

Cairngorm Estate Management Plan Summary

This summarises the estate management plan for Cairngorm Estate, prepared by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and demonstrates its contribution to delivering the future direction for Cairngorm and Glenmore.

Introduction

Cairngorm Estate is one of the most important upland estates in Scotland in conservation and recreation terms. It is the home of rare and internationally protected species and habitats. It lies at the core of the Cairngorms National Park and is its most important visitor attraction. The estate is a key driver of the economy of the surrounding area and a focal point for rural development and recreational activities.

The *environmental value* of the Estate is recognised in national and international designations for habitats, species and geomorphology. The Estate forms part of the most extensive upland plateau in the UK and is likely to play an increasingly important role as a refuge for species that are vulnerable to climate change.

The snow-sports facilities have become a nationally important for winter activities, providing a strong attraction for people to settle in the local area, as well as contributing to the portfolio of tourist attractions in the region. The high level car park provides unparalleled public access to the high ground of the Cairngorms National Park giving the general public opportunities to experience this environment first-hand.

The *educational value* of the Estate, partly delivered through the Ranger Service, interacting with the public and interpreting this environment, has been recognised but not fully realised. The potential to interpret the sensitive and sustainable management of the mix of recreation and conservation in this fragile habitat could have international significance

The *economic value* of the estate comprises direct and indirect benefits to the local and regional economy. The significant public investment in infrastructure has provided employment opportunities in construction and management of facilities and the provision of services on the site provides further economic input and a range of employment opportunities throughout the year.

The Cairngorm Estate is a key part of the wider Cairngorm and Glenmore area and as such is part of a much bigger picture in terms of the local economy, the visitor experience and of course the landscape. It is a destination that draws people to the wider area – specifically to Aviemore but also to other communities in Badenoch and Strathspey and the Cairngorms National Park as a whole. Its identity, the economic benefits and the visitor journey are all intrinsically connected with the wider area.

Estate Ownership and Management

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 1418 hectares, of which 598 are leased to Natural Retreats (the operator) to operate as a recreational facility (See Map 1)

Long Term Management of the Cairngorm Estate

Three management aims have been identified for the Estate:-

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

These three aims are broken down into objectives and an action plan (available at.....) that support the wider strategy for Cairngorm and Glenmore. Table 1 below shows how the Estate aims and objectives match those of the wider area.

Table I

Cairngorm and Glenmore Future Direction				
Cairngorm and Glenmore Objectives	Enhance habitat and species conservation on a landscape scale	Support and enhance the regional economy	Enhance the visitor experience to match the quality of environment	Create outdoor learning opportunities for all
Cairngorm Estate Aims	The estate is managed to maintain it as a special place for people and nature	The estate is sustainably managed and supports thriving businesses and communities	People enjoy the Estate through outstanding visitor and learning experiences	
Cairngorm Estate Objectives	<p>To conserve and, where possible enhance the special qualities of the estate</p> <p>To ensure that estate management decisions are based on sound understanding and knowledge of the special qualities of the estate</p>	<p>To account for competing needs and pressures in order to ensure best value and secure public interest in the estate.</p> <p>To encourage external business operators to use the estate, in line with responsible outdoor access</p> <p>To work with neighbouring estates and other partners to maximise the benefit of the estate whilst delivering legal obligations</p>	<p>To provide or enable a range of recreational opportunities on the estate that are compatible with its special qualities</p> <p>To provide or enable a range of learning experiences, integrated where appropriate with recreational opportunities</p>	

Zonation of the Estate

The estate will be managed within defined zones where different activities and priorities will be relevant. All zones will be managed with reference to the special qualities of the estate and there will be a transitional area within the notional boundary of each zone to minimise the potential impact on the more sensitive area. It is recognised that different management approaches will be appropriate within each zone on the estate to match the priorities for that zone. At all times the over-riding priority is the long-term protection or enhancement of the special qualities of the estate (i.e. sustainable management). See map p 9.

Visitor welcome zone

This includes the car parks, buildings and the approach road.

Within this zone it is reasonable to expect visitor welcome and orientation information to be available. Facilities will be provided to ensure that visitors' physical needs are catered for and the infrastructure will be designed and operated to reflect the setting of the estate.

Managed visitor zone

This includes the snow sports areas of Coire Cas and Coire na Ciste (the Ski Area). It is subdivided into two areas where the management of infrastructure will be different.

Within this zone it is reasonable to expect formal recreation facilities to be available along with orientation and guidance information for visitors. Management operations within this zone will mainly be focussed on provision and maintenance of the associated infrastructure and safe implementation of recreation activities.

