

Permitted Development Amendments to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995

Consultation Response Form

Respondents are encouraged to submit their responses online:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/5RJZZK/>.

Alternatively, please complete the consultation response form and email to planconsultations-e@gov.wales.

Your name:

Organisation (if applicable): British Holiday & Home Parks Association

email / telephone number:

Your address:

Q.1 Should the additional days granted by Class A of Part 4A be retained permanently, permitting temporary uses to take place for up to 56 days (28 days for specified uses) in a calendar year?

Yes ☐

No ☒

Other ☐

Comments:

The additional permitted development rights for temporary uses were granted in exceptional circumstances in response to the pandemic. They should not be retained permanently for the reasons we set out below.

Q.2 Do you have any evidence as to any benefits and impacts as a result of introducing the additional number of days for temporary uses to take place since April? If yes, please specify.

Yes ☒

No ☐

Other ☐

Comments:

The British Holiday & Homes Parks Association (BH&HPA) is the UK trade body representing owners and managers of holiday touring, caravan, camping, glamping and residential parks across the UK.

266 members own 305 holiday, touring, caravan, camping, and glamping parks in Wales. In 2019, holiday parks and campsites in Wales accounted for 15% of the tourism sector's GVA, generating £1.33 billion in visitor expenditure, £761.4

million GVA, supporting 24,677 jobs in rural and coastal areas (UK Caravan & Camping Alliance 2019 Economic Benefit Report: www.ukcca.org.uk).

These parks, many of which are family run businesses, have been developed over many years with careful consideration of planning and environmental impacts. BH&HPA members have worked closely with their respective local planning authorities to obtain permission for their holiday parks and camping sites to mitigate against any negative impacts on highways, the landscape, and neighbouring properties. These businesses want to ensure their park is safe for customers and offers a great holiday experience which will encourage people to return to the area and continue to support the local tourism industry.

Many parks go through a lengthy and often expensive application process in order to obtain permission to operate as a holiday park for caravans and camping. The planning permissions will often include many conditions to ensure the park does not cause environmental or amenity issues and are safe for customers. Local residents are able to comment on these applications and decisions are then made in an objective way, having regard to the planning merits and the potential impacts on the local area.

The planning process provides controls to ensure that land is used appropriately. Not only do member parks have to operate in accordance with their planning permissions, but they also have to operate in accordance with a site licence or Public Health Act licence which also contains many conditions governing the park's layout and provision of facilities to ensure the safety of users, the environment and the amenity of others. Licences are strictly controlled with the risk of prosecution to the landowner if there are breaches of conditions. They are not required for temporary sites operating within permitted development rights. BH&HPA member parks spend significant sums of money to ensure that their businesses are well run, safe for users and the environment and have minimal impacts on highways.

Holiday park businesses are busiest in the summer months (July and August) and this is the time when most landowners who have not gone through the planning and licensing process will allow their land to be used for camping, benefitting from the 56-day permitted use. Operating at the busiest time of the year only increases the already significant risks in allowing temporary sites – this is reflected in the widespread reports from our members and in the news throughout the summers of 2020 and 2021 about the problems by unlicensed sites including rubbish strewn across the land, campfire damage, overcrowding, and significant traffic issues in areas that may already have overburdened infrastructure.

Our members must operate their sites in accordance with their licence conditions which set out maximum numbers of tents, spacing requirements, provision of toilet and washing facilities, laundry rooms and lighting. These ensure a positive, safe experience for their customers and minimise community and environmental impact. Outside the pandemic, there is no good reason to allow other sites to operate without this oversight and every good reason to require them to do so.

Provision of these facilities, which are rightly required for health and safety purposes, cost the businesses money. As a result the cost of camping on licensed sites will generally be higher than sites that are only operating under the 56-day rule. This creates unfair competition at a time of year when our members would ordinarily be busiest, making up for low income in the colder months and ensuring their businesses remain viable.

Landowners who run campsites relying on the permitted development rights are not required to provide the same level of facilities as on licensed sites and accordingly can charge less. Any proposal to allow unregulated 56 day permitted use other than as an emergency pandemic response therefore risks established, regulated parks becoming unviable. It is likely to drive a race to the bottom, with fewer regulated sites.

Whilst the impact on the environment, the local community and the safety of those camping on the unlicensed sites may be the most significant factors, our members are also concerned that the extension of permitted development rights has created unfair competition for them as local businesses which welcome operating in a regulated environment to the benefit of their customers, their local community and the environment.

There was greater demand for campsites in 2020 and 2021 when many people were unable or unwilling to go abroad on holiday. However, with travel restrictions lifted to many countries, we consider that the demand for camping is likely to reduce in future years and the businesses that operate according to planning permissions and camping licences should be given sufficient protection so that they are not under-cut at the expense of safety and environmental damage.

Q.3 Do you have views on whether there should be additional restrictions on the use of this PDR to mitigate against potential impacts of making this permanent? If yes, please specify.

Yes ☒

No ☐

Other ☐

Comments:

We consider that these rights should not be made permanent. However, if the Welsh Government decides to make these rights permanent, additional safeguards need to be put in place to protect existing businesses, the environment, highway users, neighbouring properties, and the holiday makers who camp on the land.

Specifically, the legislation should be amended to require the landowner to seek prior approval from the local planning authority before using the land for camping for 56 days. To obtain prior approval the applicant should be required to provide details of the maximum number of tents that would be on the site to comply with minimum spacing standards; details of toilet and washing facilities to be provided; a plan showing the location of the site within the local road network so that the local planning authority and/or the highways authority can

assess whether the use of the land will have an adverse impact on the local highway network; details of how rubbish will be collected; confirmation that the site is not a statutory protected site such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest or a Special Area of Conservation and that it is not an important wildlife site.

The prior approval scheme will ensure that sites which are not suitable for 56-day camping will not automatically be able to operate to the detriment of others. It will ensure that if prior approval is not granted then the landowner will need to submit an application for planning permission and the use of the land will be considered objectively having regard to the planning merits of the scheme.

Q.14 Do you agree greater flexibility should be provided through permitted development rights to accelerate the rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure? If not, please provide your reasons for disagreeing.

Yes ☒

No ☐

Other ☐

Comments:

EV charging providers are likely to concentrate on the more lucrative, densely populated areas of Wales, with more remote areas being left behind. This needs to be addressed by suitable policy measures such as offering financial incentives to encourage EV providers to expand into more rural areas, as well as greater flexibility through permitted development rights.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: ☐