



Planning Appeals
Commission

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Our Ref: CCG PS

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BY EMAIL

Dear Mrs Dickson

RE: REVISED LDP TIMETABLE FOR CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL, PLAN STRATEGY

I refer to your recent letter enclosing a revised timetable for the preparation and adoption of the above Local Development Plan – Plan Strategy.

The Commission greatly appreciate that the Council have engaged on this matter. As you will be aware from recent discussions, the Commission is experiencing significant resourcing pressures which has impacted on delivery across all workstreams. We are currently operating with a reduced complement. Due to retirements, we have lost a significant body of knowledge, this combined with the number of new appointees taking time to adapt to the new role has reduced our capacity to deal with caseloads. We currently have recruitment schemes planned to fill existing vacancies but this will not resolve the resourcing issue in the short to medium term due to the training requirements for new Commissioners.

Against this background, we have experienced an increase in referrals from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). Notably, a number of these are for public inquiries. One of these is a conjoined Public Inquiry which given its scale will need a significant proportion of the Commission's resources devoted to it. Consequently, all DfI referred cases received after the conjoined inquiry cases will be stayed pending availability of suitably trained Commissioner resource to take the work forward. We currently have three referred windfarm applications where DfI have asked us to conduct public inquiries. I am advised that there are also three requests for hearings in relation to major planning applications. This will obviously have knock on implications for any future referred work from DfI, which includes the possible referral of development plan documents (DPD) for Independent Examination (IE).

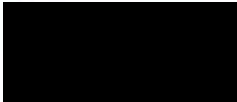
The Commission generally deal with cases in date order subject to administrative processes being complete. It is difficult to predict the level of Senior Commissioner resources that we would have available at the planned point of the referral of the Plan Strategy (PS). I understand one PS is currently with the Department pending referral for IE and that there may be four further strategies provided to DfI in the coming months. I note that your draft timetable anticipates the IE taking place in late 2027/2028. Whilst we anticipate being able to facilitate some IEs in 2027 onwards, if referrals to the

Commission are made by DfI, they will be dealt with in sequential order and subject to the resources available at that time.

The Commission is in continued discussions with our Sponsor Body (DoJ) in an attempt to address the increased pressures arising from current and anticipated future workloads. A resolution has yet to be reached. We have advised DfI regarding anticipated timescales for progressing their referred work to enable them to consider their options consistent with the legislation and paragraph 5.64 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 'Planning for Sustainable Development' (SPPS). Whilst the Commission aims to provide the highest quality service, and we will do our utmost to progress referrals at the earliest opportunity, we can only do that with the resources available. I would appreciate if you would remain in contact with our Programme Officers regarding any changes to your timetable.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely



Andrea Kells
Chief Commissioner

