



## For information

**Title:** Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy 2016

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### Strategic context

The Cairngorm and Glenmore area sees the highest concentration of visitors in the National Park while also being home to many protected sites and as a result the area sees some of the greatest visitor pressures. The area is also largely owned / managed by public sector organisations and so to help coordinate management of the area, a number of partners produced a Cairngorm & Glenmore strategy in 2016. More recently the new National Park Partnership Plan includes commitments to realise the benefits of tourism while also ensuring pressures are eased and the Cairngorms 2030 programme includes plans to designing a new sustainable model of transport for Glenmore to reduce reliance on private vehicles. In addition, the Cairngorms Connect partners now coordinate land management and conservation activity across most of the area much more effectively than was the case in 2016.

### Purpose

This paper is presented in order to update members on delivery of the actions contained in the 2016 strategy and to consider the role the Park Authority should take to lead on coordinated delivery of actions in the Cairngorm and Glenmore area in future.

### Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the progress that has been made in delivering actions contained in the 2016 Cairngorm and Glenmore strategy as well as those where there has been limited progress.
- b) Consider the approach proposed to a short-term action plan.

### Stakeholder engagement

1. Stakeholder engagement has continued since the strategy was agreed but with a hiatus over the pandemic period. More recently, the development phase of Cairngorms 2030 saw a number of public events to gather the views of stakeholders



including residents and businesses in Glenmore. Forestry and Land Scotland also hosted a preseason stakeholder event in April 2024 specifically to consider tourism issues with the Park Authority attending and presenting. The Park Authority also engages with Aviemore and Vicinity Community Council and the Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust.

## Strategic risk management

2. No direct strategic risks to the Park Authority have been identified as a result of the work described in this report. However, there are potentially significant environmental risks to the area and reputational risks to the Park Authority if the Cairngorm and Glenmore area is not properly managed.

## Background to the 2016 Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy

3. A number of public bodies formed a partnership in 2014 to collaborate on the long-term management of the Cairngorm and Glenmore area in recognition of the importance of this significant area of publicly owned land that, along with neighbouring Rothiemurchus attracted 40% of all visitors to the National Park. The purpose of the Partnership was to collaborate in the strategic management of these land holdings in order to deliver:
  - a) An exceptionally high-quality natural environment.
  - b) A world-class visitor experience.
  - c) An economic asset contributing to the economy of the National Park and Scotland.
  - d) Engaged business and community stakeholders.
  - e) Efficient and effective public service delivery.

A strategy to coordinate delivery of activity in this area was approved in 2016.

## Current situation

4. Since the 2016 strategy was approved, a number of significant changes have taken place including the UK's departure from the EU, the Covid pandemic, changes in operators at Cairngorm Mountain and the Glenmore campsite, the formation of Cairngorm Connect and work delivered through the Cairngorms Capercaillie project. These changes mean circumstances are vastly different to when the strategy was agreed. In recognition of this, the public sector partners have met on a number of



occasions since mid-2023 to consider what progress has been made and what is required for the future management of the area.

5. A summary of progress incorporating a Red Amber Green (RAG) rating as a measure of progress with each action from the 2016 strategy is included in the table at Annex 1.

## Future proposals

6. In recognition of the changes above and further anticipated changes – most notably the asset transfer of the Glenmore Visitor Centre to the Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust in November 2024 and medium-term plans for a Glenmore Transport Plan included in the Cairngorms 2030 programme, partners agreed that some further consideration should be given to the need for a new strategy or plan.
7. A number of the elements in the 2016 strategy related to collaboration around conservation activity and this element is now effectively being delivered through Cairngorms Connect. There is however a clear need for some collaborative actions to be agreed around the visitor experience theme in particular. However, partners are already working on a range of visitor management actions related to parking and visitor infrastructure that continue to require to be delivered and their impacts to be assessed. The change in ownership and operation of the visitor centre and café gives the community the chance to have a stronger voice in visitor management in future, but it will take time for them to establish their business and operational improvements.
8. It is officers' view that the area would currently benefit from maintaining the delivery focus of partners on actions already identified and some further assessment of their effectiveness, not at this stage any new or replacement strategy. Once the current proposals have been delivered and the community trust has had a chance to operate the visitor centre, it may be appropriate for the partners to consider a longer term strategy for future pressures or changes in approach, but at this point in time we consider that partners already have a package of actions to improve or maintain the visitor experience that they should continue to implement. The Cairngorm and Glenmore area remains one where monitoring of visitor numbers and behaviour is active and where any unexpected changes should be identified quickly, so if it appears that the current actions require a more comprehensive review, a revised strategy or action plan could be prepared quickly.



