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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:**

Construction of enclosures, siting of storage container, erection of fencing at Highland Wildlife Park, Kincaig, Highland, PH21 1NL

**REFERENCE:** 2020/0177/DET

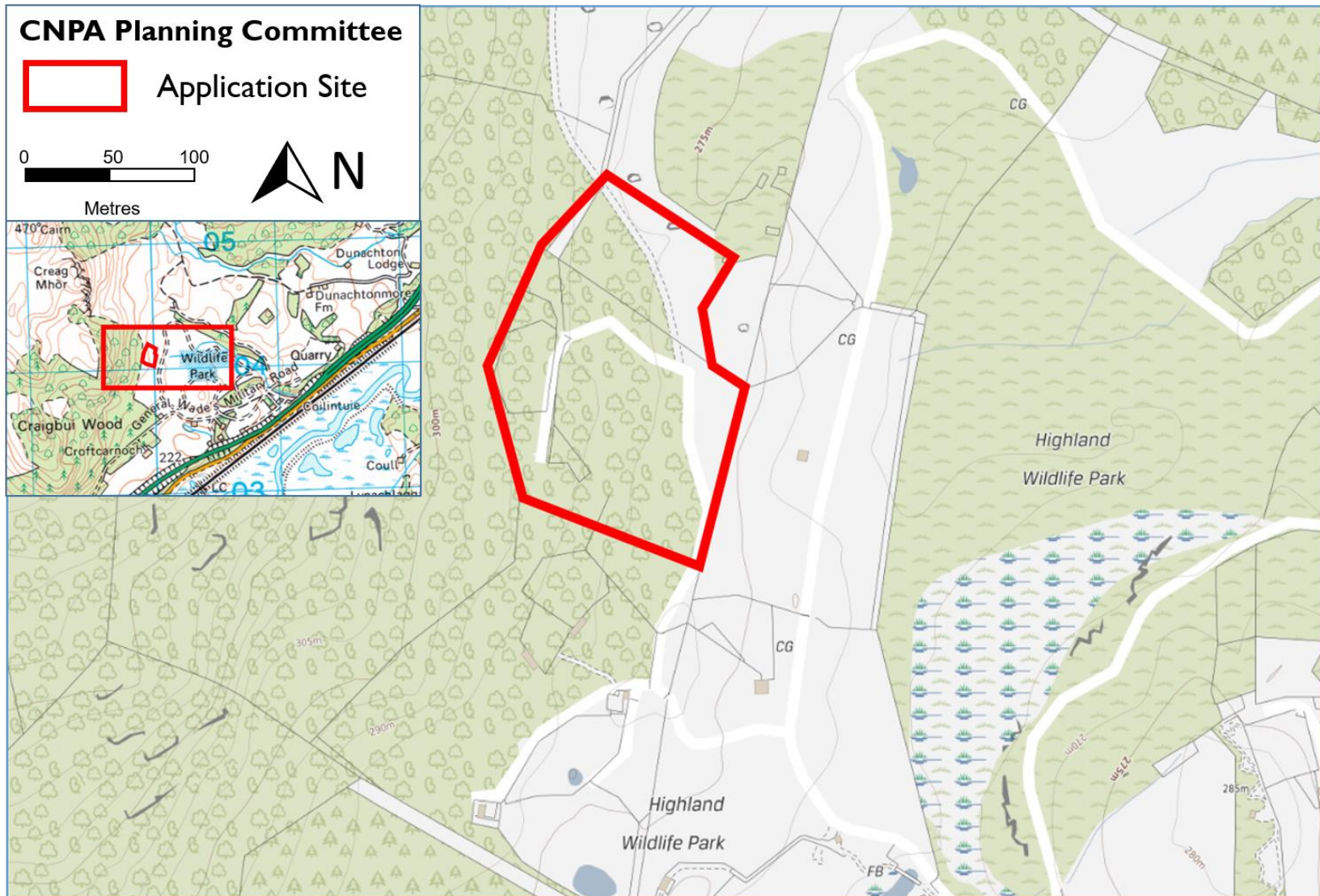
**APPLICANT:** Mr Stephen Plowman

**DATE CALLED-IN:** 10 August 2020

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve subject to conditions

**CASE OFFICER:** Katie Crerar, Planning Officer

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## **SITE DESCRIPTION, PROPOSAL AND HISTORY**

### **Site Description**

1. The application site lies within the Highland Wildlife Park which is located 3km south of Kincaig. The Highland Wildlife Park is an established 105 Hectare safari park run by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. It is home to a wide range of native and non-native animal species which visitors can come to see. The Wildlife Park takes its main access from the B9152 and the site is largely a mixture of grassland, scrub and woodland with a variety of animal enclosures and limited built development (concentrated in the south west). There is a large circular main drive through the reserve covering the north and eastern part of the Wildlife Park in a large circuit that connects to the main visitor hub (in the south west) with a café, shop and pedestrian paths connecting different animal enclosures. There is a main surfaced vehicle track which runs through the open reserve part of the park. The application site is located in the north of the Wildlife Park that is not accessed by the public.

