

# YOUR COMMUNITY ... YOUR PLAN

## Vicinity

## Living in Aviemore and

### STATEMENT

Aviemore is recognised internationally as a ski resort which now offers an increasingly large number and variety of sports and activities. Open for 52 weeks of the year, it is a village for all seasons with a year round programme of festivals and events. It has a strong record of conservation in terms of the care for the countryside and indeed has made a business out of conservation. Aviemore plays a vital part in the Scottish tourist industry and is the economic driver for the National Park.

The residents feel strongly that for a community of around 5000 people, Aviemore and Vicinity punches well above its weight, attracting more than a million visitors per year. Aviemore itself has come a long way since its beginnings as a railway junction in the 19th century and with the redevelopment of the resort over the last decade especially, it has seen residential and visitor numbers rising considerably with growth in both tourism and conservation activity.

The area is easily accessible by air, rail and road and due to the wide choice of accommodation provision, it plays host to an increasing number of international and high status conferences and events throughout the year.

Residents feel that there is a lack of appreciation by public agencies of the economic growth rate of the area and that an urgent review of the community infrastructure in the way of services, amenities and public facilities is now required, as it is struggling to keep pace.

Aviemore and Vicinity needs to continue to develop its tourist industry whilst recognising and understanding the requirements, wants and expectations of its visitors and residents. The Aviemore brand needs to be safeguarded and this requires recognition by public agencies. The community too must remain ambitious concerning the development of future projects. These new developments have been identified as a state of the art indoor sports centre, the new community primary school, the riverside park, a new Tesco and the An Camas Mòr housing development together with a fully integrated transport system and responsible open access on Cairngorm mountain.

A resolute effort is required to improve the look of the village, particularly by putting 'nature' back into its existing and new housing developments, through the use of green screening and planting as well as the more intelligent positioning of street lighting.

The above developments and environmental enhancements will significantly improve the quality of life for residents and enhance the experience for visitors to the area. These factors are inextricably bound together and future employment, with increased value placed on service industry jobs will particularly encourage Aviemore's young people to make a life in the area as lifestyle and opportunities continue to improve.

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## Living in Grantown

### STATEMENT

Grantown on Spey was designed as a planned town with a distinctive layout, resulting in a wide, central square with leafy avenues leading off it and a traditional Victorian feel to the architecture of the high street and the main roads and houses surrounding it. The town lies on the river Spey and is approached in all directions by scenic woodland roads, which residents feel add to the impression of entering a special place. It has a strong association for 'GRANTS' from all over the world, who often visit to investigate their family links with the area.

The flat, easily accessed high street is unusual in that it contains many small individual shops selling a wide range of goods, which visitors and locals appreciate. The town is considered by residents to be a good place in which to bring up a family, as it has a good primary and secondary school, is clean and well kept with a strong sense of civic pride. Its busy hotels, sports centre with swimming pool, cottage hospital, care home, dental suite and health centre, museum with its bell tower, Strathspey Thistle football club and well run caravan park are just some of the many facilities which the community enjoys. The community-owned Anagach Woods which come right into the residential area of the town provide a wonderful resource for recreation and conservation as does the Spey with its opportunities for fishing and wildlife watching.

Grantown has three industrial estates which are full of small and medium businesses providing a much needed source of employment for the local population. There is a good mix of business and community in the town, creating a positive ambience and resulting in a large number of active local organisations which support a wide range of interests and age groups, including notably many younger members.

Being a town with a relatively large population, Grantown residents are aware that a thriving high street is the key to its future prosperity and its ability to take advantage of the number of visitors to nearby Aviemore, by drawing them on to visit Grantown and its tourist facilities as well. The successful extension of the Strathspey Steam Railway from Broomhill to Grantown on Spey is seen as playing an essential part as it too will fulfil a vital role in attracting visitors and providing locals with a further transport link so hopefully enabling more people to live in Grantown and access job opportunities in other parts of the area such as Aviemore. The factor causing the greatest concern however is the continuing rise in the number of empty shops and the potential for the resulting decline in the footfall on the high street. The need for a robust marketing plan is considered to be crucial by the Business Association, to reinforce the message regarding Grantown's special character - the relaunch of the town's major retail outlet in the spring of 2011 is seen as a vital component in this.

The other serious threat to the town's future wellbeing is if Grantown's young people move away through reduced work and housing prospects. Whereas the town is unwilling to accept a large scale housing development, the residents do feel that a compromise needs to be reached, so that youngsters are not leaving because they can't get accommodation. This would result in a detrimental imbalance in the population, turning Grantown into a 'retirement town', with a loss of vitality of young people in schools and community organisations. A low impact, small scale mix of accommodation is therefore called for.

Grantown residents are hopeful that the next 10 to 15 years will see a town that continues to be busy, safe and confident in its ability to provide a special place for locals and visitors. It will have retained its attractive appearance, with all of its current assets intact, well maintained and supporting the community. It is hoped that during this period, there will be a new community centre built, more top quality hotels and restaurants established, full schools with a balanced population, lots of successful businesses and that Grantown will still be recognised as a wildlife capital.

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## Living in Killiecrankie

### STATEMENT

Killiecrankie is a small village in Highland Perthshire lying on the river Garry at the Pass of Killiecrankie and marking the southernmost entrance to the Cairngorms National Park.

