

Report 4: Review Meeting: Development Management - 16 February 2022

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the findings and recommendations of the Development Management Authority Review meeting held on 16 February 2022, and to seek endorsement for the actions planned to address the recommendations.

2. Recommendations

The Authority is recommended to:

- a. Note the findings and recommendations of the Authority Review of Development Management.
- b. Consider the responses from Leadership Team.
- c. Endorse the actions planned as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Implications

- a. Financial: Development Management work is funded from the core budget and income from planning fees.
- b. Equalities: There are no direct equalities implications from this report.
- c. Link to Business Plan: Development Management is Aim 4 Thriving Communities (Continue to operate a positive and proactive planning service for the Park which positively facilitates the vision for the Park and its thriving communities)

4. Background

- a. Members of the Authority Review Panel met on 16 February 2022 to scrutinise Development Management.
- b. The members report detailed the work of Development Management within the Planning Service, as well as resources and performance.
- c. The Review Panel were also informed of the implications of the adoption of an updated Local Plan in July 2020.
- d. An independent Planning Consultant attended the meeting to provide an insight into their experience of the planning service.

5. Key findings and Recommendations

- a. Members found that Development Management performs highly.
- b. The findings and recommendations of the Review Panel are set out at Appendix 1 to this report. Members are asked to consider and endorse the actions identified by Leadership Team to address the recommendations.

- c. Key recommendations include being proactive in the production of information to developers on sustainable construction techniques that will support the Park in achieving its Net Zero targets.
- d. Members recommended additional data and narrative to be collected and reported back to members in a timely manner.

6. Conclusions

Members are asked to note the findings of the Review of Development Management, consider the responses from Leadership Team, and endorse the actions as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

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Background papers: [Note of Authority Review Meeting 16.02.22 .docx](#)

Appendix 1

Northumberland National Park Authority Review Meeting

The table below details the Leadership Team Recommendations and Proposed Actions from Development Management Review on 16th February 2022

No	Review Findings/Recommendations	LT Response and Actions Planned	Lead	Timescale/Date
1	DMC should meet at least once (possibly twice) each year, even when there are no cases. This would particularly review enforcement as an important aspect of the work but may also look at how well DM is delivering outcomes (see below).	Agreed, we tend to have this number at least (April and May 2022 DMC meetings so far this year)	Susannah Buylla	Completed and Ongoing
2	Review the outcomes being delivered by DM – whether DM is delivering the aspirations in the Local Plan and Management Plan in terms of cases being approved and rejected and applications coming forward. This may also help demonstrate (with data), the importance of these decisions being taken by the National Park linked to our objectives.	Agreed, can add a narrative to the annual DMC report sharing outcomes rather than just statistics. Examples of planning decisions can be shared with DMC and a built example could be visited and discussed on the annual member/ staff day out. Any demographic changes will be picked up in the State of the Park report bases on census data.	Susannah Buylla	Added to annual DMC training and will add to DMC annual report.
3	Capture a narrative (by the Planning team for DMC to consider) on what can and cannot be influenced as a result of their engagement – both beneficial outcomes achieved as a result of advice (positive enhancements, negative aspects dropped or amended) and lost opportunities where beneficial ideas, suggestions and proposals are not taken forward – and why.	Agreed, a narrative on how pre-app influences development can be provided to DMC members. Examples of what kinds of developments are being discouraged as well as added value. We already use some examples during the DMC training.	Susannah Buylla	Complete and ongoing. Shared at annual DMC training and will continue

4	Low carbon and the built environment contributing to net zero targets for the National Park is an area for potential further advice (similar to Dark Skies advice). A factsheet would enable us to be proactive and promote net zero solutions, explaining best practice, policies and giving clarity on aspects such as cladding and external insulation, electric charging points etc.	Agreed. This has been on planning team's "to do" list since adopting local plan. Position statement/ technical advice note to provide details and examples of what are "Sustainable construction techniques" (required by policy ST2 part f) has been discussed but awaiting officer capacity. Alternative would be to employ consultants to produce.	Susannah Buylla	Spring 2023
5	Consider CPD for staff on net zero solutions for the built environment, particularly for older stone buildings - to be fully up to date with latest thinking and solutions being developed.	Agreed. Officers have attended webinars from by Historic England about similar. More bespoke cpd for NNPA will be investigated	Susannah Buylla	Ongoing
6	Bring in Planning Agents to ensure they are briefed on Local Plan policies and NNPA processes.	No regular planning agents submitting applications. Planning agents tend to do much of their work in county council area and only have on average one application a year in the Park. Previous investigations found little interest. HoPP could send out a "feeler" email to gauge level of interest.	Susannah Buylla	Spring 2023
7	Work proactively with statutory consultees re response times – may want to feedback collectively on consultee performance and illustrate impacts of late advice.	Agreed. Huge capacity issues with statutory consultees which seems to have been getting worse, due to increase in applications across the country. This has been done with NCC Highways and Conservation recently. With HoPP having meetings with managers.	Susannah Buylla	Ongoing

8	Maintain internal support for the DM process (from other internal teams) especially when dealing with high volumes or major applications.	We will maintain internal expertise and access to relevant external expertise as resources allow. Capacity is an issue when officers in other teams are focusing on other projects.	Pauline Wall	Ongoing
9	Consider collecting data to illustrate the relationship between pre-app advice and timescales for determining applications.	Agreed. This can be done and the HoPP will report any trends which emerge and need action.	Susannah Buylla	Spring 2023
10	Undertake benchmarking of time and costs for processing applications with other similar authorities, and report as part of performance reporting context.	This information is not easily available but will look to see what existing benchmarking information exists. This may not provide much value in terms of information collected as similar LPAs do not exist.	Susannah Buylla	Spring 2023
11	Consider introducing a little more flexibility in the timescale for issuing papers to DMC to support officer workloads (depending on volume/complexity?) Between usual 2 weeks and minimum five days.	This is appreciated by officers. However, there is the statutory requirement to ensure committee documents are available to the public at least 5 working days prior to the meeting. Also, website accessibility means that some additional time needs to be taken to ensure all reports meet accessibility requirements.	Corporate Support (Sharon Robson)	Ongoing
12	Head of P&P to ensure we are making the most efficient use of staff time through a risk-based approach to assessment and report writing.	This is done regularly and discussed with planning officers. Shorter reports where possible (but need to meet certain threshold for decision making), as well as not commenting on some consultations from neighboring authorities, taking a risk-based approach.	Susannah Buylla	Ongoing