
STRATEGY

Cairngorm and Glenmore
Strategy

**Strategic Environmental Assessment
Environmental Report**

December 2015

Appendix 4: Context for the Cairngorm and
Glenmore Strategy

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Proposed Approach of the Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy

Nature Conservation

Cairngorm and Glenmore lie at the heart of the mountain plateau and an expanding forest surrounding it. Management of these land holdings should be in collaboration with neighbours to deliver large scale conservation benefit, delivering the Cairngorms Nature vision.

Objective: Enhance habitats and species conservation on a landscape scale

Our proposed conservation goals are:

1. People engaging with a clear and ambitious conservation vision in the heart of the Cairngorms;
2. An expanding woodland, including montane woodland, better connected with neighbours in a landscape scale approach;
3. Montane habitats and species in robust conservation status;
4. Favourable condition of designated site features.

To achieve these we will need to:

- a. Integrate forest management across the Cairngorm and Glenmore landholdings;
- b. Expand the area of montane woodland;
- c. Continue the removal of non-native tree species and forest restructuring;
- d. Review recreation management for species conservation, implementing the Capercaillie Framework;
- e. Continue to operate the successful visitor management system on Cairngorm Mountain;
- f. Engage visitors more in the conservation work they can see around them.

Visitor Experience

Cairngorm and Glenmore provide a uniquely accessible mountain and forest experience and are an integral part of the visitor experience centred on Aviemore and other communities in Badenoch and Strathspey.

Objective: Enhance the visitor experience to match the quality of environment

Our proposed visitor experience goals are:

1. Deliver a high quality visitor welcome that makes it easy to plan your visit across land holdings and visitor destinations;
2. Work with the community and partners in Aviemore to develop a more connected visitor experience with an improved sense of orientation in Aviemore;
3. Proactive visitor management co-ordinated with neighbours to deliver high levels of visitor satisfaction combined with nature conservation.

To achieve these we will need to:

- a. Develop and deliver plans for the renewal of visitor facilities at Cairngorm Mountain and Glenmore;
- b. Enhance the ranger service provision, co-ordinating across land holdings and connecting with Aviemore;
- c. Deliver co-ordinated visitor information and key messages, pre-arrival and on-site and 'de-clutter' signage;
- d. Improve public transport options, enhance the travel experience, rationalise and co-ordinate car parking provision;
- e. Develop a co-ordinated spatial approach to recreation management and conservation with neighbouring land holdings;

Rural Development

Cairngorm and Glenmore are significant to the regional economy. Management should aim to improve the underlying quality of these land holdings and their infrastructure as key assets underpinning businesses and benefiting the wider region.

Objective: Support and enhance the regional economy

Our proposed rural development goals are:

1. Improve the year round visitor offering;
2. A high quality of place and infrastructure that underpins tourism and activity business opportunities;
3. A clear and consistent identity for promotion of the area.

To achieve these we will need to:

- a. Share and collaborate on customer feedback, market research and visitor surveys with the Cairngorms Business Partnership and private businesses. This to include collaborative analysis on market segmentation so that the motivations of visitors can be better understood and provided for;
- b. Collaborate across businesses to provide a co-ordinated range of options for visitors at different times of year;
- c. Promote a clear and consistent identity for the area;
- d. Invest in the public realm infrastructure to ensure a high quality asset underpinning business opportunities.

Outdoor Learning

Cairngorm and Glenmore offer an outstanding location for outdoor learning with a network of providers including the National Outdoor Centre already based in and using the area. This is a unique positioning in Scotland.

Objective: Create outdoor learning opportunities for all

Our proposed outdoor learning goals are:

1. Be a national resource for outdoor learning;
2. Improve outdoor learning facilities;
3. Make it easier for a wider range of groups to experience and learn from being in the area.

To achieve these we will need to:

- a. Improve connections between existing learning and activity providers;
- b. Create flexible learning facilities with indoor and outdoor space;
- c. Enhance volunteering opportunities in the area and enhance management arrangements to support this sector.

