

What to expect when you attend a Planning Committee meeting

Welcome to the Peak District National Park Authority Planning Committee Meeting.

Planning is one of the key ways we conserve, protect and enhance the National Park.

If this is the first Planning Committee meeting you have ever been to or you would just like a reminder on what happens then below is a brief guide to help you:

- **What is the aim of the Planning Committee meeting?**
- **Who attends the meeting?**
- **Key parts of the meeting**
- **Main business of the meeting**
- **How members reach a decision**
- **Other important points**
- **Our service to you**

What is the aim of the Planning Committee meeting?

The Planning Committee generally deals with all larger scale or finely balanced planning applications which raise significant policy issues. It also considers those applications where there are more than three substantial objections on planning grounds.

At the meeting, the members have to take into account all the planning issues raised and then decide whether to approve or refuse planning applications.

Who attends the meetings?

- **Members of the public**

All committee meetings are open to the public. Often, members of the public affected by the planning applications or their agents are present and some arrange to speak at the meetings.

The only exception to this is when there is a 'Part B – Exempt Information'. When this appears on the agenda the public and press are asked to leave the meeting so that legal, financial or personal information about individuals or staff remain confidential.

- **Our officers**

Planning officers attend the meeting to present their reports to members and answer any questions.

- **Our members**

The Chair of the committee is responsible for controlling the meeting.

The committee members are a mix of members from the National Park Authority and include county, district, city and borough councillors. The Secretary of State for the Environment also appoints local parish councillors and members who have an understanding and specialist knowledge about the issues that affect the National Park.

Key parts of the meeting

On arriving officers will hand you a copy of the agenda and planning officers' reports. Key parts of the meeting are:

- members' apologies for absence
- approval of the minutes of the last meeting (record of what was agreed)
- any matters arising from the minutes
- any urgent business and when the items will be covered
- main business
- lunch break (if the meeting has not finished at 12:30 pm then the Chair will decide when to take a 30 minute lunch break)
- main business (continued)
- appeals and other reports.

Main business of the meeting

- The Chair will introduce each report and the planning officer will present the report if it is considered necessary. Most reports will be on planning applications, although some may be on enforcement and planning appeals.
- For each report there is an opportunity for the public to speak at the meeting. To do this speakers need to have booked a slot in advance under the Public Participation Scheme.
- Speakers will be able to talk for a maximum of 3 minutes, possibly followed by members' questions.
- Members will then start to discuss the report and a member will propose a motion. A motion is a proposal of action and will often be the recommendation on the report, but this is not always the case.
- In order for the motion to be accepted for debate it has to be supported by another member – this will be referred to as 'seconded'.
- The debate will then progress – giving time for members to discuss the report and express their views and where needed, planning officers will give further information.
- Members will then have to make a decision on whether to vote in favour or against the motion. There are three key decisions they can make:
 - **Recommendation of approval** – a motion to approve the application. Members can also add or amend conditions to this approval.
 - **Recommendation of refusal** – a motion to refuse the application. Members can add new reasons for refusal and / or amend the reasons stated in the report.
 - **Defer making a decision** – if members need further information or need to visit the site they can agree to not make a decision, until the next committee meeting.
- Members decide by voting – for a committee decision to be agreed, the majority of members need to be in agreement. Votes are cast by a show of hands. If members are divided, then the Chair of the meeting has the right to use a 'second' or 'casting' vote to finalise the decision.
- If a motion is not agreed further motions can then be proposed and discussed until a clear decision is reached.

How members reach a decision

The officer's recommendation in the report is based on national and local government planning policies as well as their own professional judgement.

The members' role is to consider all the planning issues and merits of each application put forward in the report and then make a decision.

The members cannot consider any other issues other than planning issues.

Other important points

- **Exceptions to agreed policies**

Occasionally, members may propose that an application be approved that would conflict with the policies or plans of the Authority, or statutory approved plans. When this happens, the Planning Committee can only make a recommendation of approval to a meeting of the National Park Authority. This meeting will look at the policy issues raised and then make the final decision on the application.

- **Members' personal interest**

If a member has a personal interest in any planning application then they must declare their interest at the meeting. If they feel that the interest would affect their judgement then they must leave the meeting until the item has been dealt with. This is called a prejudicial interest. Members declaring a personal interest can continue to participate in the meeting. All members operate within the statutory Members Code of Conduct. The code can be found on the Standards Board for England website www.standardsboard.co.uk. Copies are also available from us.

Our service to you

If you require further information about our committee procedures please speak to the Democratic Services Officer who will be present at the meeting. Or you can contact:

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Peak District National Park Authority
Aldern House
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We are happy to provide this information in alternative formats on request where reasonable, so please contact us.

Working together for the Peak District National Park:

- a special environment
- a welcoming place at the heart of the nation
- vibrant communities and a thriving economy