

Answers to the National Park Local Development Plan 2020 Consultation

Broadly speaking I had tried to complete the survey but found that it's not asking the real questions so I am writing my own view. By the way, Survey Monkey crashed half way through on me. You do have lots of supporting documents that I have to admit I have not had time to read, so maybe some of the comments below are addressed in those.

Your vision statement should have what you aim to do and how you are going to realise it. At the top should be thriving businesses and communities. Below I've pointed out some areas that would help our business thrive.

As managing director of Glenshee Ski Area and having brought up my family in Braemar I feel that the Park is not always out to help with development of the area. Having existed far longer than the national park and providing employment and income for the local communities since 1962, at Glenshee we do feel sidelined and that we're not seen as an important part of the local economy. Yet our weekly wage bill excluding salaried staff is over £25,000 and we have currently had over 40,000 visitors this ski season so far. Surely this is worth the National Parks support as most of that money comes back to the local economy. With a bit more support and ease of planning restrictions and conditions we could develop the business to provide more permanent employment and summer business. Perhaps it would be better if the ski areas were seen as something good rather than a carbuncle on the landscape and be allowed within reason to develop unhindered within their existing boundaries. Please look to Europe and how they are allowed to develop their ski areas for the good of their communities.

Our biggest Issues which I believe will be relevant to many businesses within the park are:-

1. Staffing. There is no local accommodation for seasonal staff. Second homes sitting empty in Braemar 90% of the year. Braemar is now a retirement village. 30 years ago renting was affordable for seasonal staff and that in turn brought money into the community. Glenshee would like to build it's own staff accommodation but where? The sites in your map would be far too costly.
2. Permanent staffing. Very difficult due to lack of affordable housing to attract full time staff.
3. Planning. Big companies have the resources and manpower to tackle the red tape that the National Park puts up against proposals. But small businesses like ourselves find it difficult to allocate the time it takes to take on large planning projects. Surely the National Park should be assisting the process to achieve it's goals of having a sustainable economy.

Some of your questions I can answer.

Main Issue 2 – Designing Great Places

I think we all want to design great places but do we need more policies? This again only makes progress more difficult. Master Plans are expensive, usually employing consultants and not appropriate to smaller scale development. So No.

Main Issue 4 – Braemar Housing

AB023 would be good for a housing cooperative providing affordable homes. H1 & AB009 will be more retirement or holiday homes. EP2 is a flood plane. EP3 been on the cards for years but nothing has happened – why not?

Main Issue 5 - Affordability of housing

I agree that 35% should be affordable but what do you call affordable? Should there not be some sort of housing cooperative that can take this on and sell the houses to families and younger people

with some sort of tie in for a number of years. But economic development and housing go hand in hand. Businesses should be encouraged and assisted in their aspirations which in turn will make them more sustainable leading to the area becoming more attractive to younger people so reversing the trend of an older population.

Main Issue 6 - Economic Development

Do you need new economic development sites – maybe. But we believe you should focus on businesses already providing valuable employment and recreational facilities and assist them to develop.

Main Issue 10 - Land Management in Upland Areas - Tracks

In already established areas where tracks are used for economic benefit and have been for over half a century then these should be allowed, again it's about helping businesses that use the land which in turn creates the employment. It also makes the areas accessible to those that can't walk for miles to see some of our wonderful National Park. Only a very small part of the National Park is accessible to all.

Regards,
David Farquharson

