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Public Bill Committee
Planning and Infrastructure Bill
House of Commons

Ref: May/22/VL

Date: 21 May 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

**RESPONSE TO PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE BILL 2024-2026 from Keswick Town Council,
within the Planning Authority of the Lake District National Park**

Having considered the proposed amendments to the bill as at 19 May 2025, we confirm our support for those which relate to the provision of affordable housing. This relates to NC 2, NC3, NC5, NC7, NC8, NC15, NC25, NC26, NC48, NC50, NC60, NC76 & NC85.

One of the aims of the Bill as stated is: "Providing councils and housing associations with the long-term rent certainty and capital investment they need to deliver the biggest boost to new social and affordable homes for a generation". To support this, we consider that Local Councils should be directed to ring fence 100% of the finance raised from the Council Tax Premium levied on second homes to be used for the provision of affordable housing.

We also strongly believe that there should be an additional planning use class for holiday lets so that the number of holiday homes can be regulated. The current wording on the Gov.uk website is "Planning permission is not required elsewhere [outside London] in England to short-term let a dwelling house, so long as there is not a material change of use of the property". We argue that when a dwelling house starts running as a business, is removed from the council tax regime and becomes subject to business rates, that is by definition a material change of use. In addition, we believe that dwellings that are not available for people to live in, should not be subject to business rate relief. While the country has a housing crisis, there should not be incentives and benefits for people to remove additional housing stock from the market, reducing the available pool, and forcing additional house building, often on greenfield sites or flood plains. Particularly in rural, tourism-heavy areas such as National Parks, there are a disproportionate number of holiday homes, a lack of available properties for Assured Shorthold Tenancies, and a shortage of workers resulting from the lack of housing. 1/3 of the houses in our town alone, over 1000 properties, are holiday homes; our housing needs could be fully met without requiring any building, and without significant impact on our tourism-based economy, if we could reduce and control the number of holiday lets.

The National Parks are not subject to the same planning targets as the rest of the country, so this Bill misses the opportunity to address planning and housing issues in our protected green spaces. We hope that secondary legislation will follow to address these issues.

We note amendment NC10 proposes all new above ground car parks must include provision of solar panels equivalent to 50% of the surface area of the car park. E.g. our council is considering additional parking as part of a redevelopment site. The location itself is heavily wooded, so solar panels would not work there, and inside the national park it would be inappropriate to position them elsewhere in the area. This amendment should be reconsidered to take into account development in protected landscapes.

Another consideration for this bill is situations where the planning authority is also the applicant. We experienced this scenario, and of course the authority granted itself permission, and did not take into account objections. In our case this meant stone was shipped in from China rather than using locally quarried. There are countless examples of where similar planning proposals have been rejected, or had conditions applied to ensure local materials were used. We propose an amendment to ensure scrutiny from a secondary planning authority to avoid allowing authorities to "mark their own homework" resulting in cut corners.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'V. Little', with a large checkmark-like flourish at the start.

Vivien Little
Town Clerk, Keswick Town Council

Cc –

The Rt Hon Angela Raynor, MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government;
Stephen Ratcliffe, Director of Sustainable Development, LDNPA;
Tiffany Hunt, Chair, LDNPA;
Gavin Capstick, Chief Executive, LDNPA;
Markus Campbell-Savours, MP, Penrith and Solway
Councillor Mark Fryer, Leader of Cumberland Council;
Councillor Sally Lansbury, Cumberland Council (Keswick);
Housing Development Team, Cumberland Council
Planning Policy, Cumberland Council