

<b>BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
<b>Report to</b>	<b>The Chair and Members of Planning Committee</b>
<b>Report Subject</b>	<b>Developments of National Significance (DNS)</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Service Manager Development &amp; Estates</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> October 2023</b>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To report an email response from the Chief Planning Inspector for Wales replying to BGCBC correspondence sent 22 <sup>nd</sup> August raising concern about the process and timescales for DNS applications.
2.2	This was reported to the September cycle of Planning Committee.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Present Position</b>
2.1	The response from the Chief Planning Inspector appears below.
2.2	Despite a chase up, I have yet to receive a response from Welsh Government Planning Division.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Recommendation/s for Consideration</b>
3.1	That the correspondence is noted.

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 25 August 2023 15:19  
To: Smith, Steve <steve.smith@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk>  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Subject: RE: DNS Applications

Dear Steve,

Thank you for your email. I do understand and sympathise with your position regarding resources to support DNS work. The timetable and processes we are obliged to follow are set out in the regulations and therefore we are not at liberty to allow flexibility on the timetable for submissions, despite the concerns you have raised. I am sorry for the difficulties this can cause during periods of high staff absence and the effect it is having on the wellbeing of your team. I will leave it to [REDACTED] to reply on the consenting regime more generally in light of your comments and plans for the future.

You will be aware that LPAs receive an indication of a likely DNS submission at the Notification stage at the same time as PEDW, albeit I understand (like PEDW) it is difficult to plan for an unknown submission date during a potential 12 month window. LPAs also get sent a copy of the DNS application at the same time as PEDW, which gives some time to informally start reviewing whilst PEDW undertakes Acceptance checks. For a project with an Environmental Statement, that provides an extra 6 weeks. You might want to consider whether there are any opportunities here to take a more flexible approach to resource planning at your end.

With regard to the case you mention (i.e. being notified of a window for a Hearing and but no actual date and then an inconvenient date set) I am sorry for any inconvenience caused in that case. We do try our best to liaise with applicants and LPA's over convenient dates as a matter of practice but I will also review our internal practices to see if there's anything more we can do to help you plan ahead. In particular I will instruct case officers to give all the invited participants confirmation via e-mail as soon as the Inspector has confirmed dates while the formal notice and press notice are being prepared, which should allow some advanced warning.

I cannot comment with regard to the powers of 'suspension' available to PEDW during the process but I can advise that we only use these in exceptional circumstances, where we have to, and we try our best to limit the impact of this on all parties.

I also note the points you make about our current performance on timeliness for appeals casework and this is an area we are working extremely hard to address. We have been (and continue to) recruit to ensure we have sufficient resource to cope with the high volume of casework we are experiencing and we are doing all we can to improve our efficiencies and processes to tackle the backlog of work we have. I am grateful for your continued patience in this regard.

Best regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Prif Arolygydd Cynllunio / Chief Planning Inspector  
Rhagenwau: hi - Pronouns: she/her  
Penderfyniadau Cynllunio ac Amgylchedd Cymru / Planning and Environment Decisions Wales  
Llywodraeth Cymru / Welsh Government  
Llinell Uniggyrchol | Direct Line: 03000 251 293  
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