

CNPA Supplementary Planning Guidance

WILDNESS

Consultation draft February 2011

Wildness Supplementary Planning Guidance

Planning in the Cairngorms National Park

Planning in the Cairngorms National Park is unique. It involves the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) working alongside the five local authorities which operate in the Park – Aberdeenshire, Angus, Highland, Moray and Perth & Kinross.

Due to the expansion of the National Park in October 2010, to take in part of Perth and Kinross, different planning policies apply there.

The following paragraphs set out what planning policies apply in the National Park, and how planning applications will be dealt with.

Planning Policies

The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan, and this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), cover the Aberdeenshire, Angus, Highland and Moray parts of the National Park only. This SPG sets out detailed advice to help you meet the requirements of the policies in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan. It is recommended that it is read in conjunction with the policies in the Local Plan and other relevant SPG.

The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan and this SPG does not cover the Perth & Kinross area of the Park. The Perth & Kinross Highland Area Local Plan, or the Perth & Kinross Eastern Area Local Plan, and any associated SPG, apply. Please see www.pkc.gov.uk for further information.

Planning Applications

All Planning applications submitted within the Cairngorms National Park must comply with the relevant Local Plan and SPG (see paragraphs above on planning policies for details).

Planning applications should be submitted to the relevant local authority in the normal manner. The local authority ensures all the necessary information is supplied and registers receipt of the application. The CNPA is informed by the local authority and has 21 days to decide whether to call-in the application. Only applications which are of general significance to the aims of the Park are called-in. The CNPA determines called-in applications. In instances where planning applications are not called-in, the local authority will determine the application.

Background

This supplementary guidance on Wildness sets out to provide more detailed information in order to assist applicants to ensure they comply with policies 2 and 6 in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan.

These policies set out how aspects of landscape and its particular wildness qualities will be considered when assessing planning applications. The Cairngorm's Landscape Character Assessment will also be used to assess landscape impacts.

Introduction

The experience of Wildness is a core special quality for the Cairngorms National Park. This quality should be protected and enhanced throughout. The strength and nature of wildness qualities varies across the park.

It is expected that all developments within the National Park will pay due regard to the protection and enhancement of the qualities of wildness.

Information on wildness characteristics has been aggregated into 3 bands of increasing strength which define where the wildness qualities are best demonstrated on the ground. For each band, specific sensitivities and opportunities for enhancement have been identified, and all development proposals will be assessed against these.

For the purposes of this guidance the following definitions are used:

Wilderness – An area in a completely natural state where the impact of man is negligible.

There is no wilderness within the Cairngorms National Park.

Wild land – An area where an individual finds the experience of wildness is particularly strong.

It is entirely a personal response to a place and will therefore vary from person to person.

Wildness – The experience felt when in a wild landscape.

This experience is different for each individual however there are key elements that are common to all. These are the four key attributes: Naturalness, Ruggedness, Remoteness and the lack of modern human artefacts. In general these attributes are experienced by those in wild land but the proportion and strength of each will vary from person to person.

Purpose of this guidance

This guidance sets out how the qualities of wildness will be taken into account when considering development proposals. It is intended to help in the preparation of applications to ensure that they protect and enhance wildness within the National Park.

It seeks to ensure that the qualities of wildness are conserved and enhanced through the development process. It defines where in the park the qualities of wildness are most readily experienced. It divides the qualities into three distinct bands. For each band the particular sensitivities are described as well as the opportunities for mitigation. Particular issues are highlighted; for example historic remnants.

A methodology summary is set out in the appendix.

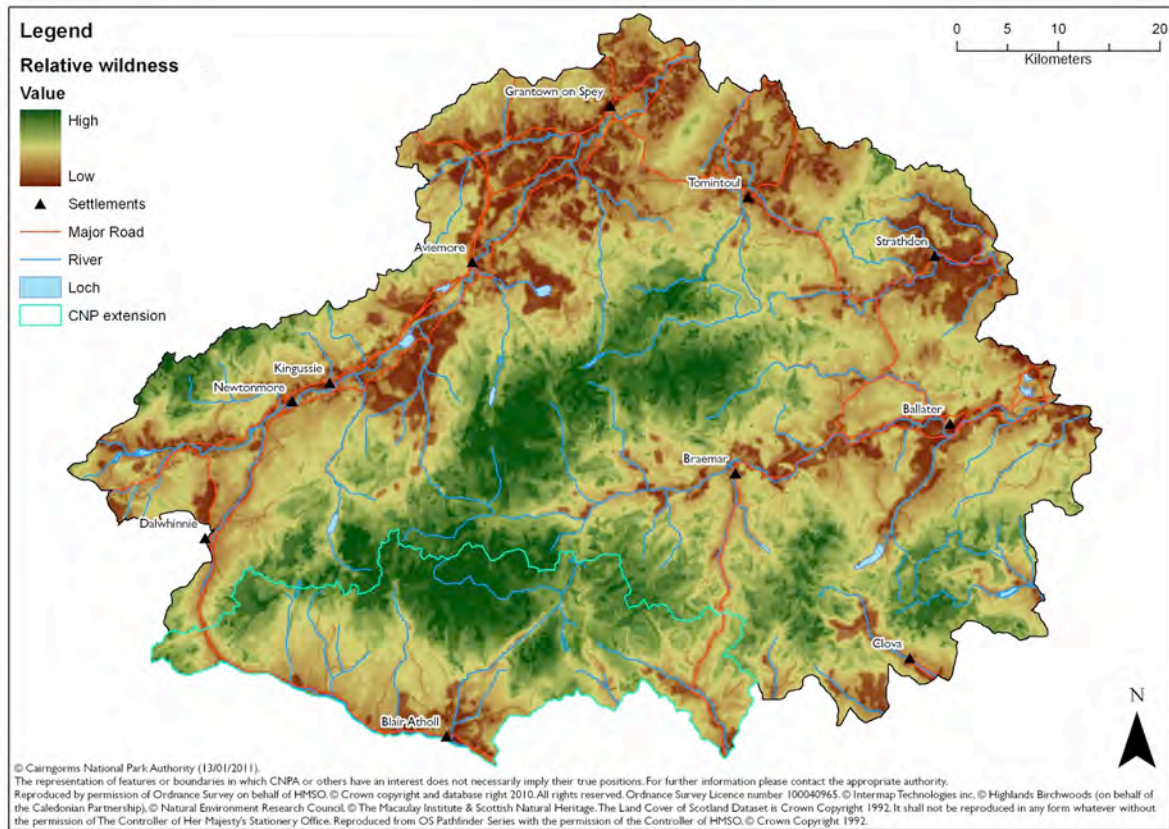
The qualities of Wildness

Wildness is a human perception of the landscape. For an individual wild land is where these qualities are particularly strongly felt. This will vary from individual to individual however there are some key components of the experience that we have common. These are called the attributes and are described more fully the appendix. They are Naturalness, Ruggedness, Remoteness and the lack of modern human artefacts.

The four attributes have each been mapped within the park by computer modelling techniques (called GIS). The resultant maps were combined to form a map of wildness (figure 1). It should be recognised that this is not a map of wild land itself, as this is an individual concept. However where the qualities are strong most people will consider it to be wild land for them.

Figure 1

Wildness in the Cairngorms National Park – *A larger map will be provided for the consultation document*

