



Northumberland National Park Authority

Statement of Community Involvement

September 2017

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1. The Statement of Community Involvement

- 1.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how Northumberland National Park Authority will involve its local communities, businesses and other stakeholders in developing planning documents¹ and making development management decisions which will impact on the National Park.
- 1.2. All Local Planning Authorities are required, under the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004, to produce a Statement of Community Involvement. Northumberland National Park Authority adopted its first SCI in 2006 and updated it in 2010.
- 1.3. A consultation draft document (September 2016), updated the Statement of Community Involvement adopted in 2010 and was consulted on for a period of 6 weeks from the 3rd October until the 14th November 2016. The document reflected changes in national policy and NNPA protocol as well as feedback on and advancements from previous methods of community involvement.
- 1.4. All comments received through the consultation were considered and where appropriate used to inform this final SCI document which will be used by the Authority for the next five years or until another review is due.

2. The Northumberland National Park Authority and its Areas of Responsibility

2.1. The Northumberland National Park was designated in 1956 and the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) was established in 1998. The statutory purposes for all English National Park Authorities are set out in Section 61 of the Environment Act 1995. They are:

- *To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage;* and
- *To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities by the public.*

The authority also has a statutory duty, in pursuing the two purposes, to:

- *Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.*

2.2. Under Section 67(1) of the Environment Act, Northumberland National Park Authority is the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for the entire area of the National Park. As such, the authority guides and controls new development, including new buildings, extensions to buildings and the use of land and buildings.

¹ Includes Local Plans as defined by The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations, 2012, Section 6; Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and neighbourhood planning documents.

- 2.3. Those responsibilities extend to the minerals planning function for the area. Other related matters, such as Building Control and Environmental Health, are the responsibility of Northumberland County Council, within whose boundaries the National Park is located.
- 2.4. All work carried out by the National Park Authority is guided by the National Park Management Plan. The Management Plan is reviewed every five years and sets out a vision, policies and outcomes for the long term management of the National Park.
- 2.5. The Management Plan 2016 – 2021 “Distinctive Places, Open Spaces” was adopted in March 2016 following a collaborative review process, steered by the Management Plan Partnership². Outlined below is the vision that the Management Plan sets out for the long-term future of the National Park.

“Northumberland National Park will be a truly welcoming and distinctive place, easily accessible to all.

Its inspiring and changing landscapes, characterised by open spaces, tranquillity, diverse habitats and rich cultural heritage, will be widely recognised and valued.

The living working landscape will contribute positively to well-being of the thriving and vibrant communities in and around the Park.”

- 2.6. Local communities, business owners, visitors, volunteers, land managers and many organisations that operate within the National Park were involved in shaping the Management Plan. It is therefore important that the aspirations of the Plan are supported and taken forward by all of these interests.

² The Northumberland National Park Management Plan Partnership comprises: Northumberland National Park Authority; Northumberland County Council; The Environment Agency; Natural England; Historic England; English Heritage; Northumberland Tourism Ltd.; The Country Land and Business Association; The Defence Infrastructure Organisation; Northumberland County Joint Local Access Forum; Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust; The National Farmers Union; The Forestry Commission; The Northumberland National Park Foundation; and; The North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network.

3. General Principles for Community Engagement

3.1. Guided by the key principles set out in the Northumberland National Park Management Plan, the Authority is committed to working in such a way that promotes:

- Sustainable Development; *promoting ways of living and working that allow people to enjoy life, businesses to prosper and communities to thrive, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of our protected areas and affording opportunities for an understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities by the public.*
- Equality, Diversity, Health and Wellbeing; *working with excluded groups, individuals and partner organisations to help reduce social exclusions among communities within the National Park and broaden access, for those who may be excluded from the understanding and enjoyment of the National Park.*
- Partnership Working; *ensuring that an effective working relationship is maintained between the Management Plan Partnership organisations, to deliver the National Park's statutory purposes and duty.*
- Transparency and Openness; *commitment to open and accountable decision making, making information freely available and encouraging the active participation of local communities and the wider public.*

3.2. All local authorities need to make sure the needs of under-represented groups, and those who have difficulties in making their views heard, are reflected in their decision making. Typically these include young people, black and ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities. In the context of the National Park this could also include commuters, working and lone parents and self employed people, as accessing these groups can be made particularly difficult by the dispersed nature of the population.

