

6. SEA Objectives

- 6.1** The SEA objectives (Figure 6.1) are informed by the need to cover the range of issues outlined in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations (Annex 1 (f) of the Directive: biodiversity; population; human health; fauna; flora; soil; water; air; climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage; landscape; and the interrelationship between those issues).
- 6.2** The SEA objectives are also informed by the key environmental resources, trends and issues that are relevant to the Cairngorms National Park, set out in Section 5.

Figure 6.1 – SEA objectives	
Cairngorms National Park draft SEA objectives	Relevant SEA environmental topics
1. To conserve and enhance the diversity of species	Flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water, soil, material assets, human health
2. To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats	Flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water, soil, material assets, human health
3. To maintain and enhance the integrity of ecosystems	Flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water, soil, material assets, human health
4. To protect and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park area	Water, flora, fauna, landscape, biodiversity, soil, human health, material assets
5. To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems	Water, flora, fauna, landscape, biodiversity, soil, human health, material assets
6. To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park	Landscape, flora, fauna, biodiversity, soils, material assets, cultural heritage, human health, wild land
7. To ensure responsible access for all	Human health, population
8. To maintain and improve air quality	Air, climatic factors, water, human health, flora, fauna, biodiversity, soil
9. To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable way	Flora, fauna, biodiversity, diversity, landscape, water, air soil, material assets, human health

Figure 6.1 – SEA objectives <i>continued</i>	
Cairngorms National Park draft SEA objectives <i>continued</i>	Relevant SEA environmental topics <i>continued</i>
10. To conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment	Cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage, material assets, landscape
11. To maintain a sustainable and healthy population	Population, human health
12. To improve sustainable energy efficiency	Air, climatic factors, material assets
13. To reduce waste and pollution	Air, water, soil, flora, fauna, biodiversity, human health
14. To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment	Landscape, material assets, cultural heritage, human health, population, climatic factors

6.3 The 14 SEA objectives are a broad set of objectives that can be applied to assess the aim and objectives and the Area Networks of the Draft Core Paths Plan. To assess the Plan's potential effect on these objectives, a set of more detailed and targeted criteria reflecting the key issues are required for each one.

6.4 These criteria are therefore used to determine the potential effects in relation to the SEA objectives, in the context of the environmental resources and issues relevant to the Cairngorms. The criteria are shown in Figure 6.2 below.

Figure 6.2 – SEA criteria	
SEA objectives	Draft Core Paths Plan SEA criteria
1. To conserve and enhance the diversity of species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss of priority species* • Minimise recreational impact on designated sites • Identify impacts on Natura 2000 sites and species <p>* Priority species are species that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifying criteria of SPAs or SACs; • Notified features on SSSIs; • Listed in Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive; • Listed as of community interest in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats directive; • Species listed in schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended; or • Listed in the UK BAP or Cairngorms LBAP

Figure 6.2 – SEA criteria *continued*

SEA objectives	Draft Core Paths Plan SEA criteria
<p>2. To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise disturbance to priority habitats* • Minimise recreational impact on designated sites • Consider impacts of new and increased activities on species • Identify impacts on Natura 2000 sites <p>* Priority habitats are habitats that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifying criteria of SPAs or SACs; • Notified features on SSSIs; • Listed in Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive; • Listed as of community interest in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats directive; • Of naturally occurring wild birds, particularly those in Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive and migratory species; • Listed in the UK BAP or Cairngorms LBAP; or • Native woodlands, including ancient woodland sites in the Ancient Woodland Inventory
<p>3. To maintain and enhance the integrity of ecosystems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent fragmentation of habitats • Ensure recreation and associated infrastructure does not create new barriers to native species movement.
<p>4. To protect and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and avoid significant adverse downstream impacts from new recreation infrastructure • Ensure new recreation infrastructure developments are appropriately sited to minimise disturbance and potential pollution
<p>5. To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise pollution risks of recreation activity and infrastructure development • Avoid interference with natural fluvial processes
<p>6. To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise recreational impacts on landscape character and experience, including wild land qualities • Ensure recreation infrastructure is sited and designed to make a positive contribution to landscape character

