
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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(DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: PLANNING PERMISSION FOR TEMPORARY USE OF GROUNDS FOR SITING PRE-FABRICATED 10 TIMBER WIGWAM TENTS (REVISED APPLICATION) AT BADAGUISH OUTDOOR CENTRE, GLENMORE, AVIEMORE.

REFERENCE: 10/107/CP

APPLICANT: SPEYSIDE TRUST BADAGUISH OUTDOOR CENTRE C/O BRACEWELL STIRLING ARCHITECTS, INVERNESS

DATE CALLED-IN: 16 APRIL 2010

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE, WITH CONDITIONS

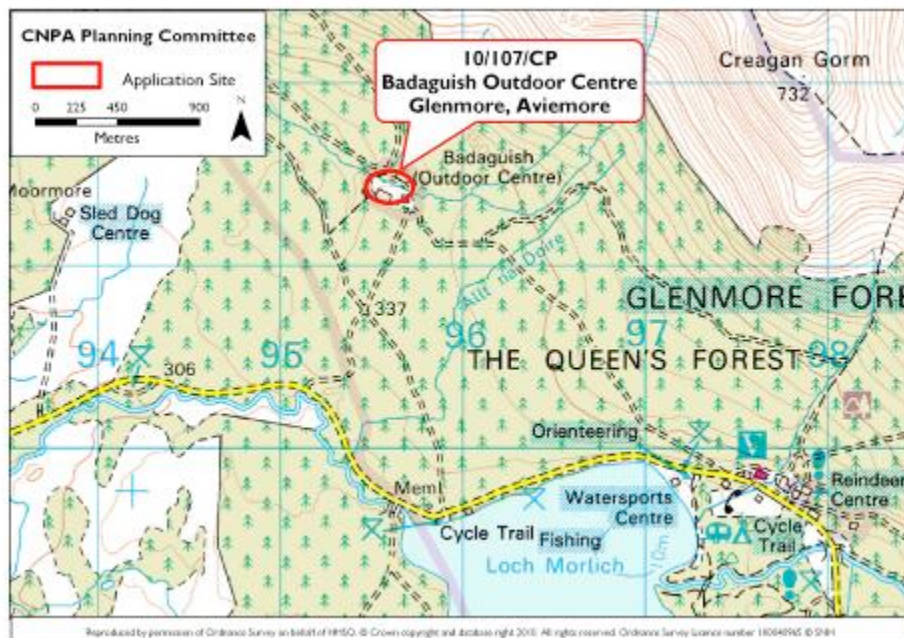


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. Planning permission is sought in this application for the temporary use of ground at Badaguish Outdoor Centre for the siting of 10 pre-fabricated timber wigwam tents. Planning permission, for a temporary period of three years, was granted by

the CNPA in June 2009 for a similar proposal. The current planning application is a revised application, essentially seeking to site the 10 wigwams in alternative positions on the site, for a three year period.

2. Badaguish Outdoor Centre is located in Glenmore, approximately 6.5 kilometres to the east of Aviemore. The outdoor centre is operated by Speyside Trust and currently includes a variety of indoor and outdoor activity areas, as well as accommodation facilities,¹ and a recently developed toilet and shower block. An area within the site is also utilised as a campground during busy periods. The outdoor centre is located in a clearing in Glenmore Forest, and is accessed via a single track access road which extends from the nearest public road (which leads from Aviemore to Glenmore and the Cairngorm Mountain ski centre).
3. The proposed 'wigwams' are prefabricated timber clad structures. The A frame units are timber and have an entrance door positioned in the gabled front elevation, with small windows in the side (roof) elevations. Each wigwam measures 2.4 metres x 3.6 metres, with an internal head height of 2.3 metres at the apex. The wigwams can accommodate 4 single mattresses. Manufacturers details² which have been provided in support of the application indicate that the interior wall would be plaster boarded, and the external timber cladding would be Siberian larch. Units would be fully insulated and double glazed. The units are intended to provide an alternative to traditional camping and have the potential to extend the current traditional camping season into the Spring and Autumn.³



Fig. 2 : Examples of typical wigwams

4. The temporary permission that was granted for the wigwams at Badaguish in 2009 was for the siting of the units in two specific locations within the complex (CNPA planning ref. no. 09/049/CP refers). Six wigwams were proposed in an existing hard standing area adjacent to the recently developed toilet / shower block in the south eastern corner of the complex. The four remaining wigwams were proposed in an open grassed area towards the centre of the site, in proximity to an existing activity course.

