPlanningServicePerformanceUpdateV1.0.pdf>

- November 2015

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/05112015/151113Item13PPFFeedbackandPlanningServicePerformanceV1.0.pdf>

- May 2016

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/13052016/160513Item7PlanningServicePerformance.pdf>

## **Part 4: Service Improvements 2016-17**

### ***In the coming year the CNPA will:***

1. Consolidate existing processes and procedures – making sure past improvements become established practice and behaviour
2. Review internal procedures for specialist advice – completing the priority identified and started during 2015/16
3. Support the move to an electronic/paperless Planning Committee – reducing costs and improving efficiency of the committee process
4. Plan and deliver a Planning Committee training programme – learning from past cases, and improving understanding of current issues and practice
5. Consolidate delegated authority provisions – to provide certainty for Committee and officers and ensure efficient operation of the service
6. Carry out a review of infrastructure requirements for allocated development sites – improving the CNPA's ability to deliver the LDP and Action Programme
7. Complete the Design Awards 2016 competition – raising awareness, understanding and expectations of good design
8. Undertake a programme of Town Centre Health Checks – building on lessons learned through the Grantown-on-Spey Town Centre Pilot Project
9. Develop a series of model planning conditions – to provide consistency for development management, monitoring and enforcement
10. Prepare and implement standard legal agreement templates – to improve efficiency in concluding legal agreements

The identified service improvements aim to respond to feedback received from stakeholders, including through the National Park's Planning Representatives Network (Community Councils and Associations) and the Developers Forum. The priorities will build upon progress that has been made in previous years.

## Delivery of CNPA Service Improvement Actions in 2014-15:

Committed Improvements and Actions	Complete?
<p>Undertake feedback exercise with Community Council/Association Planning Representatives Network (PRN) on recent LDP process to improve ease of engagement for next LDP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A feedback exercise was undertaken and the outcomes will inform the engagement strategy for the next LDP. Engagement feedback will be revisited at future PRN events</i></li> </ul>	Yes
<p>Establish plan for Enforcement Officer role from July 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Monitoring and Enforcement Officer post has been filled following retirement of former post-holder.</i></li> </ul>	Yes
<p>Undertake skills audit of planning team and establish a prioritised training/enhancement plan, including training activities on natural heritage skills and advice, delivery of the new LDP for the Park, and planning support training on Uniform administration and template modification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Training needs have been identified through staff appraisals through the year, and training has been completed accordingly</i></li> </ul>	Yes
<p>Put in place procedure for CNPA member involvement in pre-application discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Procedure for CNPA member involvement in pre-application discussions for major developments agreed at Planning Committee in December 2015</i></li> </ul>	Yes
<p>Enter Scottish Government/RTPI Awards for Quality in Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Awards entered in May 2015</i></li> </ul>	Yes
<p>Investigate establishment of a Design Panel for the Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Establishment of a Design Panel was investigated and not considered to be an effective tool for improving standards of design at this point in time</i></li> </ul>	Yes
<p>Review internal consultation procedures for specialist advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A full brief for the review process has been prepared, although the review itself will be undertaken in early 2016/17</i></li> </ul>	Partially complete
<p>Plan for Cairngorms Design Awards competition in 2016 to coincide with the themed year on Innovation, Architecture and Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Project plan for Design Awards competition has been prepared, and the competition is to be undertaken during 2016/17</i></li> </ul>	Yes
<p>Add to series of Cairngorms Planning Advice Notes to provide easy to read customer-focused advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>New Planning Advice Note on Pre-Application Advice in the Park was published in May 2015. Other Planning Advice Notes have been updated where appropriate</i></li> </ul>	Yes
<p>Implementation of a Scottish Government Pilot Project to use a new Town Centre Toolkit to improve the town centre vitality and viability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The pilot project was undertaken for Grantown-on-Spey town centre, and the report was finalised in March 2016</i></li> </ul>	Yes

Committed Improvements and Actions	Complete?
Review customer satisfaction feedback survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A new targeted survey has been produced and was launched in March 2016</i></li> </ul>	Yes



