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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title:** REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(PLANNER, DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

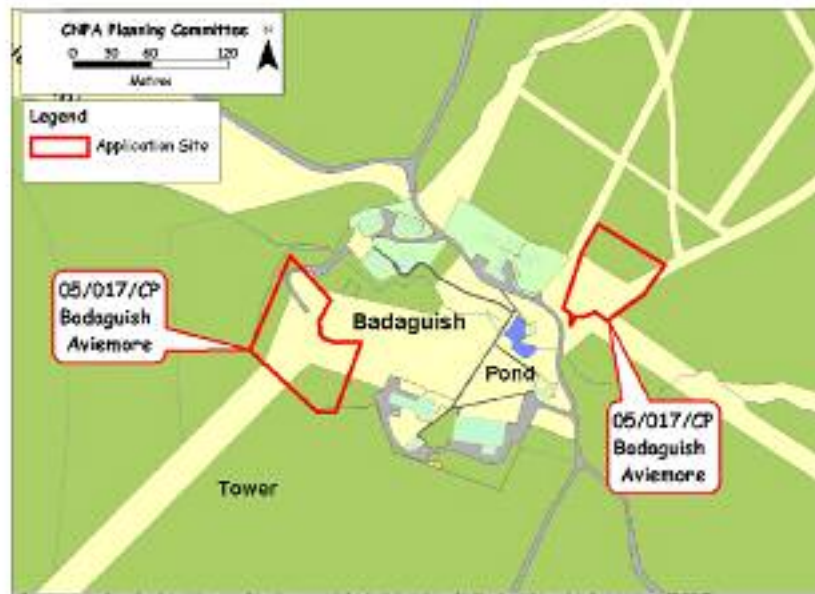
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**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** ERECTION OF FOUR RESIDENTIAL LODGES, AT BADAGUISH OUTDOOR CENTRE, GLENMORE, near AVIEMORE (FULL PLANNING PERMISSION)

**REFERENCE:** 05/017/CP

**APPLICANT:** BADAGUISH OUTDOOR CENTRE, PER BRACEWELL STIRLING ARCHITECTS, 5 NESS BANK, INVERNESS

**DATE CALLED-IN:** 28 JANUARY, 2005



**Fig. 1 - Location Plan**

## SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. This proposal is for the erection of 4 new lodges in 2 pairs at 2 separate locations at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre site, which is located within the Glenmore Forest to the east of Aviemore. Four similar lodges were approved by Highland Council in 2000 and were constructed in a single group on the site. The Lodges, which match those already built, will be finished with timber cladding on the walls and have dark grey roof tiles. Drainage is to the existing private treatment works which serves the Centre. On the site there are various other buildings relating to the outdoor centre operation, including a toilet block, wardens house, a bunkhouse, a "respite chalet", a sports building, a converted bothy and the site office. These buildings are arranged around a central open grassed amenity area and an obstacle course. Maturing trees surround the site providing a natural setting for the Centre.
2. Both locations for the Lodges are on the edges of woodland, largely maturing Sitka and Norway Spruce, and Lodge Pole Pine, where there are gaps in the woodland for overhead power lines. Some Scots Pine and Juniper are also located in these areas. The development will involve the removal of some non-native trees from the development sites.
3. Each new lodge is one and a half storeys in height. Each Lodge has the same design, with 2 floors of accommodation. On the ground floor there are living/dining/kitchen areas, 2 double bedrooms and showering and toilet facilities, all designed for all abilities. On the upper floor a further 2 double bedrooms and 2 single bedrooms are provided, with bathroom facilities (some en suite). There is an external staircase from the upper floor, on a gable end of the building. Each building has vehicular access to it, with parking spaces provided adjacent.
4. The proposal is part of a joint initiative by Highland Council, the Northern Constabulary and Speyside Trust to develop their capacities to engage with young people. Highland Council Education Department wish to offer outdoor education activities at Badaguish to primary and secondary schools, youth and community groups, initiatives for youths at risk and social inclusion, and for staff development. The Northern Constabulary wish to enhance their existing youth services by joint development of courses encapsulating adventure, citizenship and education. Speyside Trust wish to develop activities to employ, train and provide high quality work experience for disabled and disadvantaged people as stakeholders in managing and delivering services at the centre.
5. Both Highland Council and the Northern Constabulary have funding available to invest in the project which will diversify and expand the operation of the centre. Speyside Trust are seeking EC Objective 1 European Funding. It is proposed that Highland Council will lease the

existing lodge accommodation and bunkhouse on the site. The new lodges therefore represent replacement accommodation.

