

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY MEETING – 26 JUNE 2008**

**PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

**Report by:** Kevin Gardner, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

**Summary:**

At its meeting on 22 May 2008 the Authority considered a report on, and subsequently adopted, a revised version of the Authority's Standing Orders. During the consideration of the report members discussed the speaking procedures currently in place for meetings of the Planning Development Control Committee. As a result they agreed in principle to implement a trial during which public speakers in support of and those against a particular planning application would be given a one minute right of reply. The Authority agreed that at the end of the trial period, which it was suggested should run for at least six meetings, the Authority would assess the practicality and appropriateness of adopting this practice on a permanent basis. **Annex 1** to this report sets out a written procedure for public speaking during the trial period.

**Recommendation:**

**Subject to any amendments agreed at the meeting, to approve the proposed speaking procedure at Annex 1 for use during a trial period of at least six meetings of the Planning Development Control Committee.**

**Paper:**

**NFNPA: 258/08:** Cover paper  
**NFNPA: 258/08 Annex 1:** Revised speaking Procedures for Planning Development Control Committee meetings

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**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 22 May 2008, during the consideration of a report on a revised version of the Authority's Standing Orders, Authority members learnt that a few applicants who had spoken at meetings of the Planning Development Control Committee had indicated that they believed it would have been helpful to the Committee if they were given a right of reply after objectors had spoken, to enable them to respond to new issues raised or to correct errors of fact.
- 1.2 Members discussed the existing speaking procedure for the Planning Development Control Committee and it was agreed that a trial should be conducted during which public speakers in support of and those against a particular planning application would be given a one minute right of reply. The Authority agreed that at the conclusion of the trial period, which it was suggested should run for at least six meetings, the Authority would assess the practicality and appropriateness of adopting this practice on a permanent basis.
- 1.3 A proposed written procedure for public speaking at Planning Development Control Committee meetings during the trial period is attached as **Annex 1** for members' consideration and approval. The draft procedure has been compiled in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Development Control Committee.

**2 Right of reply**

- 2.1 During the Authority meeting, members suggested that the new procedure be similar to that adopted by New Forest District Council Planning Development Control Committee during a recent trial. The trial was successful and the new procedures are awaiting formal approval. Some members were concerned however that the introduction of such a procedure would lengthen meetings making their management more difficult.
- 2.2 The format trialled by New Forest District Council allowed all groups of speakers a right of reply, including Parish/Town Councils. However, as Town and Parish Councils already have an unlimited speaking slot at the Authority's Planning Development Control Committee meetings

it was suggested that the Authority's trial should not follow the Council's in this regard.

- 2.3 Furthermore, in the procedure used by the Council the right of reply by public speakers is permitted after members have debated the application and a motion has been put. It is proposed that, in respect of the Authority's trial procedure, the right of reply for applicants/supporters and objectors should occur immediately after the initial speaking slots (before debate commences) as the Committee can only fully debate an application if they are aware of all the facts. If new information were brought to light at the end of debate this could in effect re-open the debate, which could considerably lengthen the time taken to consider each application.
- 2.4 In line with New Forest District Council's procedure, it is proposed that the right of reply be limited to one minute for applicants/supporters and one minute for objectors.
- 2.5 Speakers will not be allowed to raise new issues during the right of reply. They will only be permitted to re-emphasise key points, respond to issues raised by the other speakers or to correct any factual errors which they believe have been made.

**Recommendation:**

**Subject to any amendments agreed at the meeting, to approve the proposed speaking procedure at Annex 1 for use during a trial period of at least six meetings of the Planning Development Control Committee.**