3.3. The National Park Authority is committed to enabling opportunities for everyone with an interest in the National Park to be involved in shaping development plans and proposals which may affect them and their local area. Those statutory planning processes that people can participate in and comment on, include:

- The Local Plan review;
- Neighbourhood Planning; and
- The Development Management Process

4. Involving Communities in the Local Plan review

Background

- 4.1. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Planning Authorities to adopt and regularly review a Local Development Plan (Local Plan) for their area. This document / suite of documents contains the strategic spatial planning policies that guide development through steering how planning applications are determined within the development management system.
- 4.2. Changes to the planning system, introduced through the Localism Act 2011, have reformed the way Local Plans are prepared. The importance of involving a broad range of stakeholders remains emphasised.
- 4.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2012, together with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations, set out the requirements in relation to how Local Planning Authorities should involve stakeholders during Local Plan preparation. Additional online National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published in March 2014 and is frequently updated.
- 4.4. The Duty to Cooperate, also introduced through the Localism Act, places a legal duty on Local Planning Authorities and public bodies to engage constructively on an ongoing basis. This is to ensure the most effective preparation of Local Plans, particularly in relation to cross-boundary strategic matters such as issues relating to the housing market, travel to work areas, river catchments and ecological networks.

Northumberland National Park Local Plan

- 4.5. The current Local Plan for Northumberland National Park comprises the Core Strategy and Development Policies document (2009) which is supported in its implementation by the Building Design Guide SPD (2011), Landscape Strategy SPD (2011) and Otterburn Camp SPD (2007). Government guidance requires a Local Plan to be reviewed at least every five years (from adoption).
- 4.6. The review will lead to a consolidated single Local Plan, plus a proposals map, covering the whole of the National Park. This will incorporate mineral planning policies for the Park.
- 4.7. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) will also be undertaken at key stages of the review³ to ensure that potential environmental effects are given full consideration alongside social and economic issues.

³ As required by Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The SA incorporates the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations as legislated in the European Directive 2001/42/EC.

When we will consult

- 4.8. Communities and other stakeholders can become involved in the Northumberland National Park Local Plan preparation at set stages.
- 4.9. In the early stages of the Local Plan review process (Regulation 18) there will be formal consultation opportunities, the purpose of which will be to identify the main issues facing the future development of the National Park and to begin to establish options for how these issues may be addressed through planning policies. The authority may have a separate consultation period, at a later time, to establish the preferred policy approach.
- 4.10. Comments received from this consultation will form part of the evidence base to inform the development of a more detailed policy document.
- 4.11. A 'Pre-submission' Draft Local Plan will be published at the end of the review process so that the public may make formal representation regarding the soundness of the plan, to a Planning Inspector for independent examination.
- 4.12. The [Local Development Scheme \(LDS\)](#) sets out the programme for development plan documents, including the key stages of the Local Plan review process when the authority will be consulting.

Who we will consult

- 4.13. As well as setting out the broad stages of a Local Plan Review at which a Local Planning Authority should consult, the Local Planning Regulations (2012) also provide a list of statutory consultation bodies and general consultation bodies that should be engaged in the process. The National Park Authority has identified additional consultation bodies it considers relevant. Please see Appendix B for the full list of target audiences for the Local Plan consultation.

The National Park Authority holds a database of necessary contact details for all of its Local Plan consultees. If you would like your details to be added to or removed from our database please let the authority know using the contact details on the back page of this document.