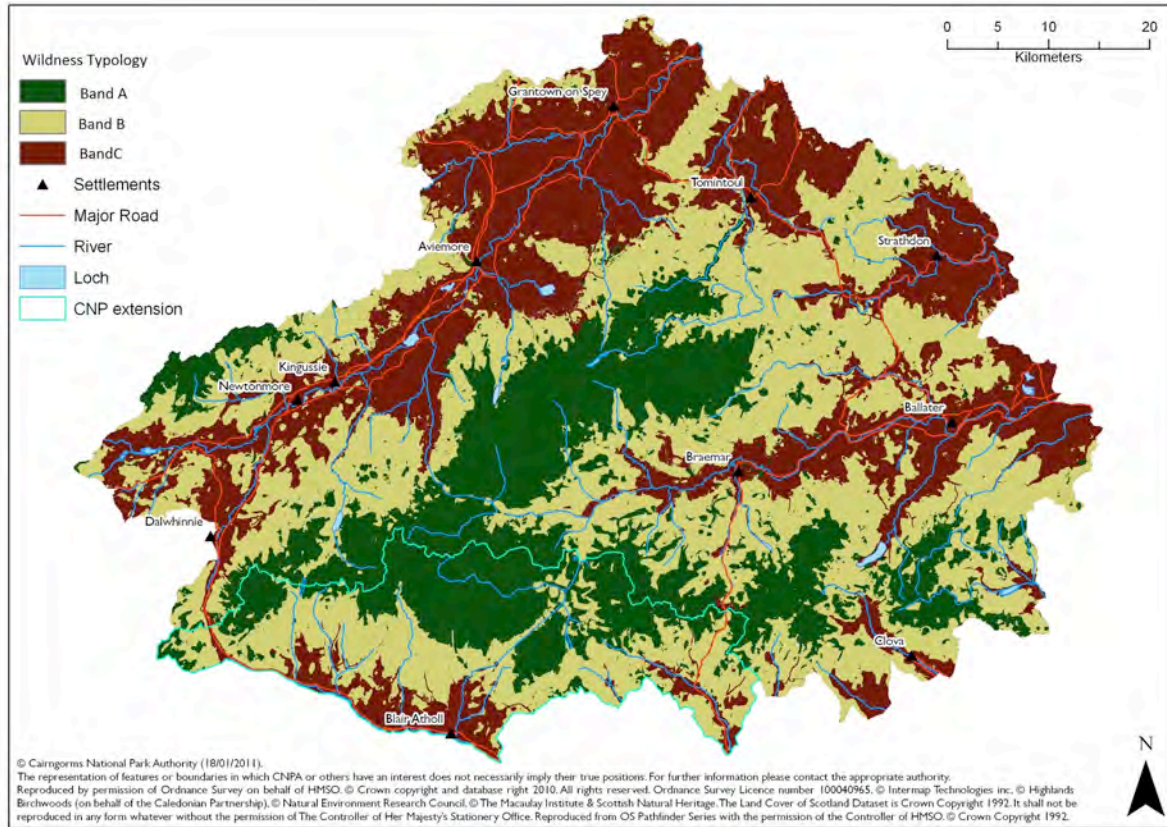


Wildness Typology

The map of wildness has been divided into three bands to make planning of developments and the assessment of them clearer (figure 2). The banding identifies areas that have broadly similar sensitivities to development. These are described in the table below. Band A has the strongest measure of wildness, Band B the next and Band C the lowest. However in all three areas some degree of wildness exists and therefore for some people even Band C may provide them with a wild land experience.

Figure 2

Wildness Typology in the Cairngorms National Park - *A larger map will be provided for the consultation document*



Wildness Band descriptions

Band	Area description	Development Sensitivities	Opportunities to enhance wildness
Band A	High quality wildness areas where the landscape is dominantly natural and ecological processes are prevalent. Management, if at all, is extensive and low impact. Man made features are likely to be absent, historic or redundant. Domestic animals are generally absent.	<p>Any form of development is likely to reduce the quality and character of the landscape and the wild experience it offers. This will include Hill tracks, fencing, telecom masts, turbines, artificially impounded water, plantation forestry, pylons and signage.</p> <p>Buildings and other such structures are unlikely but would also be inappropriate. Activity arising from development such as vehicle traffic, noise and lighting could also be significant.</p>	<p>If features exist consideration should be given to their removal as mitigation for development elsewhere. Redundant features should be removed, other than historical artefacts.</p> <p>Land management should be very light touch and emphasise natural processes. Restoration of natural vegetation</p>

		Hill tracks can often represent the most visually prominent man made feature. New tracks within this area should be avoided and the impacts of existing ones should be reduce through remedial work or removed completely.	and habitats should be a high priority.
Band B	<p>These areas have a largely natural feel with infrequent man made features. Significant built structures are unlikely to be present. Management for sporting and woodland plantations are likely to be present as well as rough grazing.</p>	<p>Development here should seek to enhance the essentially natural qualities through discrete design and enhancements to the natural vegetation.</p> <p>Features likely to be most significant are built structures, buildings barns storage facilities as well as pylons, telecom masts, turbines, hill tracks and plantation forestry.</p>	<p>Existing features should be removed if possible or repaired and redesigned to reduce their visual impact. Redundant features should be removed if they have a significant visual impact.</p> <p>Restoration of natural vegetation and habitats should be encouraged. Woodland and plantation forestry should be sympathetically designed and follow best practice.</p>
Band C	<p>This band includes settlements, transport corridors, quarries and other well developed areas. The band also includes agricultural land with improved and rough grazing as well as woodlands and conifer plantations. Management is highly evident.</p>	<p>Development here is unlikely to reduce wildness providing that it is well designed and fits in with the landscape character of the area.</p>	<p>The priority in this band is to reduce the impacts upon band A and B from existing features. This could be done for example through woodland planting, a reduction in bright lighting or</p>

			redesigning parts of buildings.
--	--	--	---------------------------------

The sensitivity of wildness areas to development

The purpose of the bands is to highlight the particular wildness sensitivities within each one. They are indicative of these sensitivities and not an absolute measurement. In general terms Band A is more sensitive to development than either Band B or C because the wildness qualities are stronger and so any addition to this landscape may have a proportionately greater effect.

