

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR INFORMATION

**Title:** NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4

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#### **Purpose**

To inform the Planning Committee of the adoption of Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and confirm its status as part of the Development Plan for the Cairngorms National Park.

#### **Recommendation**

That Members note the adoption of NPF4 and its status as part of the Development Plan covering the Cairngorms National Park.

#### **Background**

1. On 13 February 2023, the Scottish Ministers adopted and published National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) which is included as Appendix I to this paper. NPF4 now forms part of the statutory Development Plan alongside the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 (LDP) and the statutory supplementary guidance that has been produced to accompany the LDP. NPF4 represents Scottish Ministers' planning policy and supersedes NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). It therefore forms part of the decision-making framework in relation to planning applications, as well as setting out requirements for future LDPs.

#### **NPF4 Status and compatibility with the LDP**

2. In addition to the adoption of NPF4 on 13 February, the Scottish Government Chief Planner set out the transitional arrangements for NPF4 in a letter to stakeholders on 8 February 2023. The letter makes clear that where an LDP has been adopted prior to or after the adoption and publication of NPF4, legislation states that in the event of any incompatibility between a provision of NPF and a provision of an LDP, whichever of them is the later in date is to prevail (Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 ("the 1997 Act"); section 24(3)).
3. In the case of the Cairngorms National Park, NPF4 is more recent than the 2021 LDP, so if there were to be conflict between the two, then the more recent policy of NPF4 would be applied. However, officers have examined NPF4 in detail have not identified any conflicts in policy. Mostly, the policy purpose and intent is broadly comparable between the two plans and subtle differences in the ways they are expressed.

4. NPF4 introduces some new policy areas in relation to tackling the climate change and nature crisis and to climate mitigation and adaptation and the chief planner's letter is clear that it is for the decision-maker to decide the significant weight that should be given to these matters in decision making. Otherwise, policies broadly build on previous national policy or guidance from Scottish Government.
5. It is important to note that NPF4 is intended to be applied in the same way as the LDP, in that all relevant policies should be taken into account in decisions and appropriate weight given to different policies and considerations by the decision-maker. Table I below lists the policies of NPF4.

<b>Table I. List of NPF4 Policies</b>
1. Tackling the Climate and Nature Crisis
2. Climate Mitigation and Adaptation
3. Biodiversity
4. Natural Places
5. Soils
6. Forestry, Woodland, and Trees
7. Historic Assets and Places
8. Green Belts
9. Brownfield, Vacant and Derelict Land, and Empty Buildings
10. Coastal Development
11. Energy
12. Zero Waste
13. Sustainable Transport
14. Design, Quality and Place
15. Local Living and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods
16. Quality Homes
17. Rural Homes
18. Infrastructure First
19. Heating and Cooling
20. Blue and Green Infrastructure
21. Play, Recreation and Sport
22. Flood Risk and Water Management
23. Health and Safety
24. Digital Infrastructure
25. Community Wealth Building
26. Business and Industry
27. City, Town, Local and Commercial Centres
28. Retail
29. Rural Development
30. Tourism
31. Culture and Creativity
32. Aquaculture
33. Minerals

## **Use of NPF4 in determining Planning Applications called in by the CNPA**

6. Planning Committee reports on planning application to be determined by the CNPA Planning Committee will now refer to policies in NPF4 in addition to the LDP. Preparing reports for the Planning Committee is always a balance between providing explanation of policy wording and intention of policy in relation to a development proposal and providing a concise and easily understood report.
7. As a starting point, officers will provide a checklist of the relevant NPF4 policies in each report in a similar way to that done for existing LDP policies. We will then refer explicitly to relevant planning policy considerations within the text of the report where we consider it adds to the quality of reasoning or recommendation for decision-making. If in future we identify an inconsistency, conflict or ambiguity between NPF4 and the LDP, we will explain so and incorporate that within our appraisal of the application. Officers will continue to review the scope and depth of information provided in the reports and seek to establish a standardised format over the coming months. All planning authorities in Scotland adapting to the use of NPF4 and we will share and learn from other good practice and any future guidance from Scottish Government.

## **Relevance for decisions-making on applications that affect the National Park but are outside its boundary.**

8. Occasionally, the CNPA comments on planning applications that are outside the National Park but affect its special qualities. This is most notably where windfarm proposals outside the National Park can have impacts on the National Park. The basic planning policy in relation to windfarms and the National Parks remains unchanged in NPF4 and National Parks remain one of few areas in Scotland where windfarms are not supported inside their boundaries or outside if they would affect the objectives of the designation or its integrity.
9. However, NPF4 is explicitly intended to promote the development of more renewable energy generating capacity across Scotland through new and re-powered wind energy developments. Much of the rest of Scotland is likely to see further wind energy development supported by NPF4, so it is likely that there will be further windfarm developments approved for areas surrounding the National Park in future.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

10. The adoption of NPF4 is significant milestone for the Scottish Planning system that will see the same planning policies being part of the development plan across Scotland and lead to future LDPs being focussed on local issues and local spatial planning. The planning team will ensure that the relevant policy considerations of NPF4 are appropriately considered in reports to the Planning Committee and will monitor the ways we do so to ensure the necessary elements are considered as easily and efficiently as possible for members.

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