## Part 5: Official Statistics

### A: Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Category	Total number of decisions 2015-2016	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2015-2016	2014-2015
Major developments	0	-	130.9
Local developments (non-householder) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	1 (14.3%) 6 (85.7%)	2.7 16.6	7.7 24.6
Householder developments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	0 0	- -	0 11.5
Housing developments			
Major	0	-	146.4
Local housing developments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	0 2 (100%)	- 10.4	7.3 27.2
Business and industry			
Major	0	-	21.9
Local business and industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local: less than 2 months</li> <li>Local: more than 2 months</li> </ul>	0 1 (100%)	- 17.6	8.2 26.0
EIA developments	0	-	0
Other consents*	0	-	12.3
Planning/legal agreements** <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major: average time</li> <li>Local: average time</li> </ul>	0 0	- -	250 25
<b>Local reviews</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A

\* Consents and certificates: Listed buildings and Conservation area consents, Control of Advertisement consents, Hazardous Substances consents, Established Use Certificates, certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development, notification on overhead electricity lines, notifications and directions under GPDO Parts 6 & 8 relating to agricultural and forestry development and applications for prior approval by Coal Authority or licensed operator under classes 60 & 62 of the GPDO.

\*\* Legal obligations associated with a planning permission; concluded under section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 or section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973

### B: Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

Type	Total number of decisions	Original decision upheld			
		2015-2016		2014-2015	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	2	0	0	0	0

**C: Enforcement activity**

	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>
Cases taken up	41	22
Breaches identified	41	22
Cases resolved	33	26
Notices served***	1	3
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

\*\*\* Enforcement notices; breach of condition notices; planning contravention notices; stop notices; temporary stop notices; fixed penalty notices, and Section 33 notices.

**D: Context**

The decision-making timescale statistics for applications exclude applications where a processing agreement was agreed between the CNPA and applicant. The CNPA used processing agreements with 71% of the applications determined during 2015/16, with an average determination timescale of 16 weeks.

## Part 6: Workforce and Financial Information

The workforce information below represents a snapshot of the position within CNPA's planning service at 31 March 2016. The financial information relates to the full financial year 2015/16.

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Head of Planning Service		1	1	

Note: Tier 1 = Chief Executive, Tier 2 = Directors, Tier 3 = Heads of Service, Tier 4 = Managers

		DM	DP	Enforce- ment	Other
Managers	No. Posts	1	1		
	Vacant				
Main grade posts	No. Posts	2	2	1	
	Vacant				
Technician	No. Posts	1			
	Vacant				
Office Support/Clerical	No. Posts	2			
	Vacant				
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	

Note: Managers are those staff responsible for the operational management of a team/division. They are not necessarily line managers.

Staff Age Profile	Number
Under 30	2
30-39	4
40-49	3
50 and over	2

Committee and Site Visits*	Number per year
Full Board meetings	5
Planning committees	10
Area committees (where relevant)	N/A
Committee site visits	1
LRB**	N/A
LRB site visits	N/A

Notes:

\*References to committees also include National Park Authority Boards. Number of site visits is those cases where visits were carried out by committees/boards.

\*\*this relates to the number of meetings of the LRB. The number of applications going to LRB are reported elsewhere.

	Total Budget	Costs		Income***
		Direct*	Indirect**	
Development management	307,300	263,900	43,400	36,000
Development planning	157,100	135,400	21,700	-
Enforcement	40,500	38,400	2,100	-
Other	38,900	38,300	600	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>543,800</b>	<b>476,000</b>	<b>67,800</b>	<b>36,000</b>

Notes:

\* Direct staff costs covers gross pay (including overtime, national insurance and superannuation contribution). The appropriate proportion of the direct cost of any staff member within the planning authority spending 30% or more of their time on planning should be included in costs, irrespective of what department they are allocated to (for example, legal advice, administration, typing). Exclude staff spending less than 30% of their time on planning.

\*\*Indirect costs include all other costs attributable to the planning service. Examples (not exhaustive) include accommodation, IT, stationery, office equipment, telephone charges, printing, advertising, travel & subsistence, apportionment of support service costs.

\*\*\* Include fees from planning applications and deemed applications, and recharges for advertising costs etc. Exclude income from property and planning searches.