Developed Area

This area includes the funicular railway main ski tows and pistes and associated fencing; also historical earthworks. Infrastructure and recreation opportunities will be compatible with the mountain environment and the setting of the estate.

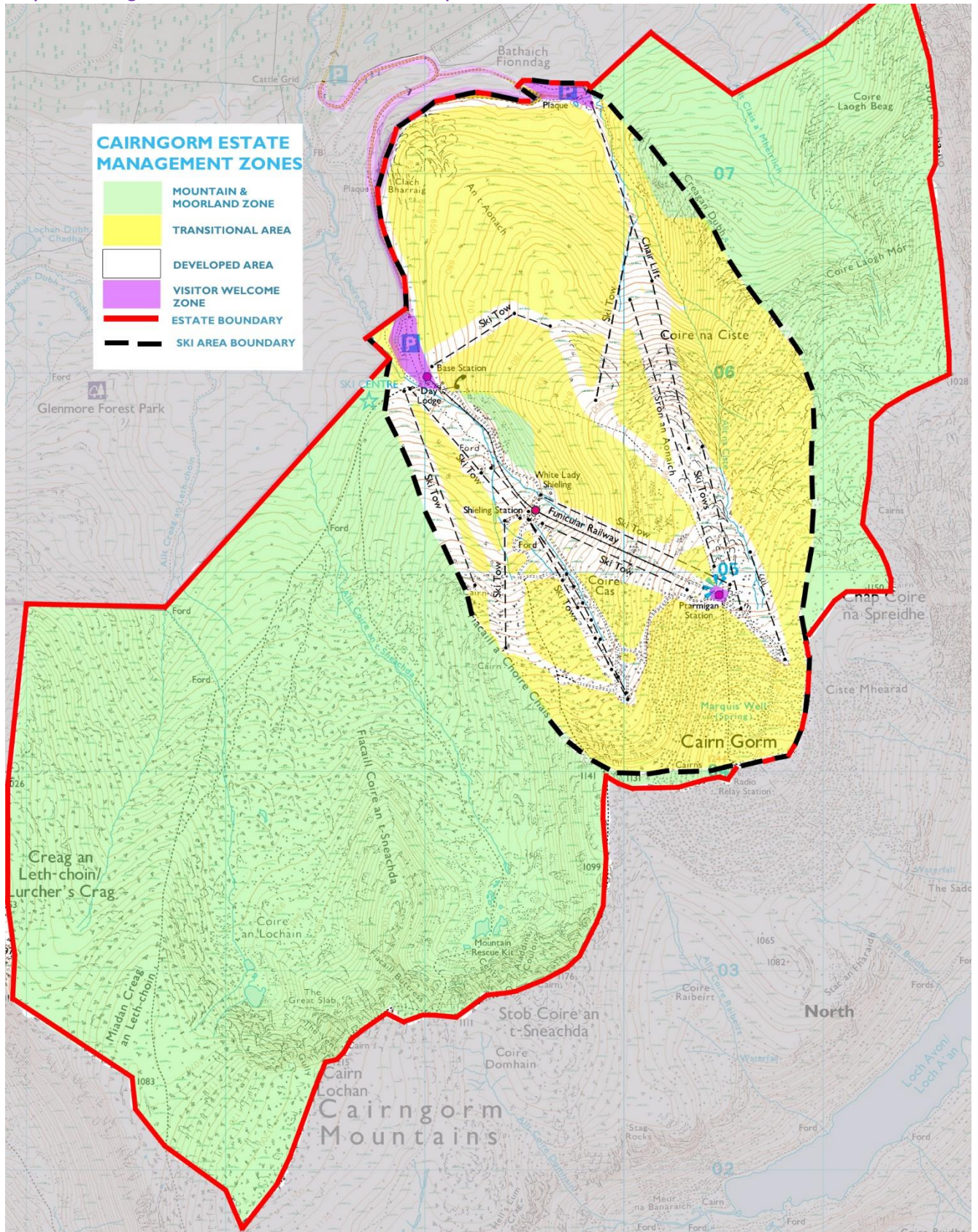
Transitional Area

This is the remaining part of the managed visitor zone where new infrastructure is discouraged, but low impact management (e.g. snow grooming) can be undertaken providing that it has no visible impact on the ground.

Mountain and Moorland zone

Within this zone visitors will need to be self-reliant. Any infrastructure or management operations will be focussed on protection and enhancement of the natural heritage and landscape value of the estate. Large events and any additional infrastructure will be discouraged within this zone and any use should be guided by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code taking into account the fragility of the environment and the principle of responsible access. Vehicle access will be restricted to essential emergency access to save life, and only when snow protects the ground and no alternative is available

Map of Management Zones referred to in this plan



Based on Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale.