

NAPE Annual Report 2022

This year marks my sixth year on the Management Committee and my first and last year as the NAPE Chair and the North of England Representative. This is my last year as an elected member of NAPE's Management Committee as this is the maximum allowed under the NAPE terms of reference. I have been the Vice Chair for around four of those years, and became Chair this year. During my time with NAPE I have enjoyed being involved at the front end of Enforcement and promoting the field within planning. This has included relaunching the NAPE Enforcement Handbook and the NAPE Beginners Guide.

Over the past 12 months it has once again been a pleasure to work alongside fellow Management Committee members Olivia, Dawn, Izindi, Richard, Chris, Craig and Karen. I am sure each of the committee members will continue to promote enforcement and to do a fantastic job. I would also encourage anybody else to get involved within the Management Committee as it is a great opportunity to be able to help other enforcement officers.

I am pleased to report that 2022 has seen a further increase in the NAPE membership with numbers currently standing at 1073 members. Increasing our membership year on year is one of our key targets moving forward, as we believe this goes hand in hand with helping to build a stronger network which best represents and promotes the planning enforcement profession.

Over the past 12 months we have continued to publish our monthly newsletter which contains expert opinion on relevant enforcement court cases, links to enforcement related media reports, and links to enforcement training events among other things. We have continued to follow the format of "Ask Months" where a member of the Management Committee is available to answer questions from our members on specific enforcement matters.

One of the key events that the Management Committee get involved in is the NAPE Conference and it was great for the first time since Covid-19 that we were able to hold this event in person. The event was held in Bristol, and we had a great range of speakers, specialising in certain enforcement topics that resulted in a great day with a lot of knowledge spread round to the attendees. The feedback which we received from this was overwhelmingly positive, and the Management Committee will once again try to ensure that during future conferences are held experience and knowledge is spread across the network. It was also reassuring that the event was well attended as this was the first year that we charged for it. As being part of NAPE is free, the Management Committee will always push for a cost-effective way of delivering events such as the conference make it as inclusive for members as possible.

As the NAPE Chair I have been involved in several events. One was where RTPI President Tim Crawshaw visited my local Council, Hambleton District Council, to view a day in the life of an enforcement officer. I would like to thank Tim for his interest, support, and enthusiasm in promoting enforcement. If you would like to read Tim's blog on his experience, please find the link below:

[RTPI | Timothy David Crawshaw: Shadowing an Enforcement Officer](#)

It was also reassuring to read and see that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (May 2022) included a number of measures recommended by NAPE which give enforcement officers more scope and power in dealing with breaches of planning control. These included:

- Extending the period for taking enforcement action to ten years in all cases and removing the four year rule associated with residential.
- Introducing Enforcement Warning Notices – this is a tool that is actively used in Wales which has been successful in tackling breaches of planning control without the need of serving a formal enforcement notice.
- Increasing fines associated with certain planning breaches – this is especially where only small fines are issued to large development companies. By increasing the fines there is more risk associated with undertaking an unauthorised development.
- Doubling fees for retrospective planning applications – this should deter people from building unlawful developments.
- Extending the time period for Temporary Stop Notices from 28 to 56 days. This gives Local Authorities more time to consider formal enforcement action and to assess expediency.
- Gives Local Planning Authorities the power to dismiss certain appeals where the appellant causes undue delay which should expedite the process.
- Tightening the scope for appeals against enforcement notices so that there is only one opportunity to obtain planning permission retrospectively.

These measures will improve the enforcement system and demonstrate the government's commitment to enforcement becoming a stronger arm in planning. However, it is known in the planning community that enforcement is largely under resourced or overlooked. Therefore, with more power being given to enforcement officers to tackle breaches of planning control it is as important as ever that we ensure that enforcement is at the forefront of planning departments throughout the country. An effective enforcement service gives members of the public confidence in the planning system and upholds its integrity.

During the course of this year the Management Committee have had quarterly meetings with DLUCH to understand the proposals further and the likelihood of when these measures will be implemented into law. The Management Committee will ensure moving forward that appropriate training is offered to members on the proposed changes and the NAPE Enforcement Handbook will be updated accordingly to reflect these changes in law to ensure it remains a relevant resource for enforcement officers.

As with the last Annual Report it was noted that many local authorities have continued to struggle with the recruitment and retention of enforcement officers and this, along with inadequate funding of planning teams as a whole, is seen as a major constraint for the delivery of an effective enforcement service. With the help of NAP, in November 2022 the RTPi undertook a research paper on planning enforcement resourcing. The RTPi conducted a survey with responses from 133 enforcement officers representing about a third of local authorities in England. The results showed that there was a lack of enforcement officers to deal with the workload and councils are struggling to recruit enforcement officers.

This highlights the issue to central government that more support is required to enable and assist enforcement officers. The Management Committee will continue to bolster the support to NAPE members and to promote the importance of enforcement within the planning system. If you would like to see a copy of the report, please follow the link below:

[RTPI | Planning Enforcement Resourcing](#)

I would like to thank the members of the Management Committee for their continued input and support, in addition to their day jobs over the last 12 months. Also a special thank you to Madeleine Bauer who has been the network manager this year who has produced the Planning Enforcement Resourcing Paper along with assisting the Committee throughout the year. I would like to extend my thanks to the RTPI for its ongoing interest and support.

Finally, I would like to thank all our members for their continued interest and contributions. NAPE is here for our members and will continue to support them as best we can and speak up for enforcement at all times.

Craig Allison

NAPE Chair

January 2023