

40 Pannanich Road
Invercauld Park
Ballater
AB35 5PA

14/4/08

Attn Ms Sara Krawczynska
Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
Grantown on Spey
PH26 3HG

Dear Ms Krawczynska,

**Cairngorms National Park Local Plan
Written Submission for Objection (Objector Reference 078)**

I attach my written objection (3 pages). I also include a CD which contains

a Word file containing a copy of my submission

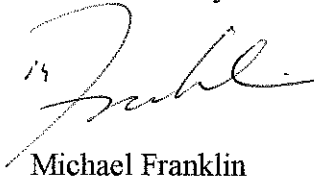
and also a copy of

**Excel Spreadsheet file containing results of Planning for Real Exercise carried out
in Ballater in February 2004**

Word file containing information about the above spreadsheet

Pleas let me know if I can provide any other relevant information.

Yours sincerely


Michael Franklin

Cairngorms National Park Local Plan Enquiry 2009

Objection to the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan Written submission by Michael Franklin (Objector Ref 078)

This objection relates only to proposals relating to Ballater - specifically the location denoted **BL/H1**. The original proposals were given on pages 72 and 73 of the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) Deposit Local Plan (2007) and were subsequently amended in May 2008 and November 2008. I raise two objections – one general and one specific.

General : Ballater already has a high proportion of houses used either as second homes or holiday homes. Although there is a need for a modest number of new affordable homes there is no need for a large number of new houses. The proposals for up to 250 houses in site BL/H1 are largely irrelevant to the needs of the community for the foreseeable future. Either the proposal should be rejected or the number of houses substantially reduced.

Specific : Monaltrie Park is already too small for the needs of the community. It is the only large (!) piece of publicly owned and easily accessible land within the neighbourhood and has numerous competing demands. Although there is a proposal in the Local Plan to increase the size of the park the suggested increase is wholly inadequate. Should it be accepted that some new housing is required then there must also be a proviso for a much larger area of parkland.

Comments on the 'general' objection

The economy of the Ballater area depends heavily on tourism and retirement. There is little evidence that this economy will expand in the near future. This raises the question as to whether any sizeable housing development is required. Furthermore, the view from Tullich across Ballater to Lochnagar is one of the finest in the Cairngorms National Park. Spoiling this view could have a significant adverse effect on the appeal of the village and hence on the economy. Thus any development in the area BL/H1 should be avoided if possible and only undertaken with great care and in response to proven necessity. Whilst the proposals by the Prince's Foundation show care (and in that respect they are to be welcomed) they have not demonstrated necessity.

It has been argued that a large development is required to justify the provision of affordable homes. Such an argument is surely specious. Furthermore, in Table 2 on p43 of the CNP Deposit Local Plan there is an allowance that (at least) one-third of all new homes will be used as second-homes. In this line of argument the need for a few affordable homes provides justification for building second homes.



The grounds of the old school at Ballater : a possible site for low-cost housing

The problem of providing affordable homes should be addressed as a specific issue. It should not be used to provide justification for a large-scale housing development.

Comments on the 'specific' objection

There is a sizeable proportion of elderly people in Ballater. Although the village is surrounded by 'open' countryside much of this countryside is remote for elderly people. The land is steep and mostly inaccessible other than by 4x4 vehicle or on foot. Indeed, the Ballater Walking Festival exploits this inaccessibility, as do the 4x4 safaris operated during Ballater Victoria Week, to provide attractive events for visitors and residents. The rural nature of Ballater should not therefore hide the need for a readily accessible public area within the village.