Proposed Approach of the Glenmore Visitor Improvement Plan

4.1 Visitor Welcome	
Objectives	<p>a. Enhance the sense of arrival both at Loch Morlich and at the settlement of Glenmore so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Visitors arriving by car, bus and bicycle know that they have arrived in a special place and can quickly find a place to stop and orientate themselves; ➤ The settlement has a strongly pedestrian-friendly character; ➤ The visitor hub in the settlement is easy to locate; ➤ Car and bike parking options are obvious; ➤ Drivers passing through Glenmore respect that they are passing through a settlement and behave accordingly.
Proposals	<p>I.1 Improve the welcome signage at arrival points and provide clear orientation information. Rationalise and improve co-ordination of signage within the settlement to help visitors find their way (short term).</p> <p>I.2 Reduce the speed of through traffic in the settlement and redesign the road and path treatments to encourage slower speeds and easier crossing by pedestrians (medium term).</p> <p>I.3 Extend the Logging Way to connect with the visitor hub and onward routes for visitors arriving and leaving by bike (medium-term) and install bike storage at key arrival points (short term).</p> <p>I.4 Fully integrate bus stops within the settlement of Glenmore (short term).</p>

4.2 Visitor Hub	
Objectives	<p>a. Create a new or improved visitor hub as focus for visitor orientation and learning, incorporating information about Glenmore Forest Park, Cairngorm Mountain and the wider National Park. Connect visitors' expectations with the opportunities available, cross promoting the area as a whole. Must be high quality design which is appropriate for such a sensitive location;</p> <p>b. Work with SYHA to implement their preferred option for a new youth hostel facility to make best use of space and co-ordinated provision of facilities/visitor welcome.</p>
Proposals	<p>2.1 Work with SYHA to enable its preferred option to build a new youth hostel incorporating a central reception facility with more flexible satellite accommodation (medium term).</p> <p>2.2 Develop plan to reconfigure buildings and layout across site of current youth hostel and visitor centre to provide new visitor hub incorporating shared facilities for youth hostel reception, visitor welcome and learning space (medium term).</p> <p>2.4 Reconfigure car parking around the visitor hub including provision for short term, coach parking and overnight parking for the SYHA (medium term).</p> <p>2.5 Co-ordinate information provision and cross promotion across businesses in and neighbouring Glenmore (short term).</p>

4.3 Access Infrastructure	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improve access from Glenmore visitor hub and all car parks to the path network; b. Improve pedestrian/cycle access between existing facilities within the settlement and increase proportion built to Countryside for All standard; c. Manage visitor flows to support capercaillie conservation through delivery of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework .
Proposals	<p>3.1 Increase understanding of visitor needs and motivations through further visitor experience analysis to help inform improvements to visitor approach, arrival, car parking and the trail network (short term).</p> <p>3.2 Improve path connections between facilities within the settlement – i.e. visitor hub, bus stops, car parks, shop/café, campsite, youth hostel, Glenmore Lodge, Reindeer Centre, beach, watersports centre (medium term).</p> <p>3.3 Improve wider connections, for example the Hayfield car park to the beach, to and along The Logging Way and from the Allt Ban car park to Green Lochan/Ryvoan Pass (medium term).</p> <p>3.4 Complete round-the-loch path by building a new loch shore path along the north shore of Loch Morlich from the beach to Rothiemurchus Lodge bridge (medium term).</p> <p>3.5 Use the hub as the main orientation point for information about other walking and cycling routes from trailheads around Glenmore (medium term).</p> <p>3.6 Improve public toilet provision, particularly at the beach in conjunction with the watersports centre (medium term).</p> <p>3.7 Improve the pedestrian experience crossing the road through effective crossing point design (medium term).</p>

4.4 Parking	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Make it simpler for visitors to understand where to park when they first arrive and for specific facilities/activities/destinations; b. Reduce roadside parking on north shore of Loch Morlich and through Glenmore.
Proposals	<p>4.1 Promote and manage the car parks as a network, each of which has a clear role (medium term):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Visitor hub: main car park for hub, SYHA, beach and local paths; ii. Loch Morlich north shore car parks: short term parking, Sailing Club and round Loch Morlich trail; iii. Beach: access to beach and watersports; iv. Allt Ban: Green Lochan, Ryvoan Pass; v. Allt Mor: Green Lochan, Ryvoan Pass. Allt More Trail, event overspill; vi. Hayfield: sledging, beach overspill, events, Loch Morlich Trail; vii. New dedicated parking for the Reindeer Centre. <p>4.2 Reduce informal roadside car parking along lochside and in settlement by introducing verge management and better use of other car parks (short term).</p> <p>4.3 Improve signage and orientation to help people choose where best to park (medium term).</p> <p>4.4 Co-ordinate approaches to car park charging with clear information about reinvestment (medium term).</p>

4.5 Landscape Enhancement	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Open up strategic views by targeted tree felling from key points in Glenmore to the mountains and loch and to visually connect facilities within the settlement; b. Improve the design quality to reflect the distinctive character of Glenmore.
Proposals	5.1 Identify and retain key strategic panoramas – e.g. from visitor hub to the Northern Corries and Loch Morlich (medium term).
	5.2 Identify the strategic view corridors within the settlement so that the visitor hub, shop/café, bus stops, Reindeer Centre etc. are inter-visible (short term).
	5.3 Prepare Design Brief (for structures, materials surfaces, planting, furniture etc.) and a landscape management and maintenance plan to deliver the high quality of visitor experience into the long term (medium term).
	5.4 Develop plans to manage the setting of all paths, opening up views, thinning trees and establishing new trees to improve the visitor experience (medium term).

