



Northumberland National Park Authority

Local Enforcement Plan for Northumberland National Park Authority

Reviewed and updated March 2017

This plan sets out the approach which Northumberland National Park Authority will take to planning enforcement, monitoring and compliance within Northumberland National Park.

1.0 Legislative context

1.1 The Monitoring and Enforcement of Planning Control is governed by the following legislation:

- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (and secondary legislation including the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Orders, Use Classes Order and Advertisement Regulations);
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010;
- Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) 2011
- Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2015;
- Localism Act 2011
- Planning and Compensation Act 1991;
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2001;
- Police and Criminal Record Act 1984;
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

1.2 Best practice guidance is set out in:

- National Planning Policy Framework;
- Planning Practice Guidance
- DOE Circular 10/97: Enforcing Planning Control;

1.3 Legislation and guidance relating to planning is available to the public via the Planning Portal: www.planningportal.gov.uk and links contained therein.

2.0 Process and Rationale

2.1 The planning system is a democratic and transparent process. The monitoring and enforcement of planning control is necessary in order to engender confidence and trust in the system by the public and by developers. The importance of this public confidence is outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This policy sets out the process and rationale for prioritising planning enforcement and monitoring work in Northumberland National Park. The NPPF states that local planning authorities should consider publishing a local enforcement plan to manage enforcement proactively, in a way that is appropriate to their area. This should set out how they will monitor the implementation of planning permissions, investigate alleged cases of unauthorised development and take action where it is appropriate to do so.

2.2 In monitoring and enforcing planning control it must be acknowledged that a breach of control is rarely a criminal offence; however a failure to resolve a breach once a formal notice has been served is likely to constitute an offence. Breaches of control such as works to listed buildings may automatically constitute an offence. The



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National Park Authority has discretion to take action in the public interest, but must also recognise that proper planning is not served by the pursuit of unimportant breaches. However, a failure to act when it is necessary to do so in the public interest may be maladministration. Where Northumberland National Park Authority identifies a breach or offence that has evidence of causing serious and irreversible harm it will usually be necessary to take formal enforcement action and/or prosecution action.

3.0 What is a breach of Planning Control?

3.1 Examples of planning breaches include:

- Building work, engineering operations or changes in the use of land or buildings that are carried out without the necessary planning permission. Not all development requires planning permission. The definition of development is set out in the Town and Country Planning Act. Some minor or temporary developments constitute permitted development, which does not require planning permission from the local planning authority. In some situations certain conditions need to be met for a development to constitute permitted development. These conditions are set out in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order.
- Where planning permission has been granted but there has been a material alteration to approved plans or conditions attached to the permission. In some instances, very minor changes can be non-material amendments that do not require planning permission. Applications for an amendment to the permission may be sought.
- Failure to comply with conditions attached to a planning permission;
- Unauthorised alterations to a listed building;
- Removing or lopping trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order or in a Conservation area;
- Display of an advertisement without the benefit of advertisement consent;
- Failure to comply with a S106 legal agreement.

3.2 A breach of planning control is immune from enforcement action if no formal action has been taken within the time limits set out in the legislation. These are:

- Four years for the substantial completion of building or other operational development (including operational development in breach of a planning condition) and for the material change of use of any building to a dwelling house.
- Ten years for all other breaches, including changes of use of land or buildings and breaches of planning conditions not consisting of operational development)

3.3 If a breach has become immune from action the landowner or developer may apply for a Lawful Development Certificate for an existing use or operation or activity including those in breach of a planning condition. If granted, this establishes the lawfulness of the existing situation, and avoids the possibility of further investigation provided no subsequent significant changes are made.

3.4 Where a complaint is not a planning matter and relates to other legislation, for example, poorly maintained septic tanks, boundary disputes, obstruction of rights of way or noisy activities, it will be passed on to the relevant authority where possible and the complainant informed.