There is a wide range of demands on Monaltrie Park. Among the events held there are the Ballater Highland Games, the Vintage Vehicle Rally and Sunday Fayre of Ballater Victoria Week, a fun fair, a caravan rally and the village fireworks display. Football is played regularly and, in winter, the Ballater Boules club holds its meetings there. The park is even occasionally used as a helicopter landing site. In 2004 a well-attended Planning for Real © exercise carried out in Ballater showed up a very wide range of demands for this park. (An Excel spreadsheet detailing the responses to that exercise is to be found on the attached CD and can be downloaded from the webpage www.royal-deeside.org.uk/rdcommactive/planning.htm)



A Caravan Rally completely fills Monaltrie Park 2008

The shortage of land available to the community of Ballater is highlighted by the recent tendency to 'parcel up' the Monaltrie Park for various specific uses. Thus the Planning for Real © exercise mentioned above resulted in a new children's play area. Recently, Aberdeenshire Council have used the park to install adult exercise equipment. Aberdeenshire Council also intend to locate a Youth Shelter in the park. A community group called YES (Youth Engaging Sport) is seeking to locate a sizeable multi-sports facility within the park. While all these activities are very laudable they are not always compatible with each other in such a small park for any specific activity reduces the space available for other activities.

The need for a larger park for Ballater has been recognised by the community for some time leading to proposals that Monaltrie Park be included in a 'Community Woodland' scheme. (This scheme aimed to link with existing woodland and paths to enhance the appeal of Ballater to both residents and visitors.) This extra space is required now. A substantial housing development would create a need for even more park space.

Any proposals for a large scale housing development should recognise both the existing need to expand Monaltrie Park and the additional need for space which would be created by the development. The current proposals (for area BL/H1) to increase the size of Monaltrie Park are wholly inadequate.

Comments on the CNP proposals for the area Ballater BL/H1

These comments relate to actions by the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) and by the Prince's Foundation. Though not directly relating to the contents of the Plan they indicate how a proper discussion of the proposals has been undermined by these two bodies.

Cairngorms National Park

From the viewpoint of a Ballater resident the following steps are very evident.

- 1 It has been known for some time that both Invercauld Estate and the developer Scotia Homes have wanted to take advantage of the housing boom to build in area Ballater H1.
- 2 The Prince' Foundation exercise in Ballater was sponsored by Scotia Homes.
3. The CNP Deposit Local Plan (2007) proposed an area of 10.99 hectares for housing and extension of Monaltrie Park for area BL/H1. This proposal was later increased (November 2008) to 16.12 hectares coinciding exactly with the proposals put forward by the Prince's Foundation.

The above sequence is strongly suggestive that the CNP planners have been overly influenced by the needs of the developers. (This suggestion is reinforced by somewhat off-hand responses by the CNP to community concerns.) *The CNP should be asked to demonstrate that it has acted in a fair and unbiased manner with respect to this proposal.*

The Prince's Foundation

In commenting on the activities of the Prince's Foundation I should point out that I was initially very supportive of its involvement in planning for Ballater. However, I have since been disillusioned as I feel their promises and actions have been at considerable variance.

- a) The invitation to the original 'Scoping Day' was post-marked 15th March 2006 only 7 days before the event. It was sent to few residents and allowed inadequate time for other interested members of the community to make arrangements to attend.
- b) The invitation to the Enquiry by Design - Sustainable Growth Workshop (7 – 9 November) was sent out in good time but only 16 local residents were invited.
- c) According to the Prince's Foundation literature the Enquiry by Design workshop normally lasts five days. In Ballater it lasted just three days.
- d) At the public meeting following the Enquiry by Design the proposals were strongly opposed by most residents present. (The mood of that meeting belies any claim that the local community supported the proposals of the Prince's Foundation.) At the meeting it was indicated by the Prince's Foundation that its final proposals would be discussed at a public meeting in Ballater in Spring 2007. To my knowledge no such meeting occurred although the Foundation did have a presence at a Community Day around that time.

The above summary shows that the Prince's Foundation not only failed to gain the support of the Ballater Community but very probably it also failed to adequately consult the residents on the merits of its proposals.

Additional note I was invited to and attended each of the meetings referred to above. Indeed, at the fractious public meeting immediately following the workshop on 9th November – see note d) above - I appealed to the audience to suspend judgement until the Prince's Foundation reported back in the spring 2007.