Spatial Options

The visitor hub proposals are the most significant proposals in terms of redevelopment of the existing facilities. The area occupied by the visitor centre and youth hostel is where there is most flexibility to redesign and change the layout of facilities to significantly improve the visitor experience (**Figure 92**). This site also provides a natural focal point and is well suited in terms of position and topography to accommodate the appropriate visitor infrastructure. The proposals are the result of a series of options analysis that takes account of the SYHA's preferred option to replace their current building with a new facility and recognition that the current visitor centre does not make it easy for visitors to engage with the place and plan their visit.

An initial appraisal and options study has been completed to assess whether it is feasible to satisfactorily accommodate all the site requirements within the site constraints, physical capacity of the site, and landscape capacity of the area to the north

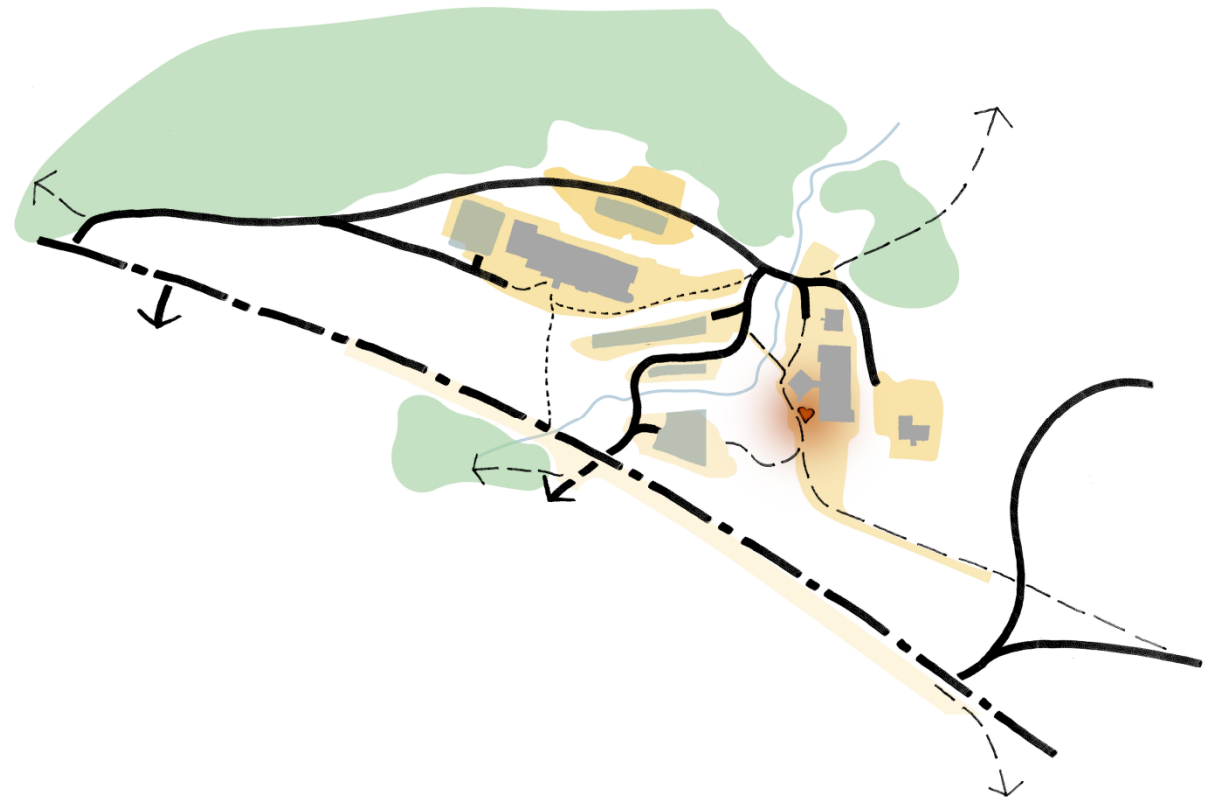


Figure 92 Existing layout.

of the public road incorporating the Youth Hostel, Visitor centre and associated car parking. The study has concluded that it is feasible and four options are being considered for the redevelopment.

