

Note Concerning the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Management Plan

Several of the consultation responses suggested that we might need to make some amendments to the draft Management Plan as a result of the Government's proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly with regards to housing need and renewable energy. However, it is important to note that the proposed changes to the NPPF are, at present, only at a consultation stage, with the consultation having run from 30 July 2024 to 24 September 2024. In previous NPPF consultations, the resulting iteration of the NPPF has differed considerably from what was proposed in the consultation. As such, it is by no means certain that the currently proposed changes will be followed through into the next iteration of the NPPF. On this basis, we do not consider that it would be appropriate to make changes to the Management Plan, at this point in time, based on the what has been proposed in the consultation draft of the NPPF.

If the proposed changes are followed through into the next iteration of the NPPF then it may be necessary to make some changes to some of the Management Plan policies and supporting text once the NPPF has been published. However, we consider that any potential changes, in this regard, are not likely to be significant. A date hasn't been set for when a new NPPF will be published, although it is anticipated that this will be in early 2025. This may well coincide with the proposed adoption of the Management Plan, by the Board, in February 2025. The Board will be updated, nearer the time, on how this issue will be addressed. It is not anticipated, at this time, that the adoption of the Management Plan will need to be delayed.

Regardless of the proposed changes to the NPPF, relevant authorities (including local planning authorities) must still fulfil the statutory duty (i.e. legal requirement) to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL. It is also important to note that the NPPF policies relating to national landscapes have not been weakened in the NPPF consultation. So, even if the proposed changes are implemented:

- (i) great weight should still be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the CNL (and the CNL would still have the highest status of protection in this regard);
- (ii) the scale and extent of development in the CNL should still be limited;
- (iii) permission should still be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

Some of the proposed changes to the NPPF relate to the Government's standard method for calculating housing need. For example, the Government has proposed removing the reference to the standard method being an advisory starting point for establishing a housing requirement for a local authority area. This is to make it clearer that local planning authorities will be expected to make all efforts to allocate land in line with the standard method housing need figure. However, the consultation document itself states that 'authorities would be able to justify a lower housing requirement than

the figure the method sets on the basis of local constraints on land and delivery, such as existing National Park, protected habitats or flood risk areas. As such, even if the proposed change to the NPPF is implemented, it would still be appropriate for the Management Plan to highlight that there may be circumstances where a lower housing requirement figure may be justified. The Government has also proposed removing the option of using alternatives to the standard method for calculating housing need. If this proposed change is implemented, it would be straight forward to remove any reference, in the Management Plan, to using alternative approaches.

With regards to renewable energy, the Government has already removed the NPPF footnotes that applied a more restrictive approach to wind energy. This has put wind energy on more of a level footing with other forms of renewable and low carbon energy. This does not affect the policies or supporting text in the Management Plan. One of the proposed changes to the NPPF is to add a new sentence to paragraph 164 of the NPPF, stating 'local planning authorities should support planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon development'. However, even if this sentence is included in the next iteration of the NPPF, the CNL considerations outlined above will still need to be factored in. The proposed changes give less weight to community-led renewable energy schemes than the current NPPF. However, we consider that, even if this change is implemented, it would still be appropriate for the Management Plan to view community-led schemes more favourably than equivalent schemes that are not community-led.