¹ Existing accommodation on the site includes lodges and chalets and a wardens house. Bunkhouse accommodation also previously existed on the site.

² The pre manufactured units are intended to be sourced from Wishbone Kabins in Applecross.

³ The camping period is traditionally considered to run from May to September.



Fig. 3 : Approved position of wigwams (CNPA ref. no. 09/049/CP)

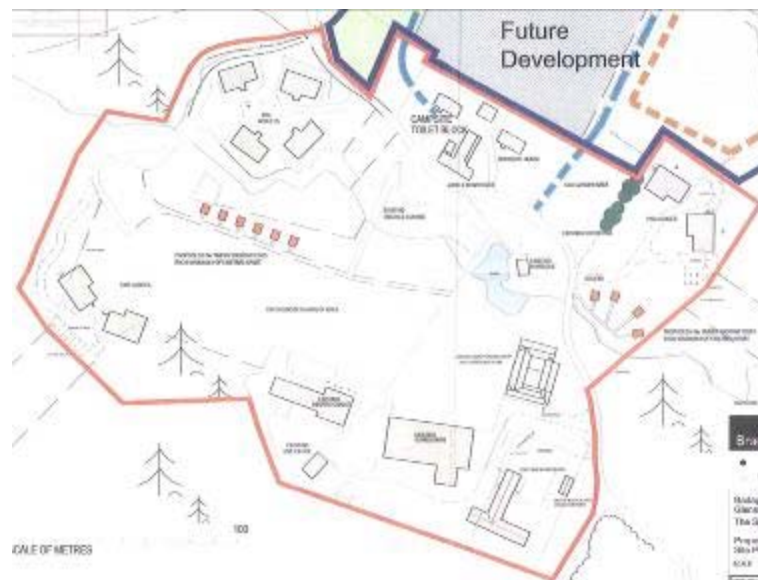


Fig. 4 : Proposed alternative position of wigwams

5. None of the permitted units have yet been erected on the site, and in the intervening months since the temporary permission was granted, the operators of Badaguish Outdoor Centre have given further consideration to their operational requirements. Planning permission and a building warrant exists for an extension to the shower block in order to provide garages and workshop training facilities. Speyside Trust has now acquired funding for that project and work is due to commence in the near future. The extension would encroach into the area in which six of the originally proposed wigwams were permitted and it has therefore been necessary to consider a revised location in which to position the wigwams.



Fig. 5 : Proposed position of 6 wigwams



Fig. 6 : Proposed position of 4 wigwams

6. The currently proposed layout would result in six of the wigwams being positioned in a linear arrangement in the aforementioned open grassy area towards the centre of the site. The land required to accommodate the six wigwams would not detract from the availability of space for traditional camping. Information submitted in support of the planning application details the fact that the specific area in which the wigwams are proposed has “quite a slope away from the path down to the burn and is at present unsuitable for tents / camping.” The remaining four units would be located on open ground in the eastern area of the site,⁴ in the vicinity of two existing holiday lodges and adjacent to land on which the CNPA recently granted planning permission for the development of a new car parking area to serve the Outdoor Centre.⁵ A separation distance of 5 metres would be maintained between each of the wigwams.

⁴ It is reclaimed forestry ground, which has been reseeded since the removal of sitka spruce at the time that the holiday lodges were being constructed in the area.