### **Proposal**

2. The drawings and documents associated with this application are listed below and are available on the Cairngorms National Park Authority website unless noted otherwise:  
<http://www.eplanningcpa.co.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=QEJHSXSI0CH00>

<b>Title</b>	<b>Drawing Number</b>	<b>Date on Plan*</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
*Location Plan, I:2250		24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Site plan	SWA24072020/SP	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Bio secure fence detail	SWA24072020/FE NCE	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Breeding Unit Plan	SWA24072020/01	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Breeding Unit End Elevation (02)	SWA24072020/02	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Breeding Unit End Elevation (03)	SWA24072020/03	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Breeding Unit Front Elevation	SWA24072020/03	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Breeding Unit Rear Elevation	SWA24072020/04	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Breeding Unit iso with dims	SWA24072020/06	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Breeding Unit post detail	SWA24072020/08	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife bio secure post detail	SWA24072020/09	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
*SWAforLife Reintroduction pen post detail	SWA24072020/10	24/07/2020	10/08/2020
Tree Survey		31/08/2020	01/09/2020

*Tree Constrains Plan 1:400		08/2020	01/09/2020
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\* Where no specific day of month has been provided on the plan, the system defaults to the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.

3. This application seeks full planning permission for the construction of a Wildcat breeding compound required to establish a breeding programme to save Wildcats from extinction in Scotland. This application will deliver part of the LIFE funded wildcat reintroduction project, of which CNPA are a partner. The timing of this project is important to ensure kittens reared this year can enter the breeding programme at the Wildlife Park this winter.
4. The application site is located on the north western edge of the Highland Wildlife Park in an existing 'off-show' animal enclosure currently being used as Wildcat reintroduction enclosures. The site itself extends to 2.97 hectares and the project will comprise of 12 breeding units, 8 fenced pre-release enclosures and a storage container all bound by a bio-secure fence.
5. Access to the development site will be taken from the south eastern boundary from an existing track adjacent to the proposed wood clad storage shed.
6. The 12 breeding units are timber framed structures with mesh covered pitched roofs and will be built in four blocks of two and one block of four (see Site Plan). The double breeding unit extends 29.85m in length by 6m wide and 4.5m high (to the pitch of the roof). In addition, there are small flat roofed annexed enclosures attached to each side of the main breeding units extending 3m on one side and 1.2m on the other.
7. The block of four breeding units will be constructed using the same design and dimensions of the double units arranged in an 'L' shape to fit into the space available.
8. The breeding units are all mesh covered to contain the wildcats but will be built on the existing ground habitat to provide a natural environment for them. The breeding units will be grouped in the south east corner of the application site.
9. Adjacent to the group of breeding units, there will be a wood clad storage container measuring 2.6m by 6m on the south eastern boundary of the application site.
10. The pre-release enclosures will be situated to the north and west of the breeding units and measure approximately 60m by 20m, with a central dividing fence. They will be fenced using 100 x 100mm posts situated 2.4m above ground, dug in to a depth of 1.2m with the base set in postcrete. The posts will be surrounded by 50x50mm box 14 gauge mesh sunk to a depth of 50cm and set in lean concrete. At the top of the posts will be 2m angle iron cranks drilled to accommodate three line wires and the total height of the fencing (including the crank) will be 3 metres.
11. The whole application site is surrounded by existing bio secure fencing. However parts of it will require to be upgraded and/or filled in to the same specifications as the pre-release enclosures using 100 x 100mm posts 2.4m above ground, and dug in to a depth of 1.2m with the base set in postcrete surrounded by 50x50mm box 14 gauge mesh sunk to a depth of 50cm and set in lean concrete. This bio secure fencing will have

100mm box Rylock stock net overlapping the lower mesh to the full height of the post and measure a total of 2.4 metres in height.

12. The site is currently a mixture of grassland, juniper scrub and woodland. A tree survey undertaken for the site concluded that the development can be accommodated whilst avoiding the radial Root Protection Areas of the surveyed trees. With the use of some temporary tree protection fencing, the proposal should not lead to any damage to the appearance or conservation value of the area.
13. The application doesn't require any services and any animal and food waste from the site will be removed to the existing waste facility at the Wildlife Park.