It is well known for several reasons: the famous Battle of Killiecrankie fought at the northern end of the village during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1689; for its historical connections with Robert the Bruce and Mary Queen of Scots; as well as for its natural beauty and breathtaking landscape.

The Pass of Killiecrankie which is dominated by the Garry and ancient mixed woodland, is owned and managed by the National Trust for Scotland and has one of the best loved views in Perthshire, looking northwards through the Pass from the Garry Bridge. Surrounded by such beautiful countryside which supports an abundance of wildlife, Killiecrankie attracts visitors throughout the year for walking, cycling and horse riding, but particularly in autumn when the hillsides are ablaze with spectacular colour.

Killiecrankie residents place great value on the tremendous community spirit within their village, with annual events such as Burns Night and Hogmanay celebrations well attended by locals and people from the surrounding vicinity. These events are held in their well used village hall that is integral to the community way of life and a focal point for a wide variety of activities.

The unique beauty of the area and the increasing numbers of visitors that it attracts potentially comes with a price however. Residents are particularly concerned about the continuing rise in wild camping in the area and the impact it has on the environment and would like to see this issue better managed. Similarly whilst welcoming new tourist developments and activities such as bungee jumping (Highland Fling) and other events, they are aware that such introductions need to be managed carefully, so as not to create an imbalance in the locals' interests. There is a well understood need for maintaining a vital and thriving tourist trade, but this needs to be balanced with local housing being available not only for the valued holiday letting businesses but for young people and families who wish to stay and work in the area. With this in mind, any opportunity for future housing developments must be targeted for residential use primarily, sympathetic in design, to redress the imbalance of a small but significant 2nd home population that currently exists.

The inevitable continuing rise in oil prices will underline the requirement for the introduction of a local infrastructure that supports energy efficient sources as well as leading to the pressing need for a properly integrated transport system for both locals and visitors to access the area satisfactorily whilst reducing the carbon footprint.

The NTS Visitor Centre to the south of the village is a valuable resource to the community but is not easily accessed from the village. A link to the Visitor Centre through provision of better signage and installation of an off-road path is therefore also a high priority for the community.

Finally the community hopes to gain support for the building and promotion of an indoor equestrian centre, in particular to help develop their vaulting training for local youngsters. They have achieved notable success in this field to date, despite having to travel significant distances to practice and compete. For this small community this is a big wish but one they are determined to pursue.

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## Living in Nethybridge

### STATEMENT

Situated in the heart of Strathspey, the village of Nethy Bridge often affectionately referred to simply as "Nethy" has been a holiday destination since Victorian times, yet it remains unspoilt with the majority of its buildings hidden away in quiet locations next to the ancient Caledonian pine forest of Abernethy. Set against the backdrop of the Cairngorm mountains and hundreds of acres of Abernethy Forest (RSPB owned), the village spans the lower reaches of the River Nethy.

Nethy Bridge also known as the 'Forest Village' has many historical landmarks and qualities making it an attractive place for residents and visitors. Abernethy Old Kirk, Castle Roy, four Thomas Telford bridges and industrial archaeology sites, all complement the farming landscape, iconic wildlife, Speyside Way and stunning forest environment. In addition the village has a shop and post office, busy community centre, primary school, Abernethy Outdoor Centre, an active parish Church (Church of Scotland), local butcher and a ranger service (Explore Abernethy), in addition to the river Nethy which is easily accessed via the community created riverside walks.

A great asset to the surrounding area is the iconic wildlife in the area, namely the Ospreys at Loch Garten. These birds of prey have been a magnet for attracting wildlife tourism for decades. With this in mind, Nethy Bridge residents would like to explore ways of creating greater communication and consultation links with the RSPB as there are several mutual benefits to be gained from an enhanced relationship.

At the heart of the village is a resourceful community who are committed to improving the quality of life and opportunities for the current and future generations of Nethy residents. This is reflected in the number and variety of community groups that exist, which look to work together and are well supported. The community's website (Nethybridge.com) and quarterly newsletter (The Nethy) help to keep residents informed of events, activities and village news, whilst also encouraging visitors to stay. The Abernethy Games are a good example of this community's successful cooperation, as the annual event goes from strength to strength attracting thousands of spectators each year from home and abroad.

Nethy Bridge's concern for the future lies in what it sees as the risk of unsympathetic housing developments in scale and design. Residents are keen for any building development that does occur, to be done using local trade and skills and in keeping with the existing dwellings, - scattered within woodland and avoiding the hard landscaping that seems to be packaged in with new development today eg soft verges not hard edges next to the roadside.

The continuation of traditional businesses such as farming, building and landscaping will hopefully all continue to provide employment opportunities for the younger generation, but this can't happen if there is an accommodation shortage due to lack of access to land for building, low wages, high cost of living and an affordable housing shortage due to the current level of 2nd homes being taken up in the community. The ability to expand small business opportunities to support local tradesmen is also one of the key factors that will determine the future sustainability of the village.

Nethy Bridge Community Development Company are hopeful that within the next decade, they will have realised their ambition of getting a successful wind energy scheme going in the community, supporting local amenities including the community centre.

Residents would not like Nethy Bridge to be very different from the peaceful yet attractive, socially active village it currently is. It is hoped that in future, people will still enjoy fishing on the Spey, the forest area will be well managed, it may be darker due to less street lighting, the stunning views will still be appreciated and it may even have a tea room for all to enjoy.