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

6. In the **Highland Structure Plan (approved March 2001)**, **Policy H3 (Housing in the Countryside)** states that new housing will generally be within existing and planned new settlements. The proposed development, although residential in nature, is for short term commercial “hostel” accommodation for visitors/users of the centre, rather than ‘housing’ in the general meaning. In this respect, **Policy B7 (Business Development in Rural Areas)** supports small-scale business development or extensions to existing indigenous industries. **Policy T2 (Tourism Developments)** supports high quality tourism development proposals, which extend the tourism season, provide wet weather opportunities, spread economic benefits, are accessible by means other than private vehicles and provide opportunities for the sustainable enjoyment and interpretation of the area’s heritage. **Policy T3 (Self Catering Tourist Accommodation)** supports tourist accommodation proposals on the basis that they are not used for permanent occupation.
7. **Policy L4 (Landscape Character)**, states that the Council will have regard to the desirability of maintaining and enhancing present landscape character in the consideration of development proposals. **Policy N1 (Nature Conservation)**, requires new developments to seek to minimise their impact on the nature conservation resource and enhance it wherever possible. For sites and species of international importance, developments which would have an adverse effect on the conservation interests for which a site has been designated, will only be permitted where there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest, including those of a social and economic nature. **Policy G2 (Design for Sustainability)**, lists a number of criteria on which proposed developments will be assessed. These include service provision (water and sewerage, drainage, roads, schools, electricity); accessibility by public transport, cycling, walking and car; energy efficiency in terms of location, layout and design (including the utilisation of renewable energy sources).
8. The site lies within the area covered by the **Glenmore Corridor**, in the **Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan (September 1997)**. This does not provide specific policies for the Badaguish area but there is a general policy for the “Corridor” area (**Policy 4.14.1, Development**) which accepts reasonable consolidation and improvement of established businesses in principle, but has a strong presumption against other further new development. In **Policy 4.14.3, (Other Land Use and Conservation)** it is stated that every encouragement will be given to active conservation measures where these are aimed at sustaining the natural heritage interest and restoring or enhancing the

underlying fauna, flora, scenery and man-made heritage features of each transitional zone.

9. **Policy 2.2.9 (Tourism and Recreation)** states that these activities will continue to make a vital contribution to the economy. The priority is to ensure that broadening the range and quality of facilities and accommodation is balanced with protecting the areas exceptional scenic and heritage resources. **Policy 2.2.10 (Tourism)** encourages the development of tourist accommodation and facilities at suitable sites within or adjoining communities. Development potential in parts of the countryside is limited by amenity and servicing factors. Priority will be given to, amongst others, expansion of existing facilities. **Policy 2.5.4 (Woodlands and Trees)** indicates that existing trees will be protected, including small groups of trees and granny pines which are important landscape, wildlife and amenity features of the countryside. The policy also states that generally development should not be sited within 20metres of the trunks of large or mature trees, and careful consideration will be given to the effect of related access and services on their stability.

## CONSULTATIONS

10. **Highland Council Planners**, under delegated powers, comment that there is no difficulty with the development in principle, insofar as it is consistent with the Local Plan Policy which specifies 'reasonable consolidation and improvement of established businesses'. Any consent granted for additional lodges should be subject to a suitably worded condition prohibiting their use as dwellings. The details of the siting of the lodges are not fully supported, with a preference for grouping the new lodges closer together. Other matters raised include the access roads to the lodges, and green transport issues (links to the Aviemore Railway Station either through a dedicated bus link using the public bus service – possibly with joint ticketing).
11. **SEPA** have commented that the development is acceptable, provided that the developers can demonstrate that the drainage works can accommodate the additional foul drainage from the new development without compromising the quality of the treated effluent.
12. Although not a formal consultee, as owners of the land to which the application relates, **Forestry Commission Scotland** has stated that they have no comments on this proposal. However, they wish to bring to our attention the potential cumulative effects of increased expansion on the forest environment at the location. They also suggest that any future development is accompanied by a professional assessment of any Environmental Impacts.

