



Rt. Hon Eric Pickles MP
Secretary of State
Department for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

5 November 2014

Dear Secretary of State

Affordable Housing and Proposals to reform Section 106

As Chairs of each of England's ten National Parks we wanted to write personally to you to urge you not to introduce plans to introduce a threshold below which affordable housing could not be required in Section 106 planning agreements. Any threshold, even one lower than the 10 proposed in the CLG consultation, risks seriously threatening our ability to facilitate affordable housing in National Parks for local needs, particularly in our smallest and most remote local communities.

The need for everyone to have a roof over their head is a basic need and one that National Park Authorities embrace. We support, in particular, the Government's encouragement to increase the volume of affordable housing. In National Parks, where land and property values are high, incomes tend to be low, and available land for housing is constrained, the focus of National Park Authorities is on how to best use the available opportunities to meet local needs. In this effort we have been driven by the needs of our local communities, and have been keen to make the most of innovative policies brought in by your department over the past four years such as Neighbourhood Plans and the recent 'Right to Build' vanguard authorities.

We welcome the Government's continuing support to protect National Parks, as set out in Planning Guidance on 06 October 2014. And we are also of one mind in recognising that our beautiful countryside thrives on the basis of sustainable communities. That is why, for many years, National Park Authorities have developed innovative policies and approaches that prioritise local needs housing in perpetuity. Without such local needs housing, National Park towns and villages risk becoming commuter settlements, or groupings of second homes – not the living, working communities the Government and the National Parks seek.

The proposals for changing the rules on Section 106, if passed, will considerably reduce the ability of National Park Authorities in our efforts to respond to the high levels of local housing need in many of our communities. Indeed, removal of the ability to use s106 agreements on small scale schemes will mean that the community in at least one National Park will not be able to meet their aspiration for local needs housing set out in their adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

Permissions given in recent years demonstrate that NPAs frequently need to rely on very small quota sites, infill opportunities and conversions for new affordable housing development – the most common size being just one unit. We understand your objective of

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supporting local developers and National Park schemes are brought forward in partnership with small scale local developers with full regard for their need to ensure that their businesses are profitable and sustainable.

We are clear that only an exemption for National Parks from this particular proposal will avoid the serious unintended consequences for affordable housing. The need for new affordable housing is just too great, that *any* change that makes it harder rather than easier to deliver new affordable housing in National Parks will be felt acutely by our rural communities.

We hope that you will take into account the circumstances facing National Parks when making your final decision on this policy change. We have provided Brandon Lewis MP and officials with additional information and would welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues with you in person, or to host a visit to a National Park to see how we facilitate affordable housing on the ground.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Bailey
Chair, National Parks England
and Chair
North York Moors National Park Authority



Stephen Johnson
Deputy Chair, National Parks England
and Chair
Broads Authority

and

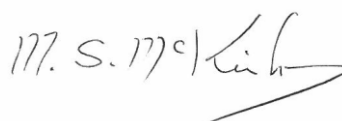
Peter Harper
Chair
Dartmoor National Park Authority



Andrea Davis
Chair
Exmoor National Park Authority



Michael McKinley
Chair
Lake District National Park Authority



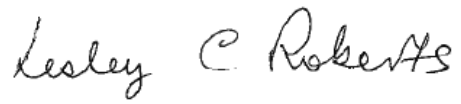
Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre
Chair
New Forest National Park Authority



John Riddle
Chair
Northumberland National Park Authority




Lesley Roberts
Chair
Peak District National Park Authority

Handwritten signature of Lesley C Roberts in black ink.

Margaret Paren
Chair
South Downs National Park Authority

Handwritten signature of Margaret Paren in black ink.

Peter Charlesworth
Chair
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

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Cc:
Brandon Lewis MP (CLG Minister of State)
Lord De Mauley (Defra Parliamentary Under Secretary of State)
Steve Quartermain (Government Chief Planner)