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4.0 Receipt of planning enforcement enquiries

- 4.1 Complaints may be received from the general public, National Park staff or partner organisations. Complaints should be directed in the first instance to the Development Management team. It is preferable for a complaint to be made in writing, either by letter, e-mail or submitted electronically via the website. Complaints received by telephone call will also be logged. Northumberland National Park Authority will record all alleged breaches of planning control that are reported.
- 4.2 Information will be sought regarding the nature of the complaint, including:
- An accurate description of the breach of planning control
 - Times and dates of the commencement and continuation of the breach
 - The exact location of the breach and the persons responsible if known
 - The harm perceived to be caused by the breach of planning control
- 4.3 A complainant's contact details (including a full name, contact number/email and address) will also be requested in order for a complaint to be pursued, which will always be kept confidential. The complainant's details will be recorded electronically if they are willing to provide them. Complainants' details will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act and will be regarded as confidential to the Authority. Other staff within the Authority or staff in other relevant authorities (e.g. Environmental Health services) may need to know complainants' details where liaison is required between organisations in addressing the situation. Details will only be passed on with the consent of the complainant and will be kept confidential in all other cases. The Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) also apply to enforcement records; however, where complainants' details are concerned, the exempt information provisions of this act will be considered before such information is divulged to a third party.
- 4.4 Complainants will be updated by officers of the local planning authority if a decision is made to take formal enforcement action, or at such point as when no further action on the case will be pursued. Officers may be contacted by complainants for updates to enforcement cases and wherever possible will provide an update on progress where requested. It may also be necessary for officers to contact complainants directly for further information when investigating cases.
- 4.5 Anonymous complaints are often the result of private grievance or are competitor based and in many instances there is no basis in planning terms in the enquiry. There may be occasions, however, when, due to fear of reprisals, that a genuine enquirer will not divulge their identity. Anonymous complaints and those based solely on business competition will not normally be investigated. It will be at the discretion of Northumberland National Park Authority's planning service whether to investigate anonymous complaints, on a case by case basis on the merits of that particular case. Private disputes between neighbours, boundary disputes, etc, where there has been no breach of planning control will not be pursued.
- 4.6 It is important that enquirers do provide contact details, as this will allow further information to be gathered if necessary, particularly if locating a breach is not straightforward. It is also important to maintain communication, to allow officers to offer feedback and to ensure that important and genuine breaches of planning control are being investigated, maximising the benefit of available officer resource and also helping to ensure officer safety. If a case is to be pursued to prosecution it may be



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helpful to the Authority if the complainant provides evidence, in which case their identity would be disclosed, although there would be no obligation for the complainant to do this. This may be necessary to demonstrate the evidence of an offence and the harm caused by it. Their prior agreement and co-operation would be sought in such cases. Any harassment or aggressive behaviour connected to a reported breach of planning control should be reported to the police.

- 4.7 Once the initial facts of a report have been established, planning and/ or enforcement officers that are authorised to enter land will check the relevant site history and planning constraints and then make a site visit as soon as is practically possible, taking into account the rest of the planning workload and the priority of the case, assessed upon the likely impact caused and immediacy required in investigation. The Prioritisation of Alleged and Confirmed Non-compliance with Planning Control section of this document sets out this approach. Should access not be possible at the initial visit, access to a site shall be obtained through an initial letter advising of the allegation received and requesting a visit to inspect. No reference to enforcement procedures should be made at this initial stage. If no response is received to the initial letter, a more formal letter will be sent. On occasions where safe access to a site to assess a development cannot be gained, further information may be sought, or it may be necessary for the authority to apply for a warrant to enter land.

5.0 Assessment and Determination of Planning Enforcement Cases

- 5.1 Enforcement action is taken at the discretion of the local planning authority. Before doing so, the LPA must be satisfied that:

- There is clear evidence of a breach of planning control; and
- The breach would unacceptably affect public amenity, the National Park's special qualities, or the existing use of land or buildings meriting protection in the public interest.

- 5.2 The planning authority aims to determine planning enforcement cases as quickly as is possible with the resources available. A complaint will first be assessed by a Planning Officer to ascertain whether there is a breach of planning control, as not all development requires planning permission. The Authority has a duty to investigate alleged breaches of planning control; however the power to take enforcement action is discretionary. This means that the Authority does not have to take action in response to a breach of planning control. Where a breach has occurred, the Authority must consider whether it is expedient to take action in the public interest. A judgement is necessary to assess the degree to which the breach unacceptably affects the special qualities of the National Park, public amenity or safety. Minor breaches that do not have a significant impact on the special qualities will not be a priority for action. In addition, the Authority cannot take into consideration private interests, for example, loss of value of property, loss of an individual's view, development affecting someone's private rights, or competition with another business. These issues may be addressed through civil action but this is a matter for the individual to pursue and not an area where the Authority can become involved.