13. **SNH** has no objection to the proposed development and considers that there will be benefits for Natura interests, including pine woodland and capercaillie on and adjacent to the nearby Natura sites. The development site is adjacent to Glenmore Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Cairngorms candidate Special Area of Conservation adopted by the European Commission as a Site of Community Importance (SCI), and Cairngorms Special Protection Area (SPA). The interests in these special areas include pine woodland, bog woodland, capercaillie and Scottish crossbill. SNH comments that it is unlikely that any of the special features will be affected significantly either directly or indirectly.
14. SNH does not consider that the development will have any adverse impact on the Cairngorms National Scenic Area. A Natura appraisal has been completed to the satisfaction of SNH and it is likely that positive benefits to the pine woodland interest will occur by the removal of non-native pine species, thus reducing their potential to spread further into pine woodland. As part of the development, 2 short sections of overhead power line will be under grounded, which would be beneficial to capercaillie by reducing the likelihood of power line strike casualties. SNH recommends that all amenity planting of trees associated with the proposal is of native species that are appropriate to the location. The applicants should also demonstrate a commitment to the removal of regenerating non-native tree species at this location.
15. The **CNPA's Natural Resources Group** support the findings of SNH but add that it would be better for capercaillie and the integrity of the European designated site if a current non-functioning deer fence adjacent to the site, is removed rather than repaired and marked, as proposed by the applicant.
16. The **CNPA's Social Inclusion Policy Officer** supports the proposal and has commented that the development is relevant to one of the CNPA's corporate themes, ie to develop a "*Park for All, which is accessible and able to be enjoyed by everyone, and not just for the fit and the few or the better off*". In particular, the development is in line with the approved "Developing a Park for All - Social Inclusion" CNPA Board Paper of August 2004.
17. **Highland Council's Environmental Health Officer** has no objections to the proposal.

## REPRESENTATIONS

18. None received.

## APPRAISAL

19. The main issues for this application are to do with the principle of the use and type of development in this location, the details of siting and design, and the impact on designated areas.
20. The location is detached from any recognised settlement and within a sensitive locality. However, the development is related to an established outdoor recreational centre where new and expanding facilities have been developed for some years now. The site is obviously inappropriate for new permanent housing, but the residential lodges will be related to a facility where special groups from a wide area within and outwith the Park, can come to train and experience some of the special qualities of this part of the Park. Planning policies at national, regional and local level generally support developments which seek to consolidate and expand rural businesses and tourist opportunities. The proposal will allow the investment opportunities already identified by the supporting agencies, to move positively forwards. The principle of the development therefore conforms with planning policy and the National Park aims in this respect, particularly when you consider the social benefits that will accrue. A planning condition is recommended which would restrict the residential use to short-term accommodation associated with the Outdoor Centre. This is in line with policy and with the conditions imposed on the existing chalets.
21. The Outdoor Centre is close to specially designated areas. The site lies within the Glenmore Forest Park and within the Cairngorms National Scenic Area. The locality is an important natural, scenic and recreational area, and the site is close to, but detached from other recreational and tourist facilities in the Glenmore Corridor. Planning policies require any acceptable developments to be carefully designed in relation to the natural environment, and well absorbed visually by landform or trees. The applicants have submitted an Appropriate Assessment, which examines whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. The conclusion of this study, as agreed by SNH and the CNPA Natural Resources Group, is that there are no significant negative impacts, but some minor potentially positive effects – the under-grounding of short lengths of overhead power lines, and the removal and replacement of some non-native tree species.
22. The core of the Outdoor Centre site is an open amenity area, encompassing the obstacle course and pond and as such all of is of value for formal and informal recreational purposes and overall amenity. The existing pattern of development at the site is for scattered buildings around these open areas. While there is some logic to grouping all the buildings together, as a means of consolidating rather than encroaching into areas not yet developed, there is some value in not creating a small “suburban” grouping of buildings in such a rural location. The spacing of the lodges around the central open area