Spatial Option 1: New Cairngorm Lodge

SYHA Cairngorm Lodge Youth Hostel building is either retained (only the original part, with the various extensions being removed) or is demolished and replaced by a new Glenmore Forest Visitor Centre HUB (Figure 93).

PROS

- A new HUB and hostel buildings together fully embrace the values and aims of Glenmore Forest and the Cairngorms National Park introducing the concept of sustainability in the natural environment;
- If the existing building were retained and refurbished, it would retain a prominent local landmark;

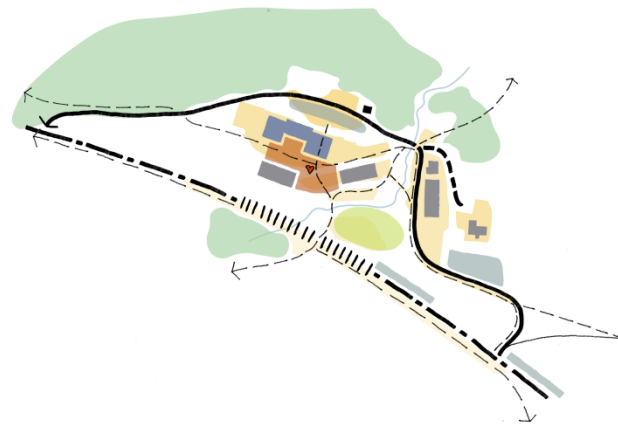


Figure 93 Spatial Option: New Cairngorm Lodge

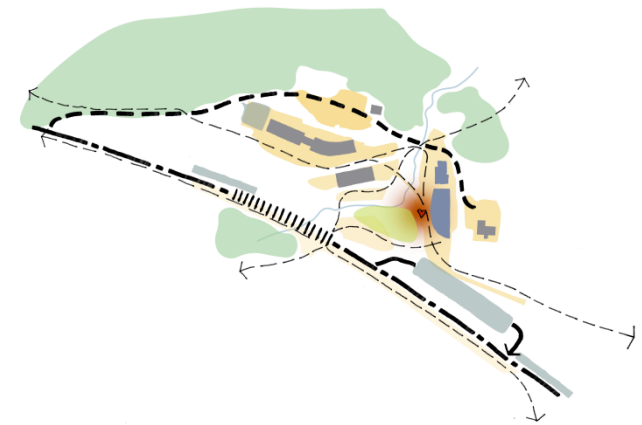


Figure 94 Spatial Option 2: Old Logging Way (Eastern Access)

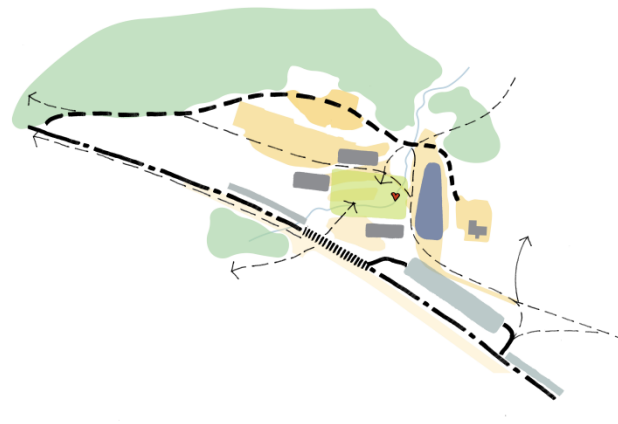


Figure 95 Spatial Option 3: Central Place

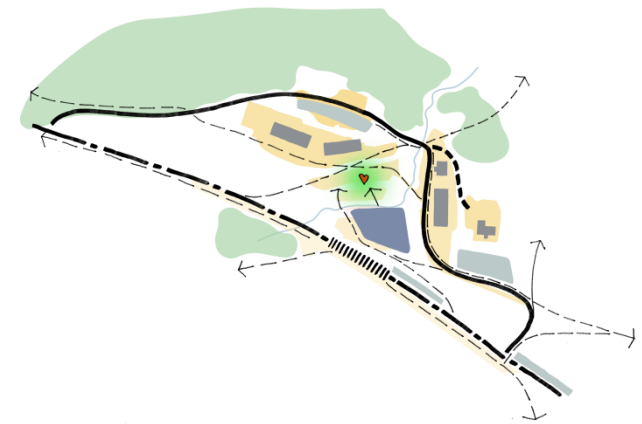


Figure 96 Spatial Option 4: Central Hub

- Buildings fit in contour and all south facing;
- Hub at high point of site – visibility & views;
- Parking moved to edges of site = landscape heart reclaimed;
- South facing external gathering space / terrace – old logging way and footpaths all branch out from here;
- Green forms the foreground and events area;
- Single vehicular point of entry for FCS, Hub, SYHA, Reindeer Centre & Glenmore Lodge. Thus much greater clarity and reduced sign clutter.

