
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

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Purpose of Report

To update the Planning Committee on the improvements to mobile communications networks across the National Park.

Background

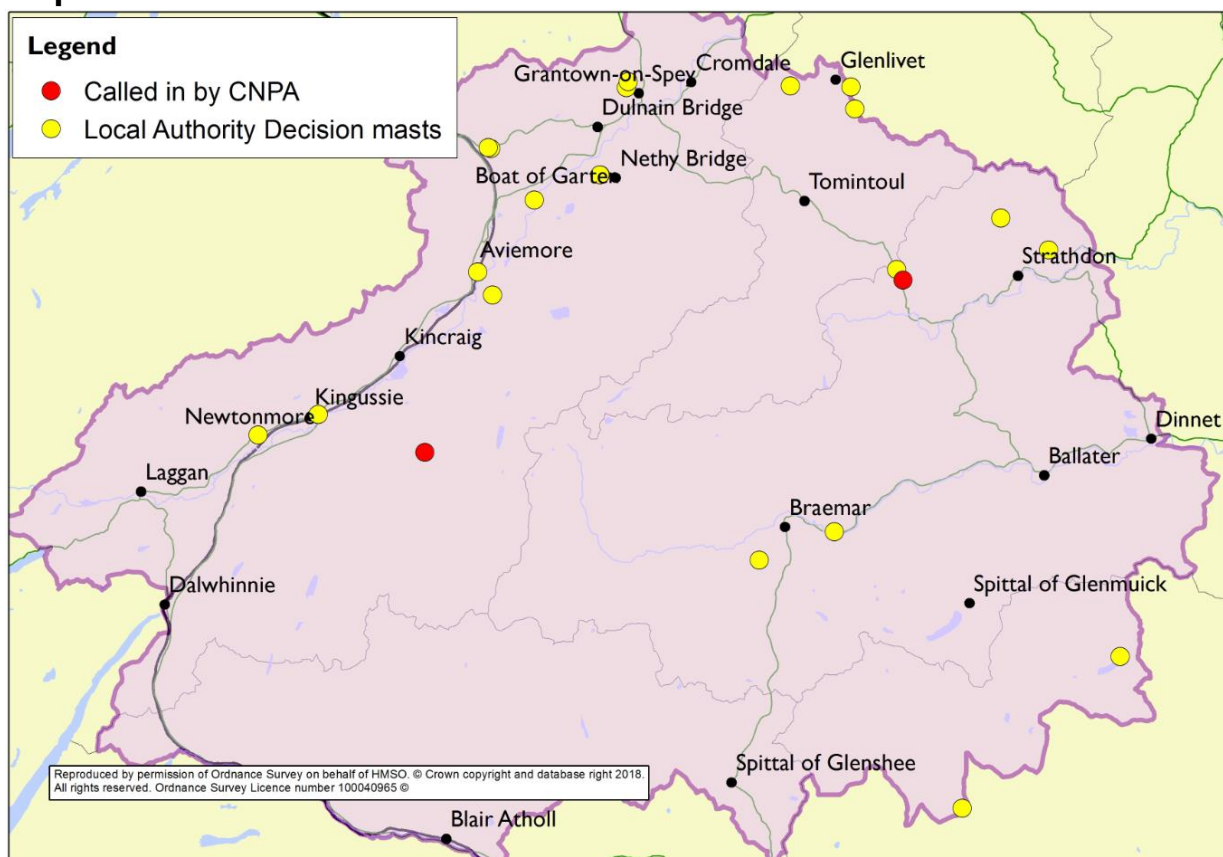
1. In May 2016, officers presented an information paper to the Planning Committee on the planned roll-out of commercial 4G mobile networks as well as the Emergency Services Network Mobile Communications Programme (ESN) to replace the 'airwave' emergency services communications network with a network using 4G technology. That report set out the available information on upgrades to existing masts and likely new mast requirements.

Summary of activity since May 2016

2. Appendix I to this paper provides additional detail on the implemented and planned improvements to enhance mobile networks across the National Park. The mobile network operators (MNOs) have shared the information with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) in their coordinating role across the Highlands and Islands and contains commercial information that is confidential so is not available to the public.
3. By the end of 2016, 39 sites in the Cairngorms National Park had been upgraded to 4G coverage out of 66 existing sites run by all mobile operators. In addition, ten new sites have been planned by the mobile operators and the Home Office have identified two further sites that would not be commercially viable. Once the network improvements have been completed, it is unlikely that any community or many roads will be without a 4G signal, often with multiple networks available. The upgrade work and new masts have already made a noticeable difference to 4G coverage in many of the bigger communities.
4. Planning Committee members will have seen planning applications for mast upgrades and new masts on the CNPA's call-in lists. The CNPA has only called in two new masts so far, both at ESN sites in prominent or remote locations. Map I shows the planning

applications that have been made for new or upgraded masts in the Cairngorms National Park and those that that have been called in by the CNPA.

Map 1



5. In the last paper that was presented to the Planning Committee, it was expected that the new infrastructure might be generally smaller than existing masts, making use of advances in technology. It's possible that this is the case, but from a practical point of view, the replacement and new masts being provided continue to be lattice towers of varying heights. It is likely that the MNO's are trying to minimise the number of sites needed for network coverage, meaning there have been fewer opportunities to use smaller masts. That said, the planning applications that have been determined so far have not presented unacceptable impacts and most have been approved quickly.

Next Steps

6. It is expected that by the end of 2018, most of the improvement will have been implemented across the National Park. So far, no areas of the National Park have been identified as a 4G 'not spots' (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-43371719>) for the Scottish Government's Mobile Action Plan to tackle further. The CNPA planning team will continue to work with the MNOs to help deliver appropriately planned infrastructure and the CNPA Planning Committee will determine any planning applications that are called in.

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March 2018

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Appendices

- I. Confidential Update Report on Mobile Service Upgrades in the Cairngorms National Park