provides a more rural feel to the overall development. This is enhanced by setting the new buildings into spaces in the existing treed areas around the site. While some trees will have to be felled (not strictly in compliance with Local Plan Policy 2.5.4.(Woodlands and Trees)) to allow the new buildings to be incorporated into the landscape, the majority of the trees will be non-native species – originally planted for their commercial value, and now nearing maturity. There is the opportunity to retain some Scots pine and one Granny Pine and also to carry out some new planting – preferably enhancing the native tree species appropriate to the area. SNH have confirmed that this can enhance the biodiversity of the area. The joint initiative proposes to allow different operators and users of the site. There are therefore practical advantages for the overall functioning of the site, for siting the proposed lodges at locations detached from the existing lodges. Taking account of all factors, I am satisfied that the siting of the proposed developments is acceptable.

23. The construction of the buildings follows the style and materials of the other lodges built on the site, and the accommodation provides well for all abilities, particularly on the ground floors, where wheelchair users can access and use all the facilities on their own, or if necessary accompanied. There is vehicular access to all of the lodges, and adjacent parking. Whilst this necessitates the construction of some new access roads to, and parking areas at, each of the lodges, subject to sensitive design and finishes, they will allow full access around the site and to each of the lodges for the disabled. I am satisfied that the designs will complement the treed setting and not create any adverse landscape impacts while meeting the needs of the proposed occupiers.
24. To conclude, the development can be supported. It does not offend any planning policies. There are no negative impacts on the nearby designated areas and there are clear benefits for the sustainable social and economic development of the area in general.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK**

### **Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area**

25. Some trees will be lost from the edge of the site, but the development has been planned to minimise the loss of non-indigenous trees from the site. There are potential positive implications for capercaillie by the undergrounding of the electricity lines. The new buildings will be set against the backdrop of the maturing trees around the site.

### **Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources**

26. The main building material for the construction and finishing of the lodges is timber.

### **Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area**

27. The Outdoor Centre's main purpose is to improve understanding and enjoyment in the local environment for many different groups of visitors. The development will have positive implications for this aim.

### **Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area**

28. The centre aims to promote and develop the benefit of outdoor activities and youth work, through participation in high quality outdoor programmes and training. This provides a practical opportunity for young people, of all abilities, to develop a personal interest in activities which will contribute to an active healthy lifestyle. This development will help facilitate the joint initiatives for developing these socially inclusive aims.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

29. **That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to: Grant Full Planning Permission for the Erection of 4 Lodges at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre, Glenmore, subject to the following conditions;**
1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within 5 years from the date of this permission.
  2. That the 4 lodges hereby approved shall be used as short-term residential accommodation ancillary to and associated with the Badaguish Outdoor Centre, and shall not be used by a tenant, lessee, owner or occupier as their only or principal dwellinghouse. Occupation shall be restricted to use by persons requiring to stay at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre for recreational or vocational purposes only.
  3. That prior to the commencement of development on site, the applicants shall demonstrate, by the submission of detailed information, to the satisfaction of Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority, and in consultation with SEPA, that the existing private waste water treatment plant at the site has the capacity to accommodate the proposed new development and that there will be no detrimental impacts on the quality of the treated effluent.
  4. That prior to the commencement of development on site, the line of the new access roadways and parking areas and the exact positioning of the 4 lodges, hereby approved, shall be clearly marked out on the ground. In addition, the trees required for removal shall be marked, all for the inspection and further written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. Only those trees that are agreed to be removed shall be felled and the trees adjacent to the developments, which are to be retained, shall be protected by



fencing around the extremities of the crowns in accordance with BS5837 (Trees in Relation to Construction), all to the satisfaction of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority.

5. Tree planting, of a species and variety (native), and height and number, in accordance with a scheme to be submitted for the further written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority, shall be undertaken in the areas immediately surrounding the development hereby approved, during the first planting season next following the completion of the development.
6. That prior to the commencement of development on site, exact details and specifications for the construction, design and finishing of the new access roads and parking areas hereby approved, shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority.
7. That the stain for the external timber cladding for the lodges hereby approved, shall match that used on the existing lodges on the site.

Note to applicants.

If the deer fencing in the vicinity of the developments is now only required to mark the boundary of the site, the applicants are asked to consider the removal of the fencing, as opposed to repairing and marking.

**Neil Stewart**  
**28 April 2005**

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