## History

14. There have been a number of small planning applications at the Highland Wildlife Park including erecting a polytunnel (09/00032/FULBS), installing a small pedestrian access (14/02893/FUL), extending the kitchen building at the café (14/02789/FUL) and constructing a road and car park (16/04258/FUL). However there is no recent planning history on the specific area of land that this proposal is located.

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

### Policies

<b>National Policy</b>	Scottish Planning Policy 2014	
<b>Strategic Policy</b>	Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2017 - 2022	
<b>Local Plan Policy</b>	Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan (2015) Those policies relevant to the assessment of this application are marked with a cross	
POLICY 1	NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT	
POLICY 2	SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH	
POLICY 3	SUSTAINABLE DESIGN	X
POLICY 4	NATURAL HERITAGE	X
POLICY 5	LANDSCAPE	X
POLICY 6	THE SITING AND DESIGN OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT	
POLICY 7	RENEWABLE ENERGY	
POLICY 8	SPORT AND RECREATION	
POLICY 9	CULTURAL HERITAGE	
POLICY 10	RESOURCES	
POLICY 11	DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS	

15. All new development proposals require to be assessed in relation to policies contained in the adopted Local Development Plan. The full wording of policies can be found at:  
<http://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Park%20Authority/Planning/LDPI5.pdf>

## Planning Guidance

16. Supplementary guidance also forms part of the Local Development Plan and provides more details about how to comply with the policies. Guidance that is relevant to this application is marked with a cross.

Policy 1	New Housing Development Non-Statutory Guidance	
Policy 2	Supporting Economic Growth Non-Statutory Guidance	
Policy 3	Sustainable Design Non-Statutory Guidance	X
Policy 4	Natural Heritage Supplementary Guidance	X
Policy 5	Landscape Non-Statutory Guidance	X
Policy 7	Renewable Energy Supplementary Guidance	
Policy 8	Sport and Recreation Non-Statutory Guidance	
Policy 9	Cultural Heritage Non-Statutory Guidance	
Policy 10	Resources Non-Statutory Guidance	
Policy 11	Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance	

## CONSULTATIONS

### Summary of the Main Issues Raised by Consultees

17. **Environmental Health** raise no objection to the proposal but note that the applicant should ensure that any development complies with the site licence conditions.
18. **CNPA Landscape Adviser** is satisfied that this proposal will have minimal impact upon the ground vegetation of this area and that the design of the fences and enclosures are in keeping with other structures in the immediate area and the wider Wildlife Park. Most of the structures will be largely hidden within the retained scrub cover and they advise that there will be no adverse effect upon the landscape character or visual amenity of this site or surrounding areas.
19. **CNPA Ecology Adviser** is also satisfied that the proposal is designed to have minimal impact upon the existing woodland, trees and ground vegetation of this area. The proposal aims to retain as many trees and as much scrub cover (including juniper) as possible to provide valuable cover for Wildcat. The Ecology Advisor is satisfied that sufficient measures are in place to ensure impacts to mature trees are avoided during construction.
20. The site vegetation is a mixture of grassland, juniper scrub and open birch woodland, some of which is already enclosed in existing fences. There is one breeding pen that will occupy the juniper area however very few small (less than 1.0m high) juniper will have to be removed. Juniper will be retained within the breeding pens. The juniper is of an age that can successfully be replanted.
21. The wooded scrub area will have fence lines erected within it. However it was again indicated that all significant trees will be avoided. There will be some loss of small (less than 2m high) of regenerating birch along the fence line. However these are very frequent on site and there would be no overall impact upon the cover of the area.

22. In respect of protected species, the area proposed for the works is currently fenced and there is a second fence to prevent large mammals (i.e. fox, badger and otter) entering the site due to bio security risks. Therefore it is highly unlikely that these species are present within the site. The trees are not of such an age or condition (with large cracks or hollows) to support bats and red squirrels are not recorded in this area.

## REPRESENTATIONS

23. No representations have been received.

## APPRAISAL

### The Principle

24. The principle of the Wildcat breeding units and associated enclosures/fencing are considered to fit well with the existing activities of the Highland Wildlife Park. This project seeks to further expand the conservation work of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and enhance the existing operations in terms of conservation of a protected species.
25. The proposal is designed to be in keeping with and complement the existing style of the structures and fences already present on the application site and in the wider surrounding Wildlife Park.
26. Overall, it is considered that the principle of this application complies with Policy 3: Sustainable Design.

