



Planning Service Parishes Bulletin 07

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Changes on the Peak District National Park Authority:

Chair of the Authority: Councillor Lesley Roberts

Councillor Lesley Roberts has been elected chair of the Peak District National Park Authority at its annual meeting on July 4.



Clr Roberts, who has lived in the Peak District for over 12 years, is the first parish council member to become chair of the Authority, and coincidentally, the first female chair. She is a member of Leekfrith parish council in the Staffordshire Moorlands. Clr Roberts was elected to the Authority in 2008 by the 26 parishes in the White Peak Moorlands and re-elected in 2011. She was appointed chair of planning committee in July 2012, has served on the audit resources and performance committee for two years, and has been one of the Authority's representatives for people and communities since 2009.

Chair of the Planning Committee: Mr Paul Ancell

Mr Paul Ancell is the new Chair of the Planning Committee. He spent the whole of his working life in local government, initially as a town planner and latterly in senior management roles including at High Peak and Macclesfield Borough Councils which enabled Paul to develop a working knowledge of the Peak District and the National Park Authority. Given his professional background, Paul has a particular interest in planning matters and is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), so is ideally suited to his new role. Paul says "I am however also very much aware that the Peak District, perhaps more so than another UK national park, is a diverse living community and home to a relatively large number of residents. Balancing the needs of that community with the protection and enhancement of our special environment is a great challenge."



Consistency in Planning

John Scott, Director of Planning explains

There are three words or phrases which we often hear in Planning but which appear to cause confusion and contradictions: consistency, precedent and “every case on its merits”. So the obvious question is: how can you have consistency if every case is judged on its merits and if you can’t take precedent into account? Is it possible for a planning authority to take the three of these into account in making decisions? The answer is “yes”, but I will explain further and give a few examples to demonstrate this.

Firstly, all planning professionals recognise that consistent decision making is essential if the applicants and the public are to have faith and trust in the planning process. One way of achieving this is to have a very clear basis for making decisions, rather than each one being an ad hoc process. The “Development Plan” provides that starting point – in the case of the National Park, we have the Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the “saved” policies of the Local Plan (2001). We also have Government guidance, such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The policies in these plans and guidance provide a legal framework or starting point for decision-makers. The Acts which we work within say that decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. This means that authorities can take into account other matters (see Planning Bulletin no.1 from 2013), but the starting point must be the adopted policies. This gives some consistency whilst allowing some consideration of other issues, provided they are relevant planning matters.

So, the second issue is how to deal with precedent. The cynics say that precedent is something quoted when it suits, but where it does not, then it is “every case on its merits”! In practice, precedent is something which applies to the application of policies and to the process of considering an application – planning authorities should be consistent in their approach and application of policies, but different site specific circumstances can lead to different outcomes, even though they may be subtly different on occasions. It is rare for two sites and two proposals to be identical, but where this is the case (for example an extension to a house on a housing estate of identical houses), then the expectation should be for the same outcome. The only time this may not be the case would, for example, be where an extension may have been approved many years ago under a different set of policies and design guidance, but new policies or guidance allows the planning authority to take a different approach. Even then, the Authority could decide that the character of the estate had changed so much because of earlier extensions that there was no merit in following the new policies. Precedent is not always a negative point - the fact that approving a development may lead others to propose something similar is not in itself a problem – if it is a good development, then it is a good example to follow. If something is unacceptable in its own right, then precedent is not necessarily another reason for refusal because it will be refused on its own merits.

This leads on to the “every case on its merits” approach. As I explained earlier, the adopted policies provide a starting point for decisions and the consistent application of policies should give a clear precedent when there are similar proposals. However, application sites and proposals can be different from neighbouring or nearby sites, so a planning authority must always look at each application on its merits. This can be further complicated when the decision is made at the Planning Committee, where the Members may give more weight to a particular factor than the Planning Officer. Similarly, a Planning Inspector may give different weight to some considerations at an appeal. - Unfortunately, this can lead to a perception that decisions are not consistent, particularly over time, when planning policies and guidance change in response to the evolving needs of society, emerging technologies or when ideas on what is “good” architectural design changes.

Parishes Day 2014 – Vibrant Villages!

Parishes Day this year will be held on **Saturday October 18th** at PDNPA HQ Aldern House in Bakewell. As in previous years, each Parish will be invited to send two representatives to participate in an interesting day of consultation, stimulating debate and informative presentations. This year's theme is Vibrant Villages and will focus on the need to ensure our communities are thriving places to live and work.

Thriving and vibrant communities have a key role to play in maintaining the special qualities of the national park. However, with more people, new technologies and changing lifestyles, our capacity to change the environment is much greater now than for any previous generation. Because of this, our collective responsibility for being aware of our impact, and for making the right choices within the national park are also much greater.

There are about 38,000 people living in the Peak District National Park. The people who live and work here face many different challenges:

- high house prices
- low wages
- an aging population
- restricted job opportunities
- inconsistent access to services

It is difficult to maintain balanced and vibrant communities when faced with these challenges, and we work in a number of ways to support the people who live and work in the national park.



There is a long history of community initiatives and it is crucial to build the capacity of local communities to shape local affairs. The views of communities and action taken by communities themselves, working directly with other stakeholders, has led to improvements to buildings, affordable housing, and the restoration of historic or natural features. The 2011 Localism Act encourages greater community engagement and participation in the decision-making processes.

PDNPA Planning Twitter Feed @PDNPAPlanning



Twitter is a micro blogging website where you can share any kind of information, but only in 140 characters. You can now follow us on Twitter @PDNPAPlanning; we will be tweeting planning decisions as soon as they are made at the Planning Committee and other relevant and useful Planning or PDNPA information. We encourage you to engage with us in this way.

Give us your feedback

The Planning Service is committed to listening to customer feedback to help us to identify any positives or negatives or areas for service improvement.

A big thank you to those Parishes who have responded to the survey so far! We've had some very useful feedback and we are keen to have a response from every Parish. So, we have kept the survey open to give you extra time to complete. Please provide any relevant feedback to us so that where workable, we can refine our procedures accordingly. **Please complete the survey online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PDNPAPCSatisfaction>**

If you have any queries please contact the Planning Liaison officer diane.jackson@peakdistrict.gov.uk