CONS

- Existing Lodge building dominates the site and other buildings - is it of high enough quality to be retained even in refurbished and stripped back form?
- Adaption of existing building would limit the potential of new HUB
- External gathering space is not well contained;

- Hostel building I obscures hub building on approach from Aviemore;
- Road still runs through the site.

Spatial Option 2: Old Logging Way (Eastern Access)

Existing SYHA building replaced with new fit for purpose hostels that occupy the terraces astride a re-aligned Old Logging Way. The existing visitor centre building is modified or rebuilt to form a new HUB; this would retain the small black timber building. New eastern vehicular loop (Figure 94).

PROS

- Logical arrival sequence;
- Landscape and pedestrian / cycle route organised site;
- Sensitive to topography, aspect and views;
- Car parking held at edges of the site;
- Reinstates the old lane past the Hub;
- Car parking for Hub is clearly seen and accessed from the road;

- Good cycleway connection
- Flexibility for sequencing and separation of construction works on the 2 facilities.

Cons

- Buildings too spaced out?
- Gathering space not defined by buildings?
- Is there a point of arrival?
- Car parking will require a retention structure (could be reinforced earth).

Spatial Option 3: Central Place

New Hub building on the site of the existing FCS Visitor Centre, with hostel buildings defining a central place astride the burn (Figure 95).

PROS

- All new buildings arranged closely around a south facing space;
- The burn and the pedestrian routes flow through the “space”;
- Parking held to the edge of the site;
- Clearly defined meeting space visible from road and the Hub;

- Minimal vehicle penetration and excellent cycleway connection;
- Potential single vehicular point of entry for FCS, Hub, SYHA, Reindeer Centre & Glenmore Lodge. Thus much greater clarity and reduced sign clutter.

CONS

- Hostel buildings lie in foreground of the Hub;
- Car parking prominent along frontage;
- Highest terraces of site not utilised, therefore views not exploited;
- Inefficient use of terraces.

Spatial Option 4: Central Hub

New Hub building close to the road (**Figure 96**).

PROS

- Hub very visible close to road + clear point of arrival;
- Go through Hub to get to the gathering space;

- Gathering space visible from road on approach from Aviemore, south facing and elevated;
- Parking held to edge of site;
- Good immediate link between buses and the Hub;
- Hostel buildings follow contour of site, with good views, open outlook and south facing;
- Hub could function as a bus shelter.

CONS

- Hub close to road and low down, not taking advantage of site contour and views;
- Elevation of Hub onto the gathering space is north facing and in shadow;
- Vehicle route interrupts between Hostel 3 and path network;
- The gathering space is on challenging terraced ground, causing accessibility issues;
- Vehicular exit junction requires improvements.

Proposed Approach of the Cairngorm Mountain Development Plan

Natural Retreats operate Cairngorm Mountain on a lease from Highlands and Islands Enterprise which owns the land. Natural Retreats is currently developing a masterplan which will help deliver the ambitions of the Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy, based on the following vision and business objectives:

Vision:

- Create a year round, world class mountain destination
- A family focused resort that resonates with the alpine community
- Establish a centre of excellence with a pioneering culture
- Forge stronger links with the village of Aviemore, wider Badenoch and Strathspey and the Cairngorms National Park

Business Objectives:

- Improve visitor experience – both mountain user and mountain visitor
- Improve non winter and weather resistant offerings

- Improve quality and diversity of component parts and guest offering
- Increase visitor numbers, demographic spread and dwell time
- Introduce world class meeting, conference and event space

The Development plan also contains a Masterplan outlining Natural Retreats' future aspirations for the destination (**Figure 97**).