- 5.3 Investigations into breaches of planning control can be very time consuming. Site visits or regular monitoring of premises or business activities may be necessary. A Planning Contravention Notice or other formal request for information may be served on a landowner, occupier or any other person with an interest in the land or development in question. This Notice may require those persons to provide information about the activities taking place, land ownership details or any other information relating to the breach, within a prescribed timescale.



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- 5.4 In considering whether to take enforcement action the local planning authority will have regard to:
- The facts of the case and the degree of harm resulting from the breach
 - The development plan (including the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy and Development Policies document, and adopted Supplementary Planning Documents)
 - Any other material considerations, including the consideration of Human Rights issues and impacts of the Habitats Regulations.
- 5.5 After investigation the local planning authority may decide that there has not been a breach of planning control, in which case, the case will be closed at that point. A development may have already been granted permission, or it may not require express planning permission from the local planning authority. Some changes of land use and building works are either not classed as development or are permitted by the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, or the Use Classes Order. Advertisements can benefit from deemed consent under the Town & Country Planning Advert Regulations 2007. Therefore, they do not require planning consent or advertisement consent and they are beyond the legal control of the planning service. A planning enforcement case may also be closed if:
- The breach of planning control stops or is removed.
 - A retrospective planning application is submitted and approved (retrospective applications must be assessed in the same way as any other planning application). If the application is approved, then there will no longer be a breach of planning control.
 - There is a planning breach, but it is not expedient, proportionate, or in the public interest to take enforcement action. This occurs in cases where development does not have a materially harmful impact upon existing land uses and other material planning considerations, or if it does, the impact is minimal.
 - A formal legal notice is served which leads to the breach being remedied. What formal action is taken (if any) will depend on the circumstances of each case. In the case of a formal notice being served, the matter will ordinarily be pursued until the breach of planning control is resolved, unless there are exceptional reasons not to do so.
 - Legal action is taken which leads to the breach being remedied - the most appropriate form of legal action will be considered in cases where legal action is necessary, depending on the circumstances of each case, to ensure that the action taken is proportionate to the offence. The authority has the power to offer a caution or to prosecute offenders in the Courts. Should a person fail to comply with the requirements of a Notice served on them they will be open to prosecution.
- 5.6 A closed case will not be re-opened unless there is a significant new piece of information or change on site. The LPA may also conclude that although there has been a breach, it is not causing enough harm to justify taking further action in the public interest. The National Planning Policy Framework states that enforcement action is discretionary, and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control. Enforcement action should



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always be proportionate to the breach of planning control to which it relates (for example, it will usually be inappropriate to take formal enforcement action against a trivial breach of control which causes no harm to local amenity, heritage assets, biodiversity or the special qualities of the National Park).

5.7 Planning and enforcement officers must use their professional judgement, based on experience, case law and the likelihood of enforcement action being successful and standing up robustly to appeals or legal challenges in considering an appropriate course of action. If it is not considered that material harm is caused, it is unlikely that further enforcement action will be taken. Where there is a harmful breach of planning control that needs pursuing further, NNPA will in the first instance seek to establish the persons responsible and to resolve the situation amicably where possible. This may be through:

- Ask for things to be put back the way they were; or
- Without prejudice, invite an application for the unauthorised development if it is considered possible that planning permission could potentially be granted (asking for clarification in respect of intentions within a defined short time period); or
- Try to resolve the situation through negotiation without allowing the matter to become protracted. This may mean agreeing a compromise or partial change that removes the most harmful aspects of the unauthorised development.

5.8 Where a retrospective planning application has been asked for, the LPA will normally wait a reasonable period for it to be submitted (subject to the owner or occupier confirming their intentions within the period given) and for its determination, before commencing further enforcement action. The Authority must deal with a retrospective application, even where the prospects of permission being granted seem remote. This may delay the taking of formal enforcement action. However, where it appears that the progress of submitting an application is being deliberately held up by the applicant or there is no prospect of planning permission being granted, enforcement action may be initiated without delay. Where an application has been submitted, this should be determined prior to an Enforcement Notice being served.