A development may have impacts upon the wildness qualities across one, two or all three bands. This will vary according to the type and scale of the development as well as its exact location. This is most likely to happen through visual effect. For example; a structure erected within Band B may be visible from Band A and therefore introduce and modern man made feature. This is likely to reduce the feeling of wildness.

However there are other potential affects. These may include noise from construction traffic or night time lighting. In addition developments in one band may have servicing requirements within an adjacent one, for example an access track or electricity or water supply. These should all be considered at the pre application planning stage.

Mitigation opportunities

It is always desirable that developments should offer mitigation to improve the landscape and wildness qualities. This may be delivered on or off site or with measures directly or indirectly related to a proposal.

Examples of mitigation may include the use of natural landform or tree planting to screen a development from a more sensitive area. It could also include the removal of features that are particularly prominent in an area, for example redundant fencing or vehicle tracks.

Mitigation may be achieved through good design. Please refer to the section on further guidance for sources of information. Mitigation may also be through the restoration of more natural habitats either on or off site. Screening can mitigate visual impacts as well as having natural heritage benefits.

Historic artefacts

There are many historic features within all landscapes. Even within Band A there are significant features that are left over from previous generations. Some of these are of recognised historic features and may be covered by statutory designations or recorded by local authorities. Others have no such recognition but never the less have historic value and are well regarded by local communities.

Such features do not necessarily reduce the experience of wildness, indeed they may enhance it by representing a long lost use of the land prior to its current state. In these cases removal would not be desirable as it would not be an enhancement.

Hill tracks

It is necessary to balance the reasonable requirements of land management to those of recreational and wild land interests. In general if a new track is required, or the repair to an existing one, then following good guidance (e.g. Constructed tracks in the Scottish Uplands, SNH 2005) should result in an acceptable solution. In some areas the wildness qualities are so sensitive that alternatives should always be considered.

Further guidance

If you are planning a development and are not sure how it might affect the wildness qualities of an area please contact the local planning authority. It is also recommended that the following sources of planning advice are read in conjunction with this guidance.

The Scottish Government planning Guidance, including the policy reference to wild land is available from the Scottish Government website:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/National-Planning-Policy/newSPP>

The Cairngorms National Park has the Cairngorms Landscape Character Assessment, local plan and National Park Plan in its website. In addition other Supplementary Planning Guidance can be found on a number of topics including Design Guide and Natural Heritage.

<http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/>

The wild land policy statements for the John Muir Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage and the National Trust for Scotland are available from their websites:

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/policy-and-guidance/policy-documents/>

<http://www.jmt.org/>

<http://www.nts.org.uk/Policy/Trust/>

Appendix

Wildness mapping summary

The CNPA commissioned a study on the relative wildness across the park in 2006 from the University of Leeds. The work looked at the four key attributes of the experience of wildness.

Perceived naturalness

Ruggedness

Remoteness

Absence of modern human artefacts

Each of these was mapped digitally from a variety of data sources. The four maps were then combined into one map showing the relative strength of the wildness across the whole of the park. In each case the attributes were mapped from measures that serve as proxies for the attribute or were a direct measure.

Perceived naturalness was mapped by rating habitat types according to how natural it would appear to a non expert rather than by their ecological value or condition.

Ruggedness was measured by scoring the altitude, aspect and steepness of the landform. Combined they give a general impression of how rugged a location is.

Remoteness was mapped by estimating the time taken to get to a point from the nearest public road or track. The rate of travel was a combination of walking speed and cycle speeds according to the gradient. It allowed for the lower summer water level of rivers at fords.

Absence of modern human artefacts was a direct measure of how many modern artefacts were visible from any point. The effect of distance from the feature was allowed for so that less weight was given to those furthest away from the view point. Features such as plantation forest were included. The area sampled included features up to 15km away from the park boundary (or 30km in the case of wind turbines).

All four attribute maps were 'normalised' i.e. the scale used for each was made the same and then they were combined to produce a wildness map. This map (see figure 1) shows a range of scores (1-256) of increasing relative wildness. This scale is specific to the Cairngorms National Park and is not a Scotland wide range of scores.

The wildness typology has been developed from the wildness mapping process. It has divided the area of the National Park into the three bands based upon their score for the four attributes. For each band the balance of the four attributes may vary however the sum of the four is roughly equivalent.