⁵ CNPA planning reference no. 09/295/CP refers. Planning permission was granted by the CNPA on 30th April 2010 for the formation of a walk / cycleway, the formation of passing places, and additional car parking.

7. The proposed site plan also shows the provision of pathways leading to each of the wigwam areas. The six units in the central open area of the site would be served by a 1.2 metre wide concrete slab disabled accessible path, and would connect with the existing 'lock block' path which traverses the open area. The four wigwams in the eastern area of the site would also be accessed via a 1.2 metre wide path, leading from the nearby access track. In keeping with the finishes proposed at the recently permitted new car parking area on adjacent land, the path would be formed with timber edging and would have a surface finish of compacted quarry dust on hardcore.
8. Each wigwam unit would have an electricity supply, provided either via an underground duct which would be laid below the new access paths, or adjacent to and alongside the existing path, in order to ensure that there will be no overhead wires or poles.

Justification for the provision of temporary wigwams

9. Information submitted in support of the application for the wigwams in 2009 indicated that permission was being sought for a limited number of units for a temporary period of three years, in order to monitor and assess their viability, demand and suitability, and essentially operate the units on a 'pilot test' basis prior to potentially embarking on a larger scale and more permanent venture of a similar nature at the Outdoor Centre.⁶ The case advanced in 2009 also referred to the wigwams providing bedspaces which would compensate for some of those lost in the course of earlier redevelopments at the Outdoor Centre, including the leasing of a bunkhouse in the northern area of the site to Highland Council for use as ancillary offices and also the conversion of a former bothy to a reception facility and café.⁷
10. The Speyside Trust is an independent local charity which was established in the early 1980's with the aim of providing people with disabilities with equal opportunities to access outdoor recreation. The previously advanced justification included a business case in which it was explained that in order to provide its charitable services, particularly with disabled groups, the Speyside Trust is reliant on trading surpluses generated from the Badaguish Outdoor Centre accommodation facilities, in combination with donations, sponsorship and government grants. The proposed wigwam development is expected to attract visitors to the site outside the peak holiday period and would generate increased revenue whilst complementing existing facilities at the Outdoor Centre.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

National Policy

11. In the national context, **Scottish Planning Policy**⁸ is the statement of the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. **Scottish Planning Policy** supersedes previous Scottish Planning Policy documents and National Planning Policy Guidance. Under the heading of Core Principles, a number of broad principles which the Scottish Government believe should underpin the modernised planning system are outlined and include:

⁶ The operators of Badaguish Outdoor Centre initiated a formal pre-application process in October 2009 proposing a 35 unit wigwam development, new camping area, and a mountain bike skills course on land adjoining the complex to the north.

⁷ The new reception facility and café has not yet opened.