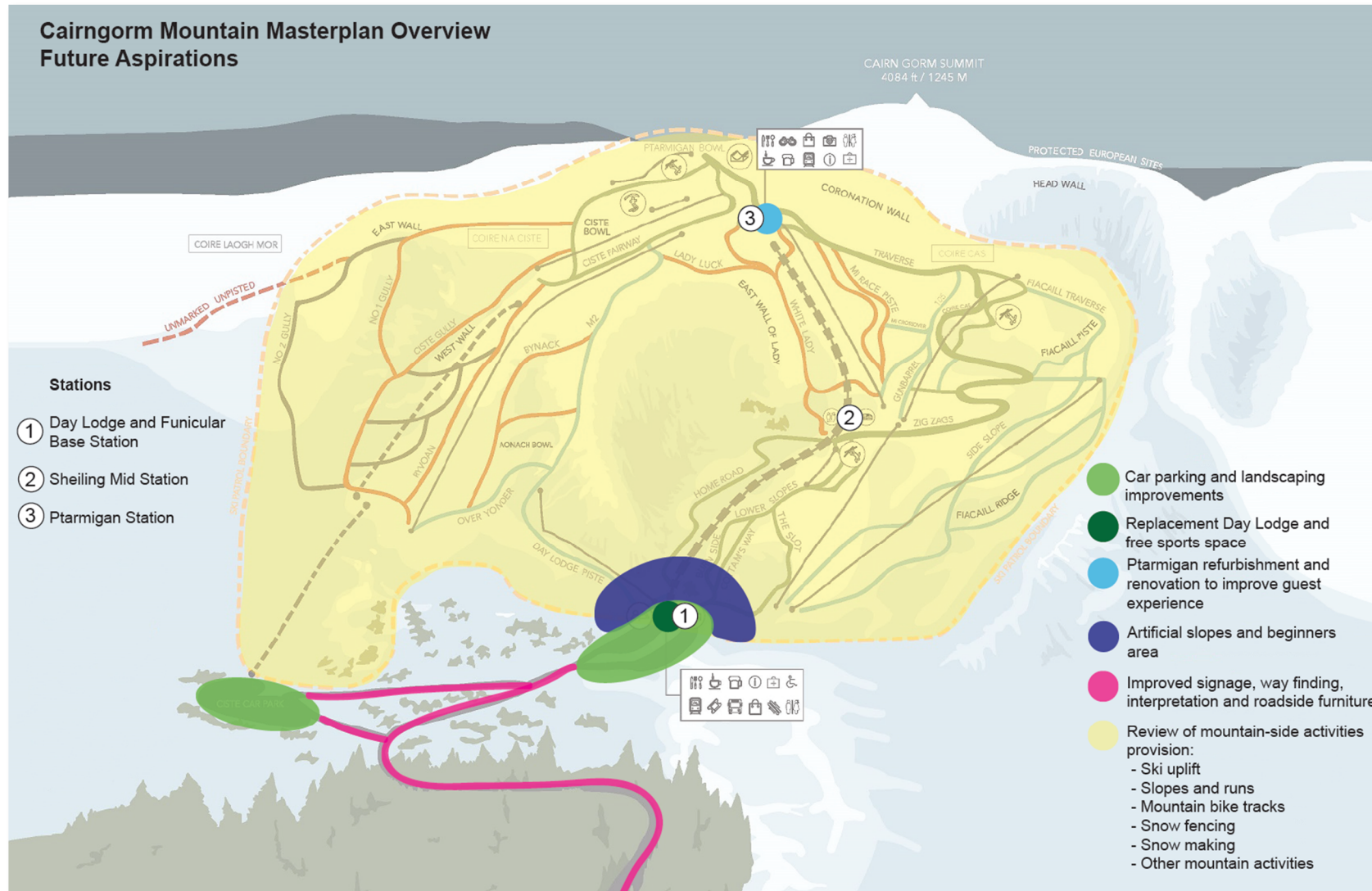


Figure 97 Cairngorm Mountain Masterplan.

Cairngorm Estate Management Plan

Cairngorm Estate is owned and managed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the government's regional development agency for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

The Estate is 1,418 hectares, of which 598 are leased to Natural Retreats (the operator) to operate as a recreational facility – Cairngorm Mountain.

Three management aims have been identified for the Estate:

- The estate is managed to maintain it as a special place for people and nature
- People enjoy the Estate through outstanding visitor and learning experiences
- The estate is sustainably managed and supports thriving businesses and communities

These three aims are broken down into procedural objectives and an action plan that have been subsumed into the overall Objectives of the Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy (see p. 201). There are therefore

no additional assessments to be made specifically for the Estate Management Plan as the assessment of the overall Strategy, cover these matters.