How we will consult

4.14. The following measures will be taken to consult statutory consultation bodies and other target audiences:

- Communicate via email and letter correspondence as appropriate;
- Publicise consultations through local press, posters/leaflets, the NNPA website and social media outlets;
- Make consultation documents available to view at NNPA offices, local libraries and other community meeting places within the National Park;
- Provide extra copies of consultation documents when reasonably requested for Parish Councils, Parish Meetings and other community groups and organisations;
- Make consultation documents available to view on the NNPA website;
- Communicate clearly with people avoiding using jargon;
- Arrange consultation events in locations throughout and surrounding the National Park;
- Be adaptable. The authority recognises that different consultation methods will be required in different circumstances; and
- Publish on the NNPA website comments received (in accordance with relevant data protection legislation), or a summary of them, and explain how these comments have been taken into account.

5. Involving Communities in Neighbourhood Planning

5.1. The Localism Act 2011 introduced Neighbourhood Planning which allows a Town or Parish Council, or designated organisation, to produce a development plan for their area. The intention behind Neighbourhood Planning is to empower local people to take a proactive role in shaping the development of the area in which they live.

5.2. The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 received royal assent on April 27th 2017. It sets how Local Planning Authorities are expected to support communities pursuing a neighbourhood planning project.

5.3. In accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, Northumberland National Park Authority will:

- Designate a body or organisation which meets the requirements to become a 'Relevant Body' for Neighbourhood Planning;
- Consult on, and designate a Neighbourhood Area which meets the requirements as set out in the Localism Act;
- Provide advice throughout the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan (or Neighbourhood Order);
- Organise the examination of a Neighbourhood Plan, where necessary;
- Publicise the examiner's report; and
- Work in partnership with the County Council to decide whether to bring a Neighbourhood Plan into force.

5.4. The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 require the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan to follow a number of stages⁴, including consulting with the local community. It is expected that the general consultation principles and techniques set out in this SCI are followed; however it will be for the relevant body to decide an appropriate level of community engagement in relation to the size and complexity of the plan.

5.5. Community powers under the Localism Act 2011 extend further to include three 'Community Rights'⁵, and enabling Town / Parish Councils to obtain permission for development through Neighbourhood Development Orders.

6. Involving Communities in the Development Management Process

6.1. This section sets out how people will be informed about and can get involved in the Development Management process.

Pre-application enquiry discussions

6.2. Pre-application discussions are confidential discussions between applicants and Northumberland National Park Authority, and provide a positive opportunity for both parties to discuss the acceptability of and requirements for future proposed development. Due to the confidential nature of pre-application discussions the Authority will not carry out consultation with members of the community.

6.3. For major or very sensitive development proposals, developers are encouraged to undertake pre-application publicity and consultations using exhibitions, leaflets and consultations with the local community, and to also discuss their proposals with relevant statutory bodies. In such cases, developers are also likely to be required to submit a report alongside their planning application to demonstrate that they have raised awareness and consulted with people likely to be affected by the proposal.

Publicity for planning applications

6.4. In order to publicise planning applications, the Authority will:

- Publish a weekly list of new applications received on its website and circulate this list to Parish Councils within the National Park, Northumberland County Council, Authority Members and other persons who have elected to receive this update;
- Make applications available to view on its website;
- Display a notice at the site (or nearest highway or Public Right of Way, in case of sites with no highway or PRow frontage);
- Advertise applications in the local press (where appropriate);

⁴ Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide (Locality, 2013)

⁵ The three Community Rights are: **Community Right to Bid** – the opportunity to bid to buy local land or buildings in order to keep them in community use; **Community Right to Build** – the opportunity to build community facilities or housing for local people; **Community Right to Challenge** – the ability to challenge to take over local services if the local council consider they could be better run.