⁸ February 2010

- The constraints and requirements that planning imposes should be necessary and proportionate;
 - The system shouldallow issues of contention and controversy to be identified and tackled quickly and smoothly; and
 - There should be a clear focus on quality of outcomes, with due attention given to the sustainable use of land, good design and the protection and enhancement of the built and natural environment.
12. Para. 33 of **Scottish Planning Policy** focuses on the topic of Sustainable Economic Growth and advises that increasing sustainable economic growth is the overarching purpose of the Scottish Government. It is advised that “the planning system should proactively support development that will contribute to sustainable economic growth and to high quality sustainable places.” Planning authorities are encouraged to take a positive approach to development, recognising and responding to economic and financial conditions in considering proposals that would contribute to economic growth.
 13. Under the general heading of Sustainable Development, it is stated that the fundamental principle is that development integrates economic, social and environmental objectives, and that the “aim is to achieve the right development in the right place.”
 14. In a section entitled Rural Development (paragraphs 92 - 96), the role of the planning system in supporting sustainable economic growth in rural areas is again emphasised. The overall aim should be to “enable development in all rural areas which supports prosperous and sustainable communities whilst protecting and enhancing environmental quality.”
 15. **Scottish Planning Policy** includes a detailed section on Landscape and Natural Heritage. Improving the natural environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it is one of the Government’s national outcomes. Planning authorities are required to support opportunities for enjoyment and understanding of the natural heritage. It is noted in para. 127 that “landscape in both the countryside and urban areas is constantly changing and the aim is to facilitate positive change whilst maintaining and enhancing distinctive character.”
Highland Council Structure Plan 2001
 16. The **Highland Structure Plan 2001** includes several policies that are broadly applicable to the type of development proposed, including policies on sport and recreation, tourism and the environment. The benefits of sport and recreation facilities are highlighted in section 2.5.1 of the Plan, where they are attributed to making an important contribution to sustainable development and enhancing the health and quality of life of the residents of the Highlands.
 17. Section 2.7.1 of the Plan describes tourism as a vital element of the Highland economy, and notes that opportunities to participate in outdoor pursuits are amongst key visitor attractions. The Structure Plan strategy aims to build on the Highland identity and take a proactive approach to the wise use of the natural environment as a primary resource for tourism. One of the Plan’s strategic themes includes encouraging the “adoption of a proactive approach to the wise use of the natural environment”.
 18. The Structure Plan notes that tourism makes major demands on infrastructure and facilities and also notes that there is scope for improvement in the quality and level of provision. **Policy T2 on Tourism Development** confirms Highland Council’s support for high quality tourism development proposals, particularly those which extend the season, provide wet weather opportunities, spread economic benefits more widely and provide opportunities for the sustainable enjoyment and interpretation of the area’s heritage.

19. On the specific topic of tourist accommodation, section 2.7.8 refers to a growth trend in recent years in the self-catering sector. In anticipation of further applications for chalet and other self contained accommodation, the Structure Plan advises that they must be designed for minimal impact on services, road infrastructure and the environment.
20. The proposed site is located the Cairngorms Mountains National Scenic Area which has been designated for its landscape quality.

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan (1997)

21. The Badaguish Outdoor Centre is located within the area identified as the Glenmore Corridor in the **Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan (1997)**. The Plan states that “the Council recognises the integrity of the corridor linking from the Spey into the Cairngorms, its distinctive conservation features and the mounting visitor pressure.” The general development policy for the area is outlined in section 4.14.1 of the Plan where it is stated that reasonable consolidation and improvement of established businesses is acceptable in principle, although a strong presumption will be maintained against further new development throughout the area “except where this is considered essential for the proper management of visitors.” It is the policy to avoid conflict between users and activities, hazard or jeopardy to public safety or damage to the environment.
22. On the general subject of Tourism and Recreation, section 2.2.9 of the **Local Plan** notes that activities of this nature will continue to make a vital contribution to the economy, but also emphasises that 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.” The plan suggests within communities and on their edges that tourist accommodation, recreation and leisure facilities of a scale appropriate to the community concerned will be promoted.
23. Section 2.2.10 of the Plan, entitled **Tourism**, states that the “Council will encourage the development of tourist accommodation and facilities at suitable sites within or immediately adjoining communities” and that “priority will be given to expansion of existing facilities.” This section of the Plan also requires that tourism proposals should “either associate well with the prevailing pattern of building, or be well absorbed visually by landform and trees.
24. The **Local Plan** details a number of pertinent conservation objectives and states that the priority is to promote sustainable development of the areas’ resources and ensure an acceptable balance between economic growth and safeguards for the outstanding heritage. The conservation strategy advocated for the countryside includes provision being made for the restoration and expansion of the core Caledonian Forest, and the upgrading of facilities for recreation, tourism, interpretation and education / research in more robust locations. In particular, multiple use of forest areas is encouraged.

Cairngorms National Park Plan (2007)

25. The **Cairngorms National Park Plan** has a number of strategic objectives that provide a long term framework for managing the National Park and working towards a 25 year vision. The strategic objectives are set out under three broad headings – (i) conserving and enhancing the park; (ii) living and working in the park; and (iii) enjoying and understanding the park.