## Annex 1: Progress towards 2016 objectives

Long term Direction	Short Term Steps	Timescale (yrs)			Progress (RAG)	Comments
		1-2	3-5	5-10		
<b>Conservation</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand woodland and remove non-native tree species as part of a connected vision with neighbours</li> <li>• Restore montane woodland and natural tree lines</li> <li>• Protect core areas of undisturbed habitat for capercaillie</li> <li>• Safeguard the plateau habitats and species by actively managing recreation pressures</li> <li>• Ensure management changes safeguard the features associated with the area's international and national status as Natura sites, National Scenic Area and Wild Land Area</li> <li>• Ensure enhancements within the ski area are implemented to high quality standards appropriate to the sensitive environment</li> </ul>	Collaborate with neighbours to expand native woodland and continue non-native removal					Forestry & Land Scotland (FLS) work to remove non native trees via felling - large scale removal of non-native plantation at Rothiemurchus and within parts of Glenmore as per the FLS Strathspey Land Management Plan complete. Ongoing non-native regeneration removal from large areas of FLS open ground and native woodlands being funded through Cairngorms Connect. Natural regeneration survey of FLS open ground completed in 2022/23. Deer management has allowed expansion of native woodland towards a natural tree line with considerable success in areas like Ryvoan. Ongoing periodic removal of non native plants within Cairngorm estate.



	Implement the capercaillie framework actions including review of recreation management and identification of core areas of undisturbed habitat				Cairngorms Capercaillie Project work with user groups to reduce disturbance. New management arrangements in place and concept of "quiet areas for nature" being developed
	Expand montane woodland establishment within and around the ski area				Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd (CMSL) have an ongoing programme of tree planting between 2500 to 5000 trees per year. Looking at expanding this with spey fisheries board in 1-3 yr period to mitigate rising temps in upper catchments.
	Develop action plan to enhance the ski area by improving storage and removal of disused items				Large scale removal of disused infrastructure has taken place. Operational storage remains challenging.
	Develop agreed best practice standards for development and enhancement works in the ski area				Guided by Cairngorm Masterplan. Supporting documents agreed 2018. Associated C.E.M.P. in relevant planning apps.



Visitor Experience						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move to a single integrated ranger service across Cairngorm and Glenmore with increased presence on the ground</li> <li>• Enhance visitor infrastructure and facilities ensuring high quality low impact development</li> <li>• Enhance the access network to make visitor orientation easier and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats</li> <li>• Make a significant change in the way people access the area to increase the proportion of non-car access</li> <li>• Support enhancement of the wintersports experience and year round activity provision</li> </ul> <p>Continue to operate the effective Visitor Management Plan associated with the funicular</p>	Co-ordinate ranger services and review options for single service provision					New CNPA managed service to complement site based services from 2020.
	De-clutter signage and co-ordinate better visitor signage and information					CMSL investment on visitor arrival and signage at Cas Car park. FLS has replaced all Forestry Commission Scotland corporate signage and updated all information panels. Little progress on coordination of signage.
	Feasibility study for improved public transport and park and ride approach					Preliminary options appraisal for Glenmore transport undertaken 2022/23 as part of Cairngorms 2030 work.
	Improve effectiveness of existing car parks and reduce roadside parking					Some restrictions on roadside parking now in place. Traffic orders / parking charges to be introduced winter 2023/24. Moves towards a more holistic and better enforced approach to parking management progressing slowly
	Work with on-site businesses to develop plans for enhancement of visitor facilities at					New campsite operator in Glenmore, investing in the site. Asset transfer of Glenmore visitor centre. Minor improvements to FLS beach toilets spring 2023. New Highland Council



	Cairngorm Mountain and Glenmore					public toilets at Glenmore opened autumn 2023.
	Create improved outdoor learning space and enhance volunteering opportunities					Volunteer Cairngorms programme being expanded but not specific to Cairngorm & Glenmore area. FLS hosting volunteers at the Glenmore visitor centre
	Improve views at key locations through selective tree felling and vegetation management					No significant progress
<b>Rural Development</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase business collaboration</li> <li>• Support improvements to the year round tourism offering</li> <li>• Improve the quality of place and infrastructure on which tourism and activity businesses depend</li> <li>• Improve co-ordination of marketing and promotion</li> <li>• Continue to develop the area's reputation as a centre of excellence for outdoor learning and sport</li> </ul>	Collaborate on customer feedback and market research across on-site businesses					Some individual organisation research undertaken (CNPA led National Park Visitor survey), FLS visitor research Any others?
	Invest in the quality of public space to ensure a high quality place					Some major investments of public money including roadside path and Utsis Bridge replacement
	Scottish Youth Hostels Association (SYHA) and partners to review options to					Proposal considered by the Glenmore Visitor Improvement Plan but SYHA and partners chose not to progress this



	renew the youth hostel facility					
	Collaborate with on-site businesses to improve cross promotion					Pre-season meetings have taken place in Glenmore. Engagement with Cairngorms Business Partnership for wider promotion and responsible visitor messaging.
	Natural Retreats <sup>1</sup> and partners to develop and deliver masterplan for Cairngorm Mountain					Cairngorm Mountain Masterplan produced 2021. Developments under way.

<sup>1</sup> Natural retreats no longer operator - now Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Limited	
	No or limited progress
	Some progress and / or activity continuing
	Good progress / activity completed

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