
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: PLANNING APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY USE OF LAND FOR SITING OF 10 TIMBER WIGWAM TENTS AT SPEYSIDE TRUST BADAGUISH OUTDOOR CENTRE, GLENMORE, AVIEMORE

REFERENCE: 09/049/CP

APPLICANT: BADAGUISH OUTDOOR CENTRE PER BRACEWELL STERLING

DATE CALLED-IN: 09 MARCH 2009

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION FOR A PERIOD OF 3 YEARS, SUBJECT TO SUSPENSIVE CONDITIONS



Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION

1. Badaguish Outdoor Centre is located within the Glenmore Forest Park to the north of Loch Morlich. The site, which is surrounded by Forestry Commission woodland, is accessed off the public road from Aviemore to the Cairngorm Mountain, approximately 3 km east of Coylumbridge (see Fig. 1 above). There are a mixture of buildings on the site, including timber chalets, a bunkhouse undergoing conversion to a cafe, the warden's house, a shower and toilet block, and a portal frame building for indoor sporting activities. There are also various structures and apparatus for outdoor activities.

PLANNING HISTORY

2. Various planning applications related to the Outdoor Centre have been considered by the CNPA including; 03/042/CP Siting of 3 caravans and 1 mobile storage unit. More recently full planning permission for an extension to the existing shower/toilet block to provide training facilities (06/368/CP) was granted. Similarly, a planning application for the erection of four timber lodges on two sites was approved by Members of the Committee and a subsequent application (06/470/CP) proposed alternative locations for several of the lodges. Permission was also granted in March 2007 for conversion of and extension to both to form coffee shop and restaurant, and associated training facilities.

THE PROPOSAL

3. Planning permission is sought for the temporary use of ground for the siting and erection of 10no. pre-fabricated timber 'wigwam' tents within the Badaguish Outdoor Centre for a period of 3 years. These would be located in two areas (fig. 2) – a linear group of 4 wigwams in a central area of the site to the north of the playing field, close to the activity course (photo 1) and a further group of six located roughly around the existing toilet/shower block in the south east corner of the site by the car park area (photo 2).



Fig. 2 – Site Plan



Photograph 1: Site for 4no. proposed wigwams



Photograph 2: Site for 6no. proposed wigwams

4. The timber wigwams (figure 3) are a wooden cabin structure provided by a specialist manufacturer, utilising sustainable resources of home-grown timber and providing accommodation for 2 - 4 adults. They would be 5.3 metres in length, 3.5 metres in width and be 3.0 metres high. They are roughly triangular and shaped like a prism, finished with naturally treated timber linings and would sit on footings lifting them from the ground.

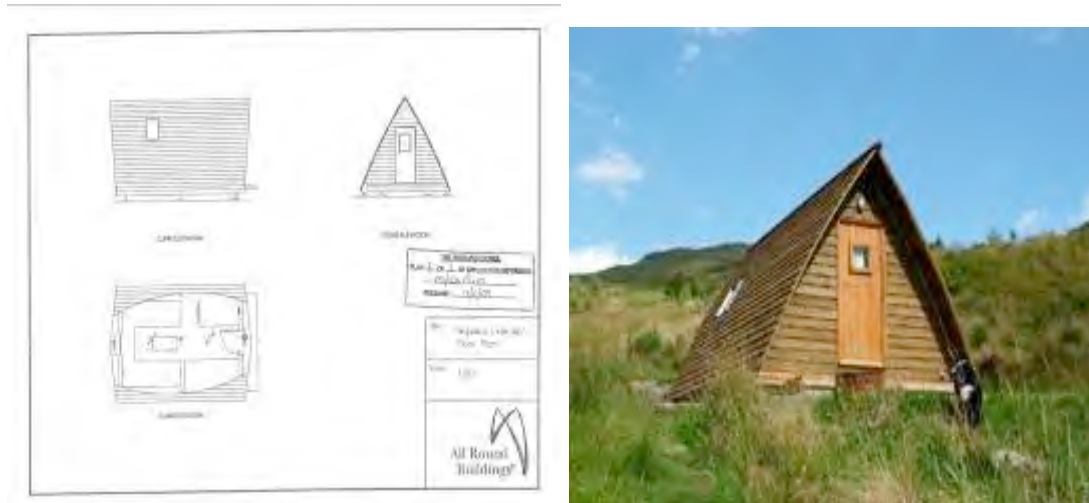


Fig. 3 & 4 – Elevations and existing wigwam

5. The applicant confirms that the wigwams would be placed on the Badaguish site for a temporary period of 3years, to allow for monitoring and assessment of their viability, demand and suitability, a ‘pilot test’ with a view to examining and considering them on a more permanent basis (for avoidance of doubt this would require a further planning application).

