

National Parks - Planning, Farming and Land Management

Concerns have been raised that National Park will create more red tape and bureaucracy for farmers and land managers – but what is the truth behind this?

Development Management: When a National Park is created there is a small change to the rules relating to planning consents for the construction of large buildings mirroring the rules that apply already in the 3 National Scenic Areas (NSAs).

Generally, both farming and forestry are exempt (with a small number of exceptions) from planning control and have been since 1948 when the first Planning Act came into being in the UK. Over time concerns were raised at large buildings (particularly those for animal housing) being built close to homes.

Rather than require farmers to apply for planning consent the Government introduced a mechanism for anyone seeking to build a large building on a farm to notify the Planning Authority of their intentions. The Planning Authority has 28 days to either require that a planning application is made or allow it to be built. A failure to respond within this period allows the farmer to simply proceed.

This system contrasts with the planning process all other businesses must follow in that if a decision on the application is not reached within the time limits (normally 8 weeks) all they can do is to lodge an appeal against a non-determination – a process that will add several months before a decision is made.

A large building is normally one over 1,000sq. m (10,000sq. ft) but in a National Park (as in the NSAs) the limit is reduced to 456sq m. (5,000 sq. ft). **This is the only change to the requirements for planning permission in a National Park.**

Cases where an application is automatically required include being within 25m of a public road or 400m of a house (not part of the farm) where the building will house animals, slurry, or sewage sludge. The limits also apply to extensions of existing buildings that will then exceed 456sq m and a limit on the number of times a building can be extended. If the Planning Authority requires an application to be made for a farm building it can **only** consider

matters of siting and design to ensure that it fits into the wider landscape. Many Planning Authorities produce design guidance to help to avoid the need for an application.

Concern has been raised that once the Park is created the Planning Authority will expect higher design standards significantly increasing costs with some people referring to the possibility of the Park insisting on the use of traditional materials e.g., stone walls and slate roofs.

In the case of Galloway, the landscape has a remarkable ability to absorb large buildings if they are sited carefully. Because of the scale of many large new farm buildings the use of steel and colour coated sheet materials is the only practical solution and is now well established. The Planning Authority in **this Park** could not seek to impose a building form or materials that are clearly not traditional. All planning policies must be set out in the Development Plan which is subject to significant public consultation before it is approved.

In 2020 farmers were given freedom to change the use of a farm building to a house or a wide range of commercial uses. These rights are accompanied by the same notification process as large buildings and are unaffected by the designation of a National Park

Access: A National Park is the access authority, responsible for the Core Path network and for encouraging reasonable access to the countryside. They can either directly employ, or provide funding to others, to employ Rangers to create, promote, and manage, public access and deal with any issues or conflicts that may arise. The Park also has powers to provide grants to improve or create paths and provide information/interpretation.

Land Use and Land Management: The Park has powers to enter into Management Agreements with landowners, but these are voluntary as it has **no powers** to require any specific actions to be taken or stopped.

Biodiversity: The Park will look to work with Land Managers **at their request** to help them to mitigate climate change and improve biodiversity and it can provide financial assistance to help with this work.