5.9 If a breach of planning control is not resolved through negotiation, is refused permission, or the invitation to submit an application is declined, the Authority's steps will be:

- To consider the expediency of taking further enforcement action (this may involve seeking the views of other organisations (such as the highway authority, Historic England or the Environment Agency) to see if they have any concerns about the development; Sometimes it may be decided at this point not to try to remove or change everything about an unauthorised development. This is known as 'under enforcement' and may be necessary where certain elements of an unauthorised development are acceptable, but others are harmful and require enforcement action to be taken. Taking enforcement action against matters that are not harmful can leave the authority open to losing appeals and legal challenges, with the potential for cost awards due to unreasonable behaviour arising from this. Therefore this approach may need to be taken where necessary.
- If further enforcement action is necessary planning and/ or enforcement officers will draft legal instructions and/or legal notices and serve a notice following legal advice if required, providing that this advice confirms that this will be an



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acceptable course of action. Once it has been decided that formal action is necessary, this will be commenced as soon as is practically possible.

- The recipient of an Enforcement Notice has the right to lodge an appeal within 28 days following receipt of the notice. Any(?) appeal forthcoming would be heard by an independent Planning Inspector and will usually take several months to be resolved. An enforcement notice would not take effect until the decision date of an appeal, if the appeal is dismissed. Therefore, if an appeal has been submitted, no further action can be taken until the outcome is decided. It is necessary for the LPA to work to the various procedures and timescales that are set out in the Town and Country Planning Act, including compliance periods for legal notices and appeal timescales.
- A Planning Inspector may amend an enforcement notice on appeal, leaving it in force. An Inspector may also uphold an appeal and quash the enforcement notice, in which case it would cease to take effect. The Inspector may also use powers to grant planning permission for the unauthorised development on appeal.
- If no appeal is lodged, the Notice takes effect after a period, specified within the Notice, of no less than 28 days following its date of issue.

5.10 An Enforcement Notice includes requirements for remedying the breach of planning control and a period for compliance. Failure to comply with the requirements of an Enforcement Notice within the specified compliance period is a criminal offence, liable to prosecution in the Magistrates or Crown Court (subject to a maximum fine of £20,000). Further information on this and other means of formal enforcement action and legal action are set out in Annex A of this document.

6.0 Decision making authority

6.1 The Authority's Scheme of Delegation to Committees, Groups and Officers (June 2016) authorises the Head of Development Management or the Chief Executive to exercise delegated authority to determine any matter arising under:

- a. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990;
- b. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; and
- c. Any Statutory Instrument or Regulation made there under.

6.2 In relation to compliance, monitoring and enforcement work this includes the issue, service or withdrawal of:

- a) a Planning Contravention Notice
- b) a Section 330 Notice
- c) a Breach of Condition Notice, or
- d) a Temporary Stop Notice

6.3 Any other enforcement actions required will be undertaken in accordance with the scheme of delegation and are likely to require a decision to be taken by the Development Management Committee.



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7.0 Prioritisation of Alleged and Confirmed Non-compliance with Planning Control

7.1 Breaches of planning control will be prioritised according to their impact on the special qualities of the National Park, and the immediacy with which a response is required.

7.2 Impact

HIGH: Those breaches that would have a permanent and substantial adverse impact upon the special qualities of Northumberland National Park (see Annex B). This would include:

- Unauthorised developments that have a significant adverse effect on protected species and/or habitats.
- Unauthorised developments that have a significant adverse impact upon particularly sensitive landscapes and views.
- Unauthorised developments within a Conservation Area that have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Unauthorised alterations to or demolition of a Listed Building, unauthorised lopping, chopping or felling of trees covered by a Tree Protection Order, or trees within a Conservation Area .
- Developments having a significant adverse impact upon tranquillity, or upon local residents' amenity.
- Any other developments that significantly conflict with adopted planning policy, particularly NNPA Core Strategy and NPPF policies

MEDIUM: Unauthorised development that would have a moderate adverse impact on the special qualities of the Park, on residential amenity, highway safety, or any other significant planning policy implications, where it is deemed to be in the public interest to pursue the matter. This would also include breaches which are significant in planning terms, but where no harm will be caused by a delay in investigating.

LOW: Lower priority planning breaches include those that have little or no adverse impact upon the special qualities of the National Park. Low priority breaches are often development that is technically unauthorised, but is often compliant with the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. Such cases may often be remedied through the submission of a retrospective planning application, or may be easily reversible without resulting in harm. In the majority of cases it is not in the public interest to pursue formal enforcement action. This may include a range of minor developments in less sensitive areas of the National Park. Development that is likely to constitute permitted development, i.e. granted deemed planning consent by the Secretary of State through secondary legislation would also be low priority.