- Notify and invite comments from neighbouring properties (who adjoin the application site) by letter;
 - Notify and invite comments from the relevant Parish Council, statutory consultees, internal specialist consultees and other interested bodies or parties of the application by letter or email;
 - Allow consultees and other interested parties who wish to do so 21 days to submit initial representations by post or email; and
 - Where an application is presented to Members at Development Management Committee allow the applicant/agent, supporter or objector to speak under the Authority's Public Speaking procedure.
- 6.5. All letters of representation received will be kept on the planning application file which is available for public inspection, and may also be published (with appropriate safeguarding of sensitive personal information in accordance with the Data Protection Act) on the Authority's website. In general, letters of a confidential nature will not be considered as part of the determination process. All non-confidential letters of representation will be made available to Authority members when they meet to consider the application. .
- 6.6. In the case of exceptionally sensitive or complex applications which give rise to a great deal of public interest, the National Park Authority may decide to hold a public meeting to discuss the proposals.

Decision making process

- 6.7. The majority of planning applications are determined by Officers under the Authority's [Scheme of Delegation](#). This typically includes applications which by virtue of their scale or nature do not raise significant policy issues or have other materials considerations that would lead them to being of greater complexity. For such applications, the community will be involved as set out in 6.4.
- 6.8. In some circumstances applications will go before Development Management Committee to be determined by Authority Members. This typically includes applications which are more contentious by virtue of their scale and nature or those for which a number of representations have been received. For such applications, the community will be involved as set out in 6.4. All those who made representations on the application will also then be notified in writing of the details of the meeting and offered the opportunity to speak. The Authority has adopted formal guidance for public speaking which is available [here](#).
- 6.9. A letter is sent to the applicant or agent advising them that a decision has been made, accompanied by the decision notice.
- 6.10. If the applicant is aggrieved by the decision of the Authority to refuse to grant planning permission or by Conditions applied to a grant of planning permission they have a right of appeal against the decision. Rights of appeal and how to appeal will be set out on the formal decision notice. All those initially consulted and those who made representations on an application will

be notified of any subsequent appeal made. Appeals are decided by the Secretary of State or by a Government appointed Planning Inspector.

- 6.11. When complaints about alleged breaches in planning control are received these will be recorded and investigated in accordance with established procedures at set in the Northumberland National Park Authority Enforcement Plan. All cases are dealt with confidentially and no public consultation is undertaken.

7. Monitoring and Review of the Statement of Community Involvement

- 7.1. The Northumberland National Park SCI will be kept under review and revisions will be made if there are new groups the National Park Authority wish to engage with, or when regulations relating to public consultation change.
- 7.2. The Authority is committed to learning through its work. At times an optional monitoring form will be included with consultation response forms to enable monitoring of the effectiveness of community involvement approaches. Feedback received through this process will inform future SCI reviews.

Engaging communities in the Authority's other work

- 7.3. The Authority also prepares a wide range of other policy and guidance documents including the National Park Management Plan and other work relating to the statutory purposes, such as the Natural Environment Vision. Regard will be given to the principles set out in this SCI when involving communities in this work and there may be additional opportunities for engaging by other means tailored to a particular project. A consultation strategy is sometimes prepared giving a more detailed account of specific consultation exercises that will be carried out.

8. Data Protection and Freedom of Information

- 8.1. All information collected by Northumberland National Park Authority through its planning policy consultation exercises is processed in accordance with the data protection principles in the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 8.2. At the end of each period of consultation all responses will be analysed and a summary report prepared. This report will be considered by a panel of elected Authority Members and published for inspection both at NNPA Headquarters and on the NNPA website.
- 8.3. Public disclosure of data may be required in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. If so, your personal contact data will not be shared.

Appendix A: Glossary

Annual Monitoring Report: assesses the extent to which planning policies are being successfully implemented, monitors the timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan, and identifies areas where new or revised policies or Supplementary Planning Documents may be required. The report forms part of our annual State of the Park Report.

Consultation Body: statutory consultees a local planning authority is legally obliged under regulations to consult.

Consultee Database: where the authority holds electronically contact records of statutory consultees and other individuals / organisations with a stake in the development of the National Park.

Core Strategy: the main policy document within the Local Plan setting out the spatial vision and strategic objectives of the planning framework for an area.

Decision Notice: Notification of the decision on a planning application.

Duty to Cooperate: a legal duty placed on local planning authorities to engage constructively on an ongoing basis, around cross-boundary strategic matters.