26. Under the heading of ‘conserving and enhancing the special qualities’ strategic objectives for landscape, built and historic environment include maintaining and enhancing the distinctive landscapes across the Park, ensuring that development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park, and ensuring that new development in settlements and surrounding areas and the management of public spaces complements and enhances the character, pattern and local identity of the built and historic environment.
27. Under the heading of ‘Living and Working in the Park’ the Plan advises that sustainable development means that the resources and special qualities of the national park are used and enjoyed by current generations in such a way that future generations can continue to use and enjoy them. Section 5.2.3 of the Park Plan acknowledges that tourism is one of the primary forms of employment in the Park, although many jobs in this and other sectors are highly seasonal and with little long term security. Strategic objectives for economy and employment include creating conditions that are conducive to business growth and investment that are consistent with the special qualities of the Park and its strategic location and the promotion of green business opportunities.
28. Section 5.3 of the Plan concerns ‘enjoying and understanding the park’ noting that the Cairngorms National Park is known for its outstanding environment and outdoor recreation opportunities and advises that the vision for the Park seeks to “go further and develop a world class destination which plays a significant part in the regional and national tourism economy.” Strategic objectives for sustainable tourism include : -
 - raising awareness of the Park as a premier, year round, rural tourism destination;
 - recognising its outstanding natural heritage and its National Park status;
 - improving and maintaining the quality of the experience of the Park for all visitors, communities and those working in the tourism industry;
 - maintaining a high quality environment by encouraging sound environmental management by all those involved in tourism in the Park;
 - developing a wide range of opportunities for visitors to experience and enjoy the special qualities distinctiveness and natural and cultural heritage of the Park; and
 - encouraging an optimum flow and spread of visitors across the Park and minimising the social and environmental impact including traffic generated by visitors and conflicts between different forms of recreation.
29. Many of the strategic objectives detailed in relation to outdoor access and recreation are also of relevance in the context of the current development proposal. Objectives include encouraging people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and experience the outdoor environment; and promoting high standards of responsible enjoyment of the Park so that its special qualities are understood and appreciated and safeguarded for now and future generations to enjoy.

CONSULTATIONS

30. Highland Council’s **TEC Services** assessed the proposal and have no objection, provided that the proposed wigwams remain in the ownership and control of the existing Badaguish development and will at no time be in separate ownership.

31. The proposal has also been considered by **Aviemore and Vicinity Community Council**⁹ and there is no objection. It is noted that the proposal falls within the existing boundaries of the Badaguish Outdoor Centre and it is considered that there is sufficient space to accommodate the development.
32. **Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Association** has also been consulted on the proposal. No response has been received to date.

REPRESENTATIONS

33. The proposal was advertised in The Strathspey and Badenoch Herald on 14th April 2010. No representations have been received in connection with the proposal.

APPRAISAL

34. Earlier sections of this report have detailed the fact that planning permission was granted on the site in 2009 for 10 wigwams, for a temporary three year period. The principle of development of this nature has therefore been established and four of the wigwams proposed in the open central area are in the same general location as those previously permitted. An assessment of the current development proposal in the context of existing planning policy indicates its acceptability. The proposal is consistent with the general thrust of **Scottish Planning Policy** particularly in the context of Rural Development, where the SPP emphasises the role of the planning system in supporting sustainable economic growth. The development of the wigwams for a temporary period would provide a new economic dimension at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre, would be located in the midst of the established centre, and would be of a limited scale which would not detract from the environmental quality of the overall area.
35. The proposal is also consistent with Structure Plan and Local Plan policies, which seek to recognise the importance of tourism and promote tourism development proposals which would assist in extending the season. At Local Plan level, the principle of consolidation and improvement of established businesses within the Glenmore Corridor is accepted. The limited scale and unobtrusive siting of the proposed wigwam units fits this criteria and could be considered an example of achieving a balance between economic growth and safeguarding the natural heritage of the area. The proposal is also consistent with the aspirations of the Cairngorms National Park Plan and could assist in particular in achieving many of the strategic objectives for sustainable tourism. The introduction of the wigwam units would provide a new experience for visitors to the National Park, allowing them to experience an alternative to traditional camping, in an area where a variety of natural heritage interests may be experienced in the immediate area.
36. In conclusion, the proposal is limited in scale, with the units being of a design which would result in minimal interference (both visual and physical) in the area in which they are proposed. They would be positioned within the developed area of Badaguish Outdoor Centre, and would be within easy reach of the various facilities at the centre, including the toilet and shower block, recreational facilities, car parking and the future café.