Low priority cases also include those breaches that may be tackled by other more appropriate legislation. For example, this would include unauthorised signs within the highway, which can be more quickly and effectively resolved by the highway authority under the legislative provisions of the Highways Act, rather than through Town and Country Planning Advertisement Regulations.

In certain cases, alleged planning breaches may be regarded as de minimis, meaning that planning permission is not required at all, due to the minor and trivial nature of works meaning that they do not constitute development.

7.3 Immediacy



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HIGH: Breaches which are likely to cause irreversible and long term harm the special qualities of the National Park, particularly where the impact on the special qualities would be compounded by an ongoing breach. Immediate safety issues, such as significant highway safety implications or significant harm to the amenity of those living within the National Park may also necessitate quick action. Enforcement cases may also have increased immediacy where there are specific time considerations such as a potential for a harmful established lawful use to occur.

MEDIUM: Breaches that have occurred some time ago and which are of a fixed nature, where neither the nature of the breach or its impact on the special qualities are likely to change in the short or medium term.

LOW: Breaches that are short lived, temporary and which will not result in long term harm to the special interests of the National Park, unauthorised development that has happened a considerable time ago and against which no or minimal complaints have been made; breaches where there are no significant planning policy implications.

7.4 Depending on the complexity and nature of the issues, investigations and legal considerations, planning enforcement cases can take a considerable time to resolve. Northumberland National Park Authority will notify complainants of the outcome of an investigation if contact details are provided.

8.0 Enforcement Register

8.1 The Authority is required to keep a register that is available for public inspection and which contains details of the following types of notices served:

- Enforcement Notices
- Listed Building Enforcement Notices
- Breach of Condition Notices
- Temporary Stop Notices
- Stop Notices

8.2 Northumberland National Park Authority will maintain an electronic version of this register on the planning part of its website, and a register will be kept on request at the Northumberland National Park Authority headquarters at Eastburn, Hexham.

9.0 Monitoring

9.1 A risk based approach will be undertaken to prioritise the monitoring of developments for which planning permission has been granted. This will be based on the impact and immediacy approach set out above. It will not be practically possible for the local planning authority to proactively monitor every single development that has been granted planning permission, or even a sizeable proportion of them, given the numbers of historical consents that exist and the number of approvals that are granted each year. If there are specific cases where proactive monitoring is required, then these would need to be identified on a case by case basis, having regard to the potential impact of the development and the immediacy of this impact.

10. Minerals

10.1 There are separate legislative provisions relating to monitoring of minerals and waste. This strategy does not cover this service area.



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Enforcement Plan Annex A: Legal Provisions for Planning Enforcement Action

Breach of Condition Notice (BCN)

This type of notice can only be used where planning permission has been granted subject to conditions and one or more of the conditions has been breached. The Authority can issue a BCN to ensure full or part compliance with the planning conditions. A BCN would state the breach and the steps required to remedy the breach. The Notice must allow a minimum of 28 days in which to comply with the requirements. There are no rights of appeal against a BCN. If any person is found to be in breach of a BCN he or she shall be guilty of an offence with a maximum fine currently not exceeding £1000 on conviction.

Enforcement Notice

This is the most common form of notice used to deal with unauthorised development, operations and/or uses. Listed Building Enforcement Notices are issued when works are carried out to Listed Buildings. An enforcement notice will specify what the alleged breach is, the steps that must be taken to remedy it, and a time period in which to carry out those steps. An enforcement notice cannot come into effect until at least 28 days after it is served. Within that period the recipient of the notice has a right of appeal. If an appeal is made, the requirements of the notice are suspended until the appeal has been determined (or withdrawn) so this does delay the process. If any person is later found to be in breach of an enforcement notice that has come into effect, the Authority will consider whether to prosecute, since failure to comply with an enforcement notice is an offence. If found guilty, that person would be liable on conviction in the Magistrates Courts to a maximum fine of £20,000. More serious cases may be heard in the Crown Court where the level of fine is unlimited.

Stop Notice

The Authority can, when expedient to do so, serve a stop notice requiring activities to cease immediately. Such a notice is generally served at the same time as, or after, the service of an enforcement notice. It is most commonly used to deal with breaches of planning control that are seriously affecting the amenity of nearby residents or to prevent serious or irreversible harm to the environment. There are limitations on the service of this notice and additionally compensation may be payable by the Authority in some circumstances if the recipient makes a successful challenge. It is used very selectively and is not necessarily an instant solution.

