



Consultation – Planning performance and the planning guarantee

Response from the English National Park Authorities Association (ENPAA)

17 January 2013

1. The English National Park Authorities Association (ENPAA) supports the policy-making process by co-ordinating the views of the nine English National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority. It is governed by the Chairs of the ten Authorities. Our response represents the collective view of officers who are working within the policies established by the National Park Authorities (NPAs) and follows internal consultation amongst the All Parks Heads of Planning Professional Group. We are happy for our response to be made publicly available and would be happy to discuss any of the points we make further with officials if that would be helpful.
2. In November 2012 the Government published a consultation document on the proposal to introduce measures to enable quicker decisions on applications, including giving applicants the option of applying directly to the Planning Inspectorate where there are clear failures in the local planning authority's performance. ENPAA supports an effective planning system and understands the reasons why the Government wishes to take steps to minimise uncertainty and delay for those seeking planning permission. ENPAA therefore wishes to only respond to the following questions within the consultation document.

Question 3: Do you agree that extensions to timescales, made with the written consent of the applicant following submission, should be treated as a form of planning performance agreement (and therefore excluded from the data on which performance will be assessed)?

3. ENPAA supports this suggestion subject to a more proportionate approach to planning performance agreements (see below).

Question 4: Do you agree that there is scope for a more proportionate approach to the form and content of planning performance agreements?

4. ENPAA agrees that there is scope for a simpler approach to planning performance agreements and there are some 'good practice' examples where National Parks have already sought to improve the process. For example, the Lake District National Park Authority, encouraged by the ATLAS publication 'Making a Planning Performance Agreement Work for your Project' (December 2010), piloted a simplified form of planning performance agreement during 2011. They reviewed this experience with their Business Task Force which is a sub group of the Lake District National Park

Partnership and has the stated purpose of building understanding, respect, trust and collaboration between businesses, the National Park Authority (and other public sector agencies) to deliver tangible benefits for businesses. This resulted in the 2012 launch of the Lake District easy to use Planning Performance Agreements Service. As part of their development management approach business customers in the Lake District have benefited from this simplified planning performance agreement approach for housing, small scale hydro electric schemes, a significant hotel extension and master planning a university campus.

5. As another example, Dartmoor National Park Authority will be using this year a simplified 2/3 page Planning Performance Agreement which sets out a protocol including milestones for how a number of major planning applications will be dealt with that will flow out of their soon to be adopted Development Management and Delivery Plan. They see this as providing clarity and certainty over how the applications will be dealt with and demonstrate already a partnership method of working with applicants to bring forward successful schemes. To complement this work Dartmoor already offer a free pre application advice service which includes a project team approach involving statutory consultees to resolve problems before an application is submitted. This has been welcomed by agents and other interested consultees involved in the planning process.

ENPAA
17 January 2013