⁹ AVCC note in the response that although the application site is not technically within the AVCC area at present it is expected that it will be brought within the area after completion of the Community Council Review.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

37. The proposed site is located within the Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area. The proposed development of 10 wigwams, for a limited temporary period, is small scale in the context of the overall established development at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre. The units would assimilate with the existing structures and would not have any adverse effect on the National Scenic Area.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

38. There are no significant negative impacts associated with the proposed development.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

39. The proposed development would provide an additional type of tourist accommodation. This has the potential to attract new visitor groups to the area, thereby providing visitors with the opportunity to experience this area of the National Park. The nature of the accommodation could also encourage visitors to the area outside the traditional high season and in this respect would facilitate visitors in experiencing the National Park at various times of the year.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

40. The proposed wigwams would enhance the variety of accommodation facilities available at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre and in the Glenmore area. The units are designed to provide a more robust style of camping accommodation than the traditional tent and would therefore be usable outside the traditional summer camping season, resulting in increased visitor numbers and consequent visitor spend in the area outside the peak season.

41. Income generated from the wigwams would assist in the overall operations of Speyside Trust at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre and in particular would assist in their principle aim of funding the delivery of charitable services, particularly to disabled users of the recreational facility.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to:

Grant Planning Permission for the temporary use of grounds for the siting and installation of 10 pre-fabricated timber wigwam tents (revised application) at Badaguish Outdoor Centre, Glenmore, Aviemore, subject to the following conditions :

1. This permission is for a temporary period only and shall expire on 11th June 2012. At the end of that period the use of the wigwams shall be permanently discontinued and the land reinstated to its former condition or such condition as otherwise agreed to the satisfaction of the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority, unless a further extension of the time period has been granted by the relevant Planning Authority.

Reason: This permission pertains to the period of validity of the original temporary planning permission. The buildings are of a temporary nature and a form which may be liable to deterioration if not properly maintained. It is necessary in the interests of the general amenity of the area to limit the period of the permission in order to review the effect of the structures on the said amenity.

2. The proposed wigwams shall only be used as short term tourist accommodation and shall be retained and operated as a single commercial entity. The wigwams shall not be sold separately. No single period of occupation shall exceed two months in any calendar year unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as planning authority. Occupation shall be restricted to use by persons requiring to stay in the area for recreational purposes.

Reason: In accordance with the application detail and to ensure that in accordance with the social and economic development aim of the Cairngorm National Park the units are used for commercial purposes in connection with the operation of a tourist facility.

3. The development shall be landscaped and maintained in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to and approved by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. The scheme shall indicate the siting, numbers, species and heights (at the time of planting) of all trees, shrubs and hedges to be planted and shall ensure:-

- (a) Completion of the scheme during the planting season next following the completion of the development, or such other date as may be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.
- (b) The maintenance of the landscaped areas in perpetuity in accordance with the detailed maintenance schedule/table. Any trees or shrubs removed, or which in the opinion of the Planning Authority, are dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within five years of planting, shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: To ensure the implementation of a satisfactory scheme of landscaping which will in due course improve the environmental quality of the development.

4. All public services for the development shall be located underground throughout the site.

Reason : In the interests of the visual amenity of the area.

Mary Grier
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18 May 2010

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