

Kingussie & Kincaig

Thursday 27 October 2011, 7pm

Talla nan Ros, Kingussie

Main points from the National Park Plan (Main bullet points taken from discussion)

Outcome 7

Settlements and built development will retain and enhance the distinct sense of place and identity within the landscapes of the Park.

- Sounds lovely but who is going to decide what 'fits' and what is suitable?
- Need stronger planning decisions – problems now due to impact of previous decisions made
- Need to LISTEN more to what communities say about proposed developments – particularly larger developments
- New development hasn't fit the needs of communities in the past
- Lack of distinct sense of identity in some developments coming forward – someone else's vision
- Danger of the Cairngorms becoming the biggest 'urban nation park' on the world
- The 'elephant in the room' (the existing housing site in Kingussie)
- People not against development per se, but development needs to be sustainable and suited to the community in questions – 'OUR community' – its ours and not anyone else's, and we have to live here and deal with the implications of the increased population
- Kingussie is a beautiful town- unique – and needs to be enhanced
- Very proud of our community and want to keep it special
- Importance of ensuring details – design and layout – of housing site is got right for Kingussie – please ensure community are listened to at the next stage
- Need for subsidised small industrial units

- Housing should be affordable for locals and not based on a developer's idea of affordable – if development is community driven then every house should be affordable for locals
- Identity is an evolving thing – Kingussie is not just a Victorian town, it's a town in the 21st century
- Question about how to ensure individual developments in rural areas
- We are not conserving what we have – empty old buildings – we need to redevelop old buildings and not just focus on new build
- Must remember settlements grew up to serve the local countryside and businesses
- Too much speculative development and so not in balance with the existing community – this is not organic growth
- Concerns over the National Park being a nice place to live / visit / retire to and so demand for housing increases, prices increase and rural businesses struggle to afford the prices
- Towns filled with people who have no association with the area
- Lots of empty holiday and second homes
- What is affordable housing? £120K is not affordable
- If we're going to have more development, we need the infrastructure and services to go with it

Outcome 4

The qualities of wildness in the Park will be greater

- Plea from those who make a living from the land – this is a managed landscape, and need to be realistic so people can continue to make a living from the land
- Problems caused by a 'one industry' economy – tourism - need diversity of interest / jobs etc
- It's not just about creating somewhere nice to see and visit
- If it's too pretty and there is not enough production then you have a problem
- There should be two national park boundaries, one is the existing, and the second defines a core area of wild land where nothing happens
- If it wasn't for the estate owners / stalkers etc we wouldn't have the area we do

- Example of the 'Celtic tiger' situation in Ireland – build it and they will come – but now lots of derelict recent development
- Keep local population happy, and then visitors can join in, but don't build specifically for visitors
- Need an opportunity to look again at the last local plan and revisit it
- The specific proposals set out are not about 'wildness' – you can't put anything about development into discussions about wildness.
- Different people have different perceptions of wildness
- Links to outcome 2 - Planting schemes and land management practices good to help increase connectivity and habitats, but the amount of development that takes place harms this, and development removes habitats. This also links to qualities of Wildness
- Encroachment of villages into town forms
- Boreal forest at An Camus Mor – unique in the UK

Outcome 9

The Park's communities will be more empowered and able to develop their own models of sustainability

- There are really good examples of community activity in Kingussie – old folk museum etc
- Want to see affordable housing for young people
- Problems with allocations policy
- The objective relating to affordable housing needs to be there to give strength to the politicians to encourage affordable housing for people in a local community who need it
- It's unfair to locals if people come here from elsewhere and get affordable housing
- Old funding model for affordable housing has collapsed – so need to find a new model
- Estates would like to provide more houses to rent – but problems in terms of long term investment and taxation
- Can we remove the 'right to buy' – need to keep rental properties for rent only in perpetuity
- Communities need to be inclusive – we need housing for the elderly that take specific needs into account. We have an aging population, and need provision to care for the elderly in their own communities – both residential care and dementia care
- Affordable and appropriate housing

- Council needs support from communities to tackle Government / national policies – eg allocations policy. Idea of rugby scrum management – all need to push together

Outcome 6

The economy of the Park will have grown and diversified drawing on the Park's special qualities

- Need broad based industry / businesses – not just tourism
- Must support land based industries
- Also need to look at new businesses / industry to help bring young people back after going to University. The skills and knowledge they develop there should be able to be used here. Role for Highlands and Islands Enterprise in this.
- Want to see clean, sustainable, low carbon industry and not polluting industries
- Poor existing infrastructure. Some areas don't even have broadband at the moment, need to be joined up
- Lack of infrastructure means businesses are having to outsource work to areas outside the Park to get better communication links / broadband
- Need to open up and encourage communication links between tourism businesses and landowners
- Problem of costs of accommodation – employees can't afford to live where work, so have to travel long distance at great cost, and employers want to retain staff but struggle to pay higher wages
- Need to move towards a more user friendly planning system – not the CNPA / LA joint system we have at the moment
- Need to consider the look of the National Park and what will happen when lots of the forestry planted in the 50s comes to maturity – all planted at the same time
- Don't want to lose valuable agricultural land in Kincaig to development – just as easy to build in birch woodland

Main Points from the Local Development Plan (Main Issues Report) (Main bullet points taken from discussion)

Issue 2

Resources / reducing our consumption: *How to plan for sustainable use of resources and deal with the effects of climate change?*

- We are reducing 'our' consumption but encouraging visitors to increase their consumption to come and visit and use our resources
- But remember whilst they are here they buy our resources hence bring benefits to the area
- Need for better integrated public transport (link to issue 7)
- Existing housing stock – improving the energy efficiency / sustainability of existing building is very important
- New builds should have as low a carbon footprint as possible

Issue 3

Supporting our communities: *How to make sure communities have what they need – jobs, tourism, facilities etc?*

- Is there any financial commitment from CNPA to help support communities
- Concerns over land being allocated for businesses use outside settlements in the future, and communities joining up – Kingussie and Newtonmore

Issue 4

Housing and Affordable housing: *How and where to meet the housing need of our communities?*

- 25% affordable all well and good but problem is how housing is allocated so locals get housing
- Argeal development at Kincaig by Highland Small Communities Rural Housing Trust – not bound by same rules as Registered Social Landlord so more control over who gets the housing
- What is affordable? What is affordable is different for everyone, and nothing is affordable is on the minimum wage
- Kincaig – variety of models of housing development to help move people up the ladder and so free up housing further down the ladder, for example, offering some housing as shared ownership, then people moving into this often move out of rented housing, which is then available for others.
- Don't need all housing at the bottom of the ladder, need variety
- Tax holiday homes double council tax, but recognise this can artificially reduce house values
- Need for both affordable and appropriate housing to meet wide range of needs in communities
- What is 'local' in terms of housing provision? Is there are definition?

- There are far more people wanting to move within Badenoch and Strathspey than options to do so
- Council's duty of care for homeless people

Issue 7

Connectivity and Communications: *How can we help people move around the Park – local access, tourist, people travelling through the Park?*

- Problem of transport and access – not something a community can tackle on their own, not something Badenoch and Strathspey can tackle on its own – needs to be looked at as part of the bigger picture
- Links to low carbon issues and affordability in terms of the cost of running cars
- Need to get things to connect together – can people get to work affordably? Trains and buses need to be linked, and at the times when people need to travel.
- Would be good if can get onto the sleep to Inverness in the morning
- Heather hopper – problems of level of subsidy required
- Must look at petrol costs, fuel poverty – both in terms of house heating, but also petrol costs, and private car costs and carbon footprint of driving
- Needs support and thinking outside the box to address these issues