Proposal justification

6. A supporting statement (Appendix 1) has been submitted alongside the application, providing information on the need for the wigwams and the nature of their proposed use – as low cost accommodation, allowing for an alternative option to conventional tents, bunk houses and bothies. It is highlighted that they would allow for the current camping season to be extended into the spring and autumn (from the present 5 month period of May to September), replace and substitute 40 bed spaces (campsite capacity currently stands at 252 bedspaces including 100 campsite pitches, see fig. 3) lost owing to previous redevelopment of the site, the leasing of a bunkhouse to the Highland Council for ancillary offices and the conversion of an existing bothy to a café/reception facility. It is further stated that the wigwams have been very popular in other areas of Britain particularly with families, youth groups and schools and may offset the decline in the popularity of normal camping; crucially it is believed that they would enhance the overall visitor experience of the site.

Fig. 3 BEDSPACES AT BADAGUIISH	
60	Lodges leased to Highland Council
40	Speyside Trust Lodges
12	Speyside Trust Care Beds
112	Subtotal
40	Speyside Trust Bunks lost
100	Campsite Accommodation
252	TOTAL
The application for 40 Wigwam bed spaces is to substitute for the 40 bunk places lost.	

7. A business case (appendix 2) has also been provided as part of the statement, outlining that to provide its charitable services, particularly with disabled groups, the Speyside Trust is reliant upon trading surpluses generated from the Badaguish Outdoor Centre accommodation alongside donations, sponsorship and government grants, a breakdown of its funding sources is provided. The Speyside Trust is an independent local charity established in 1981 to promote equal opportunity access to outdoor recreation for people with disabilities, by providing accessible accommodation, facilities and services to organisations, youth groups, schools, colleges and families including a specialised care unit and training facilities. The centre itself is wholly owned by the trading subsidiary of the trust to ensure the site is developed as a site of excellence for equal opportunity access to the outdoors; all trading incomes are placed back into the charity.
8. The applicant expects that the proposed wigwams would draw increased visitor numbers to the site outwith the peak period months, thereby expanding the holiday season and bringing increased economic benefit to the area. The proposal would allow for accommodation of 40 bed spaces to be re-instated at the site providing a total of 252 bed spaces (including camping pitches) and improve the future viability of the centre's operation.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007

9. The Strategic Objectives that provide a long term framework for managing the National Park are set out in the **Cairngorms National Park Plan** under three broad headings – (i) conserving and enhancing the Park; (ii) living and working in the Park; and (iii) enjoying and understanding the Park. In terms of conserving and enhancing the Park, section 5.1.2 refers specifically to natural and cultural heritage, particularly landscape and the built and historic environment. The Plan advises that all new development and management of the landscapes and settlements within the Park should be based on a sound

understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of the area. Strategic objectives for landscape, built and historic environment include ensuring development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park, understanding and conserving the historic landscapes and historic built environment, and raising awareness and understanding of the influences of natural processes, land management and culture on the landscape character.

10. 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.

Highland Structure Plan 2001

11. **Policy G2 (Design for Sustainability)** sets out certain criteria against which proposed developments will be assessed. These include the extent to which they demonstrate sensitive siting and high quality design in keeping with the local character and historic and natural environment.
12. 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.

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997

13. The site lies within the Glenmore Corridor as identified in the Adopted Local Plan for the area. **Policy 2.5.11** states that given the conservation, recreational and amenity interests of national/international significance in the Glenmore Corridor, the Highland Council has brought forward a framework. This includes guidelines for visitor management, conservation of the natural heritage and landscape character, and established settlements. In this context, **Policy 4.14.1** states that whilst reasonable consolidation and improvement of established businesses is acceptable in principle, the Council will maintain a

strong presumption against further development throughout the area, except where this is considered essential for the proper management of visitors.

14. The Local Plan also 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 the upgrading of facilities for recreation, tourism, interpretation and education / research in more robust locations.

CONSULTATIONS

15. **Scottish Natural Heritage** has commented that the site lies adjacent to but outwith the Cairngorms Special Protection Area (SPA), the Cairngorms Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Glenmore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). **SNH** have no objections, considering that the proposed development will not directly impact on any of the designated interests.
16. **The Highland Council Area Roads Manager** has no objections.
17. **Aviemore Community Council** commenting on the application are supportive of the proposals, suggesting they may be 'good fun.' They raise queries related to disabled access and the temporary use of the site. **(Appendix 3)**
18. **CNPA Visitor Services and Recreation Group** raised some question on the capacity of the site including vehicle access and car parking. The applicant has addressed these by confirming that the proposals are intended to make up a reduction in the number of bed spaces previously provided and would not lead to a net increase in site capacity. **Visitor Services** are content with this.