Section 215 Notice

Where the condition of buildings or land causes serious harm to the visual amenity of an area, the Authority, if it considers it appropriate and reasonable to do so, may serve on the owner and occupier a Notice under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Such a notice would require steps for remedying the condition of the land or buildings and specify a period of time for doing so. This period cannot be less than 28 days. The notice can be appealed against at a magistrates hearing. Failure to comply with the requirements of a Section 215 Notice is an offence subject to a maximum fine of £1000 on conviction.



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Prosecution

The authority can pursue prosecution proceedings against any person who carries out unauthorised works to trees that are either protected by a Tree Preservation Order or are within a Conservation Area, unauthorised works to listed buildings and certain unauthorised works of demolition within Conservation Areas. The Authority can also prosecute individuals for non compliance with an Enforcement Notice.

Direct Action

Failure to comply with the requirements of a notice may result in the Authority using powers available to it to enter land and carry out works that are required by an Enforcement Notice, particularly where prosecution for non-compliance with an Enforcement Notice has not resulted in a breach of planning control being resolved. Any costs incurred in carrying out such works can be recovered from the landowner. Where costs are not recovered they can be registered as a charge on the land.

Injunction

Although they are rarely used, other than in exceptional circumstances, legal powers are available for the Authority to apply to the Courts for an Injunction to stop an actual or alleged breach of planning control. Injunctions can be used to require someone to stop doing something or to require them to carry out something. They can be used in cases of urgency or can be granted by the Court following a prosecution. Failure to comply with an injunction can lead to an unlimited fine and/or imprisonment.

Advertisements

The legislation, under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007, is concerned with advertisements and is separate from that dealing with general planning matters. The display of an advertisement without formal consent is an offence and the Authority has the power to prosecute the person displaying it, if it is considered that it harms the amenity of the area or public safety. There is no need for an enforcement notice, or other similar notice, to be served. If a person is found guilty of an offence under the advertisement regulations, he or she could be liable to a fine up to a maximum of £1000. The Authority would have the option to serve an Advert Removal Notice, or Discontinuance Notice, in certain circumstances, to require the removal of advertisements that are considered to be harmful.



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Enforcement Plan Annex B: Special Qualities of Northumberland National Park

National Park Authorities are required to identify the nature of the special qualities of their National Park. Northumberland National Park's special qualities are:

Distinctive Landscape Character

The interaction of people with nature in Northumberland National Park has produced a landscape of remarkable beauty and distinctive character that is enjoyed by the nation. Millions of people visit the National Park¹. The majority of the land in the National Park is in private ownership, with a proportion owned and managed by public bodies or charities. Northumberland National Park's distinctive landscape character has been created by its topography, geology and the complex interaction of many different factors. Managed landscapes, widely dispersed settlements and farmsteads, dry-stone walls, stunning scenery, mountain landscapes, rich cultural heritage-all combine to make Northumberland National Park the special place it is.

A Landscape Rich in Biodiversity and Geology

The underlying geology of Northumberland National Park, natural processes and human activity have combined to create a hugely varied landscape. These processes have created the unique conditions for a rich and diverse ecology to thrive; many nationally and internationally important habitats and species flourish within Northumberland National Park. 31% of the National Park comprises priority habitats and about a third of these are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

A Rich Cultural Heritage

From Yeavinger Bell in the Cheviots to the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and the Roman fortifications in the South, an exceptional range of archaeology provides the evidence of human activity in Northumberland National Park for several millennia. Local history, social activities and cultural traditions have left us a rich legacy. This cultural legacy has created a community spirit that is instilled with self-sufficiency, self-belief and determination. A strong tradition of livestock farming and upland rearing is deeply interwoven into local life and livestock sales and agricultural shows continue to play an important part in the lives of local people.

True Sense of Tranquillity

Tranquillity is a key component of experiencing Northumberland National Park. It is an emotional, spiritual quality, difficult to define by standard methods; nevertheless it is, overwhelmingly, what people have said they value. The 2011 Resident Survey revealed that 83% of residents think that 'peace and tranquillity' make the National Park a special place. Northumberland National Park is the most tranquil place in England³ and we regard tranquillity as one of its most special qualities. The dark skies over the National Park contribute greatly to this sense of peace, and have themselves been protected since the designation of the International Dark Sky Park (Gold Tier) in 2013.

These special qualities are as defined in the Northumberland National Park Management Plan 2016 - 2021. They are described in spatial terms in the Core Strategy and Development Policies Document (March 2009).