REQUEST FOR SPEAKING RIGHTS

Causeway Coast and Glens Planning Committee — 26 August 2026

Applications	LA01/2023/1276/F and LA01/2024/0137/F
Site	Lands 300m south-east of 41 Dogleap Road, Limavady — Roe Valley Country Park
Proposals	Retention, refurbishment, change of use and extension of existing unlisted mill buildings for community use, together with refurbishment of the existing cottage as caretaker accommodation supporting the adjoining use
Speaker	Murray Bell RIBA, Bell Architects Ltd, on behalf of the applicant and two others.

Purpose of this request

We respectfully request speaking rights to address the Committee. The applications concern the conservation and viable re-use of existing buildings, not the introduction of an unrelated new-build development into an undeveloped rural location. The principal issues are capable of being explained clearly to Members.

Summary of the planning case

- The proposals would secure the retention and sensitive restoration of existing stone mill buildings of local heritage and landscape value, together with an existing cottage required to support their community use.
- The buildings already occupy this location. Their proposed use cannot simply be transferred to a settlement without abandoning the very heritage assets the applications seek to conserve.
- A community use can compliment Roe Valley Country Park by widening participation, supporting education and interpretation, providing year-round activity and strengthening the relationship between the park, its industrial heritage and the local community.
- Continued vacancy and deterioration present a more direct risk to the park's character and visitor experience than a carefully controlled, heritage-led re-use.

Response to the stated refusal reasons

1. **Northern Area Plan 2016 — ENV1 / LYL02** The proposal should be assessed as the restoration and re-use of established buildings within the Local Landscape Policy Area, rather than as unrestricted further development. It would preserve buildings that contribute to the historic character of the Roe Valley and prevent their progressive loss. The public and landscape benefit of retaining these structures is directly relevant to whether the development is appropriate within the designation.
2. **SPPS paragraph 6.73 and PPS21 Policy CTY1** The rural location is inherent to the proposal because the buildings already exist there. The planning purpose is to conserve and put those buildings to a viable community use. PPS21 also contains express support under Policy CTY4 for the sympathetic conversion and re-use of suitable existing buildings where their form, character, features and setting are maintained and the locality is not adversely affected. The applications should therefore be considered in that fuller policy context, rather than solely as a new use that could be located elsewhere.
3. **Flood risk — SPPS paragraph 6.107 and PPS15 Policy FLD1** The submitted information indicates that flood matters have been addressed and that the buildings themselves have not been threatened by flooding. If Members consider that a residual technical point remains, it would be proportionate to seek targeted clarification or impose appropriate mitigation conditions rather than refuse the principle of conserving and re-using the buildings.
4. **Tourism asset — SPPS paragraph 6.107 and PPS16 Policy TSM8** No clear evidence has been identified that the proposed community use would significantly compromise Roe Valley Country Park as a tourism asset. A sympathetic restoration can instead enhance the visitor offer through heritage interpretation, education, events and weather-independent community facilities. The proposal is low-impact, uses existing structures and can be managed by conditions controlling design, use, access, hours and environmental matters.

Consistency and relevant precedents

The Committee is also asked to consider the Council's approach to comparable heritage and community projects:

- LA01/2021/1409/F — Compass Advocacy Network at Lislagan Farm, Ballymoney: a rural community/charitable use cited as demonstrating that an appropriate community facility can be accepted outside a settlement.
- LA01/2017/0964/F — Cloughmills Old Mill: restoration and community re-use progressed despite a recognised flood context, with mitigation incorporated into the development.
- Green Lane Museum and other successful mill/industrial heritage projects demonstrate that active re-use is often essential to long-term preservation and public appreciation.

These examples are not advanced as binding precedents, but they demonstrate that the relevant planning issues can be resolved through a balanced, site-specific assessment rather than an assumption that community use is necessarily incompatible with a rural park setting.

Matters to be presented orally

- The heritage significance, present condition and risk of further deterioration of the mill buildings and cottage.
- The nature, scale and management of the proposed community use and its relationship with the Country Park.
- Flood evidence, site history and any proportionate mitigation that may be required.
- Why the proposals conserve rather than compromise the landscape and tourism value of Roe Valley Country Park.

Request to the Committee

Bell Architects Ltd therefore respectfully requests speaking rights at the Planning Committee meeting on 26 August 2026.

We ask that Members hear the applicant's case before reaching a decision and consider whether the applications can be approved, subject to appropriate planning conditions and any final technical clarification considered necessary. The central choice is between a controlled, beneficial re-use that secures these buildings and continued deterioration.

Murray Bell RIBA
Bell Architects Ltd, Ballymoney