Evidence Base: a series of documents on a range of topics which contain up to date and reliable information to support and inform development policies.

Independent Examination: the final stage of Local Plan production, prior to adoption, where an Independent Inspector, on behalf of the Secretary of State, will assess the Plan to determine whether it has been prepared in line with legal requirements.

Local Development Plan (Local Plan): a document, or suite of documents, that guides all development in a given local planning authority area; its policies therein steer how planning applications are determined.

Local Development Scheme (LDS): The Local Development Scheme is reviewed annually and agreed with the government, it sets out the programme for the preparation of Local Development Documents.

Local Planning Authority (LPA): The authority which is empowered by law to exercise planning functions.

Management Plan: the over-arching strategic document for the National Park that sets the vision and objectives to guide the future of the Park.

Minerals Planning Authority: an authority whose responsibility it is, to set the development policies relating to mineral extraction.

National Park Authority: the legal body in charge of a National Park and whose statutory responsibilities are set out in the Environment Act 1995.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): The document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): Further guidance for the implementation of the Government's planning policies, accessible online and updated periodically.

Neighbourhood Area: an area designated by the local planning authority to which a Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order will apply.

Neighbourhood Planning: introduced through the Localism Act 2011, neighbourhood planning allows a town / parish council or designated body to prepare a plan for their local area that could become part of the statutory development plan.

Pre-submission Draft: also referred to as 'publication draft', this is the Local Plan version considered by the local planning authority to be ready for examination.

Proposals Map: illustrates on an Ordnance Survey base map, all the policies and proposals in a local plan.

Relevant Body: a town / parish council, neighbourhood forum or other organisation designated by the local planning authority for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Scheme of Delegation: sets out the structure by which development management decisions are made, including where delegated powers are granted to planning officers to make decisions without consideration by a committee of Authority Members.

Soundness: to be considered sound at examination, a Local Plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Statement of Community Involvement: (this document) sets out how the Authority will involve and consult the public and organisations when carrying out its statutory planning duties.

State of the National Park Report: provides an overall picture of the 'health' of the National Park and measures progress against the outcomes set out in the National Park Management Plan.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): Provides supplementary information and detail in respect of policies and proposals in a 'parent' Development Plan document.

The Regulations: the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations introduced in 2012.

Appendix B: Consultation bodies

As defined by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012:

Specific Consultation Bodies

- a) the Coal Authority,
- b) the Environment Agency,
- c) the Historic Building and Monuments Commission for England (known as Historic England),
- d) the Marine Management Organisation,
- e) Natural England,
- f) Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (company number 2904587),
- g) Highways England,
- h) a relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the local planning authority's area,
- i) Any person –
 - (i) to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under section 106(3)(a) of the Communications Act 2003, and
 - (ii) Who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the local planning authority's area,
- j) if it exercises functions in any part of the local planning authority's area –
 - (i) a Primary Care Trust established under section 18 of the National Health Service Act 2006 or continued in existence by virtue of that section,
 - (ii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 6(1)(b) or (c) of the Electricity Act 1989,
 - (iii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986,
 - (iv) a sewerage undertaker, and
 - (v) a water undertaker,
- k) the Homes and Communities Agency, and
- l) where the local planning authority is a London Borough Council, the Mayor of London.

The Duty to Cooperate also extends the consultation requirements imposed under the Regulations, to include:

- a) the Civil Aviation Authority,
- b) the Clinical Commissioning Group established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to deliver NHS services,
- c) the Office of Rail Regulation,
- d) each Integrated Transport Authority,
- e) each highway authority within the meaning of section 1 of the Highways Act 1980 (including the Secretary of State, where the Secretary of State is the highways authority),
- f) each Local Enterprise Partnership (established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area),
- g) Local Nature Partnerships, and
- h) the Combined Authority for the North-East.

General Consultation Bodies

- a) voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local authority's area,
- b) bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority's area,
- c) bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the local planning authority's area,
- d) bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the local planning authority's area, and
- e) bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area.

Forward Planning contact details:

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