### Landscape

27. The development is located within the existing Highland Wildlife Park and relates well to the rest of the Park. The development site is already fenced with large deer fencing (some posts are 100 – 150 square with gate posts of 250 diameter) and the new proposal will be consistent with this, comprising smaller fenced enclosures and timber framed breeding units. This style of fencing and enclosure is common within the Wildlife Park and will not introduce a new landscape feature.
28. The development site already has other similar features. Therefore whilst there would be additional fencing it will not appear inappropriate or detract from the character of the immediate and surrounding area.
29. The development will be visible from within the Wildlife Park and especially the vehicle circuit of the main reserve. However the design of the breeding units and fencing will be less visible than existing enclosures in the same area (they will not have the green sheet material at the top of the fence). Therefore they may be less visible than existing features. Only one enclosure will actually be visible from this road and the rest will be hidden from view by the topography.

30. The views from outwith the Wildlife Park are limited and over some distance. Therefore, there will be no adverse effect upon the visual amenity. The proposal is considered to comply with Policy 5: Landscape.

### **Ecology / Environmental Impacts**

31. The development is unlikely to have any significant adverse environmental or ecological impacts. The site vegetation is a mixture of grassland, juniper scrub and open birch woodland, some of which is already enclosed in existing fences. Juniper will be retained within the breeding pens to provide natural habitat for the Wildcats. Any small scale disturbance by vehicles will be minimal and should regenerate naturally.
32. The wooded scrub area will have fence lines erected within it. A Tree Survey was undertaken which set out that the proposal will avoid the radial Root Protection Areas of the surveyed trees on the site and whilst some temporary tree protection fencing may be required, there should not be any damage to significant trees on the site. There may be some limited loss of regenerating birch however these are very frequent on site and would not impact upon the cover of the area.
33. There are unlikely to be any protected species at the site because of existing fencing and the development itself will further the conservation of wildcat which are a protected species. The proposal is considered to comply with Policy 4: Natural Heritage.

### **CONCLUSION**

34. It is considered that this proposal for the construction of Wildcat breeding units and enclosures is acceptable in land use planning terms. The principle, character and design of the proposal is compatible with the existing structures and operations of the Highland Wildlife Park. It is not considered that there will be any significant landscape or ecological impacts as a result of the proposal and therefore the application is considered to comply with the Local Development Plan policies and is recommended for approval.



## RECOMMENDATION

**That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to approve the Construction of enclosures, siting of storage container, erection of fencing at Highland Wildlife Park, Kinncraig, Highland, PH21 1NL for the following subject to the following conditions:**

- \* *Those conditions listed below in bold text are suspensive conditions, which require to be discharged prior to implementation of the development.*

### Conditions

- 1. No development shall commence until full details and specifications of the external finishing materials of the wood clad storage container have been submitted to and approved in writing by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.**

**Thereafter the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.**

**Reason:** To ensure a full assessment is undertaken of the appropriateness of the external materials of the storage container and the development will not adversely impact upon the landscape setting of the development site in accordance with Policy 3: Sustainable Design and Policy 5: Landscape of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015.

- 2. No development shall commence until details of the tree protection measures have been submitted to and approved in writing by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority.**

**Thereafter the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.**

**Reason:** To ensure the development will not adversely impact upon existing trees and the landscape setting of the development site in accordance with Policy 4: Natural Heritage and Policy 5: Landscape of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2015.

### Informatives

- The development hereby approved must commence within 3 years of the date of this decision notice. If development has not commenced within this period then this planning permission will lapse.
- The person undertaking the development is required to give the Planning Authority prior written notification of the date which it is intended to commence the development. Attached to this decision notice is a Notice of Initiation of Development for completion and submission. Submission of this information assists

the Cairngorms National Park Authority Monitoring and Enforcement Officer in monitoring active work within the area to ensure compliance with the approved details and to identify and correct any potential problems, as they arise, rather than later when it may be more difficult and more costly to rectify. Failure to give notice would constitute a breach of planning control which may result in enforcement action being taken.

3. Following completion of the development, a notification of completion shall, as soon as practicable, be given to the Planning Authority. Attached to this decision notice is a Notice of Completion of Development for completion and submission. Submission of this form will assist the Cairngorms National Park Authority Monitoring and Enforcement Officer in making a final inspection and checking compliance with the approved drawings and conditions. If the development hereby approved is to be carried out in phases, then a notice of completion should be submitted at the completion of each phase.

The map on the first page of this report has been produced to aid in the statutory process of dealing with planning applications. The map is to help identify the site and its surroundings and to aid Planning Officers, Committee Members and the Public in the determination of the proposal. Maps shown in the Planning Committee Report can only be used for the purposes of the Planning Committee. Any other use risks infringing Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Maps produced within this Planning Committee Report can only be reproduced with the express permission of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and other Copyright holders. This permission must be granted in advance.