

APPENDIX 1

Peak District National Park Authority

Policy on Training Requirements for Members Determining Planning Matters

Background

The Authority's decision making process must be, and be seen to be, of the highest standard. It is important that the public has confidence in all aspects of the Authority's work and especially all aspects of the planning system. Members have an important role in making decisions on non delegated cases, albeit these are a small number of all applications. This policy relates to any Authority meetings where planning applications and related matters are decided, which is usually the Planning Committee and sometimes the Authority when matters are referred to it.

The public expect members who determine planning applications to follow the general principles of public office but also that they are aware of matters that are relevant to planning. They are expected to bring a lay perspective to the professional advice from officers, but in order to do so they should be familiar with matters such as:

- National legislation and planning policy at local, regional and national level
- The context of planning, such as matters important to the community and the special qualities of the national park
- The role of officers and members in the planning process
- Procedures for and conduct of Authority meetings
- The way in which our public participation arrangements work
- The way in which members declare interests in planning matters and other Code of Conduct issues
- The Authority's Planning Protocol including being familiar with the issues relating to predetermination and bias

Members come to the Authority from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of experience of the planning system. It is important, however, that all members who take part in planning decisions have a contemporary understanding of policies, legislation and guidance and committee procedures and standards of conduct in the National Park context.

Members of the Authority who are appointed to positions where they are able to make decisions on planning matters should not be debarred from doing so and this must be balanced with public confidence in their ability to do so. This policy creates a framework which enables members to do this.

Policy

1. All members are encouraged to attend a new member induction course and the Association of National Park Authority (ANPA) new member induction course as soon after appointment to the Authority as practicable. They should also familiarise themselves with key strategic documents especially the National Park Management Plan and planning policies that are in force (currently the East Midlands Regional Plan and the Local Plan and, from its adoption, the Local Development Framework).

2. New members who have not previously been a member of a local authority planning committee (this does not include town or parish councils) should familiarise themselves with how Planning Committee works by observing a relevant meeting prior to participation. They should raise any questions that arise with a suitable officer (Head of Planning or Planning Managers,

Head of Law, Democratic Services Manager, any Director or the Chief Executive) or the Chair of Planning Committee. Members wishing to be nominated to Planning Committee should consider observing a committee prior to their appointment.

3. Members are encouraged to select a mentor from amongst other more experienced members (the Chair of the Authority can assist with this) with whom they can discuss any matters related to their roles.

4. Members of the Authority must attend a National Park Authority annual planning training course and should have attended a course at least every 2 years. Members of Planning Committee are encouraged to attend annually. Two courses will be run annually in the autumn, soon after new appointments are made to the Authority. Attendance at such courses will only be recorded if members attend all of the policy, legal, procedural and probity modules that make up the day course. Members who have not attended a training course over a 2 year period will not be able to continue to attend or vote at Planning Committee or when Planning cases are considered at the Authority.

5. With effect from 31 March 2010 all newly appointed members will be provided as soon as they are appointed with a learning package that provides essential information related to their role on Planning Committee. This pack will include a self completed assessment form which ensures that members have understood all of the material. The Head of Planning Service or one of their senior qualified colleagues will, in the first instance, assess each completed assessment form. They will raise any matters directly with the member to ensure understanding and, conversely, the member may discuss any matter that they are unsure of with the Head of Planning or other officer. Members who do not complete this assessment will not be able to attend or vote at Planning Committee or the Authority when planning cases are being determined.

6. All members are encouraged to attend any suitable additional training related to planning, such as those courses run by the Local Government Association, Royal Town Planning Institute, their host authorities, the Peak Park Parishes Forum or similar bodies. All members are encouraged to attend other training courses run by the National Park Authority on matters that have a bearing on planning matters, such as landscape, biodiversity, climate change, design and cultural heritage.

7. The Chair of Planning Committee, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, will have discretion to vary the application of this policy in relation to individual circumstances where members have experience of planning in a different context such as their own professional background or in their role as members of other Authorities.

Chief Executive
21 November 2009