REPRESENTATIONS

19. No letters of representation have been received.

APPRAISAL

20. The proposed development is located within the National Scenic Area which is designated for its outstanding landscape value; the site lies adjacent to a number of natural heritage designations including SSSI, SAC and SPA. It is considered that the proposed wigwams are relatively moderate additions within the confines of the overall complex – a well established, ran and presented site. The design of the wigwams would match that of the existing buildings in terms of scale, appearance and finishing materials and would be enclosed within the larger wooded area; there are no adverse landscape or visual impact concerns.

21. Natural heritage designations are located nearby but it has been confirmed by SNH that there will be no direct impacts from the development proposals on these areas. Forestry Commission Scotland has been involved in discussions with the applicant from the onset.
22. The main issues to consider in assessing this application are therefore whether the proposed development, which represents a further consolidation of an established business which is sited within a National Scenic Area, is acceptable in cumulative terms. This proposal is part of the current wider development strategy at Badaguish to consolidate and improve the training and outdoor educational facilities and operations at the Centre. There has been previously some concern both within the committee and locally about the recent level of new build activity at the Centre. No objections have been received from consultee's, the local community and the proposals are broadly supported by the Community Council.
23. The planning policy applicable is outlined in paragraphs 9 – 14 of this report. Policy 4.14.1 of the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan states that whilst reasonable consolidation and improvement of established businesses is acceptable in principle, a strong presumption against further development throughout the area will be maintained, except where this is considered essential for the proper management of visitors. The development essentially represents an improvement, enhancement and augmentation to the existing facilities at the Outdoor Centre - of significant benefit to charitable, youth and other community groups, involving the replacement/substitution of the level of provision previously established on site with high quality, innovative structures, utilising natural and complimentary materials that would afford alternative, low-budget accommodation to both existing and additional users.
24. The Speyside Trust stress that the proposed wigwams would not increase overall net capacity but allow for the more effective utilisation of existing under-used facilities, aims to extend the camping season, substitute 40 bed spaces lost and meet a gap in existing low budget accommodation locally. The proposed wigwams would boost visitor numbers and footfall, make up for poor utilisation of the 4 lodges by re-introducing budget facilities and enhance the future viability of the operation.
25. There are no fundamental planning policy objections to the proposal. Indeed policies for the area accept reasonable consolidation and improvement of established uses in the area. The proposal represents a moderate increase to the number of existing buildings within the Badaguish complex, augmenting the existing accommodation level – affording reasonable consolidation and improvement. The proposed wigwams would clearly add to the range of facilities and services available at the established operational centre and it would provide additional choice for disabled users, young people and other groups attending courses.
26. In terms of the aims of the park, the proposed development would provide enhanced opportunities for visitors to understand and experience the park, there are no adverse impacts on the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

The wigwams would help develop and improve the Centre's facilities for delivering a programme of equal opportunity education and training activities and as such is seen as positive to the social and economic development of the area.

Conclusion

27. To conclude, this proposal is a development of a moderate scale within an existing established complex and it raises no significant concerns in relation to planning policy or the aims of the National Park. The site is well enclosed and screened and planning permission only sought on a temporary basis.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

28. The proposed development is located within the Cairngorm Mountains National Scenic Area, in a location which already accommodates an existing outdoor centre and a number of associated buildings. The proposal is relatively moderate in the context of its setting. There are no adverse impacts on the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

29. There are no significant negative impacts associated with the proposed development. The development includes utilising locally sourced sustainable timber products as the main construction material in the wigwams.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment

30. The proposed development would provide enhanced opportunities for visitors to understand and experience the park. The operation of Badaguish Outdoor Centre provides equal opportunities for educational advancement and training activities, some of which relate to understanding of the area.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development

31. The new wigwams would represent an improvement to the facilities at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre, and the applicant predicts that the improvements would result in an increase in visitor numbers at the facility. The wigwams would add to the facilities to help develop and improve the Centre's programme of equal opportunity education and training activities and as such is seen as positive to the social and economic development of the area.

RECOMMENDATION

32. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to:

GRANT temporary planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 59 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act, 1997.

2. The wigwams, hereby permitted, shall be completely removed, their use permanently discontinued and the land reinstated to its former condition no later than three years from the date of this planning permission, unless a further extension to the time period is agreed in writing, following the submission of a planning application, with the Planning Authority.

Reason: The buildings are for a temporary period of three years.

4. The development shall be landscaped and maintained in accordance with a scheme which shall be submitted to and approved by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority before development commences. The scheme shall include indications of all existing trees and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of the 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 in the area by the burn (including the extent of any areas of earth mounding), on the above deck car parking area, and in other locations within the development 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.

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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.