Figure 6.2 – SEA criteria <i>continued</i>	
SEA objectives	Draft Core Paths Plan SEA criteria
6. <i>continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve geodiversity (geological and geomorphological features) and the integrity of natural processes and systems
7. To ensure responsible access for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss/fragmentation of access networks and open greenspace • Create appropriate new access opportunities • Promote safe access provision and use
8. To maintain and improve air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise need for travel by private car
9. To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage use of local materials in development of recreation infrastructure
10. To conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise recreation impacts on archaeological sites and/or their setting • Minimise recreation impacts on designed landscapes
11. To maintain a sustainable and healthy population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure non-car access to services for communities • Ensure access to recreation opportunities • Encourage communities and visitors to be more active
12. To improve sustainable energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise energy efficiency of new recreation development through sustainable materials and construction • Minimise need for use of private cars
13. To reduce waste and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise pollution from human waste in the countryside • Ensure waste is not left in the countryside • Minimise need for use of private cars
14. To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality in new recreation infrastructure design • Ensure Listed Buildings are undamaged by recreational activity or infrastructure development

7. Core Paths Plan Strategic Alternatives

- 7.1** The Cairngorms National Park Authority has a statutory duty to produce a Core Paths Plan for the Park. The Plan has been developed in line with this duty as well as in context with the Park Plan and Outdoor Access Strategy. Much of the strategic direction of the Core Paths Plan is therefore set by other plans, policies and legislation. The Park Authority considered a number of alternative scenarios for developing the Core Paths Plan before choosing the approach outlined in the Draft Core Paths Plan.
- 7.2** The aim and objectives used to select the core paths network were developed through public consultation, guidance and the SEA process. The objectives were initially proposed as 'Selection Criteria' but it was found that a 'one size fits all' approach does not work right across the Park. As such a more general set of objectives was developed to help select core paths for the different areas of the Park.
- 7.3** It was initially proposed to select the core paths network on an area by area basis based on the community council areas. When developing the Plan, however, it was found that the Action Areas as identified in the Outdoor Access Strategy are a more appropriate geography to work from. The objectives used to select the core paths were altered to include an objective to help deliver the priorities for the area as identified in the Outdoor Access Strategy. This ensures that each area has an appropriate network identified which addresses the access priorities within that area.

8. Assessment of the Draft Core Path Plan Aim and Objectives

How environmental issues were considered in developing the aims and objectives

- 8.1** The aim and objectives of the Draft Core Paths Plan have evolved through public engagement and consultation with public agencies and other groups and bodies, eg SNH, the Local Outdoor Access Forum etc. The aim and objectives have been influenced and guided by the four aims of the Cairngorms National Park as interpreted by the Park Plan and the Outdoor Access Strategy.
- 8.2** The special qualities of the Park are closely linked to the natural and cultural heritage of the area. As such many of the objectives, and in particular the first and second one, will provide robust protection to a wide range of environmental interests that are also reflected in the SEA objectives.

The significant environmental effects of the aims and objectives

- 8.3** The following section describes the predicted environmental effects of the aim and objectives of the Draft Core Paths Plan. The full assessment record for the aim and objectives is shown in Annex 3 (available on request).
- 8.4** The aim and objectives has an overall strongly positive effect on the SEA objectives. This is largely due to the way in which the Draft Core Path Plan has been developed taking into account the policies in the Outdoor Access Strategy and the Cairngorms National Park Plan.

Judgements of the significance of environmental effects

- 8.5** The assessment shows that the aim and objectives are likely to have strongly positive effects for a large number of the SEA objectives, positive effects for some others and no negative effects. As such it is judged that the aim and objectives of the Draft Core Paths Plan will have a strongly positive environmental effect.

Cumulative effects

- 8.6** It was considered unlikely that the aim and objectives of the Draft Core Paths Plan would have negative, cumulative or synergistic effects.

Proposed mitigation

- 8.7** It is considered that the aim and objectives will have strongly positive effects and as such no mitigation or modifications are proposed.

Uncertainties and risks

- 8.8** There is some level of uncertainty in the assessment of the Draft Core Paths Plan as we can only predict the effect of the aim and objectives based on our own judgments rather than on past evidence. This uncertainty carries a level of risk. This risk, however, will be managed through monitoring of the Core Paths Plan and accompanying Environmental Report.