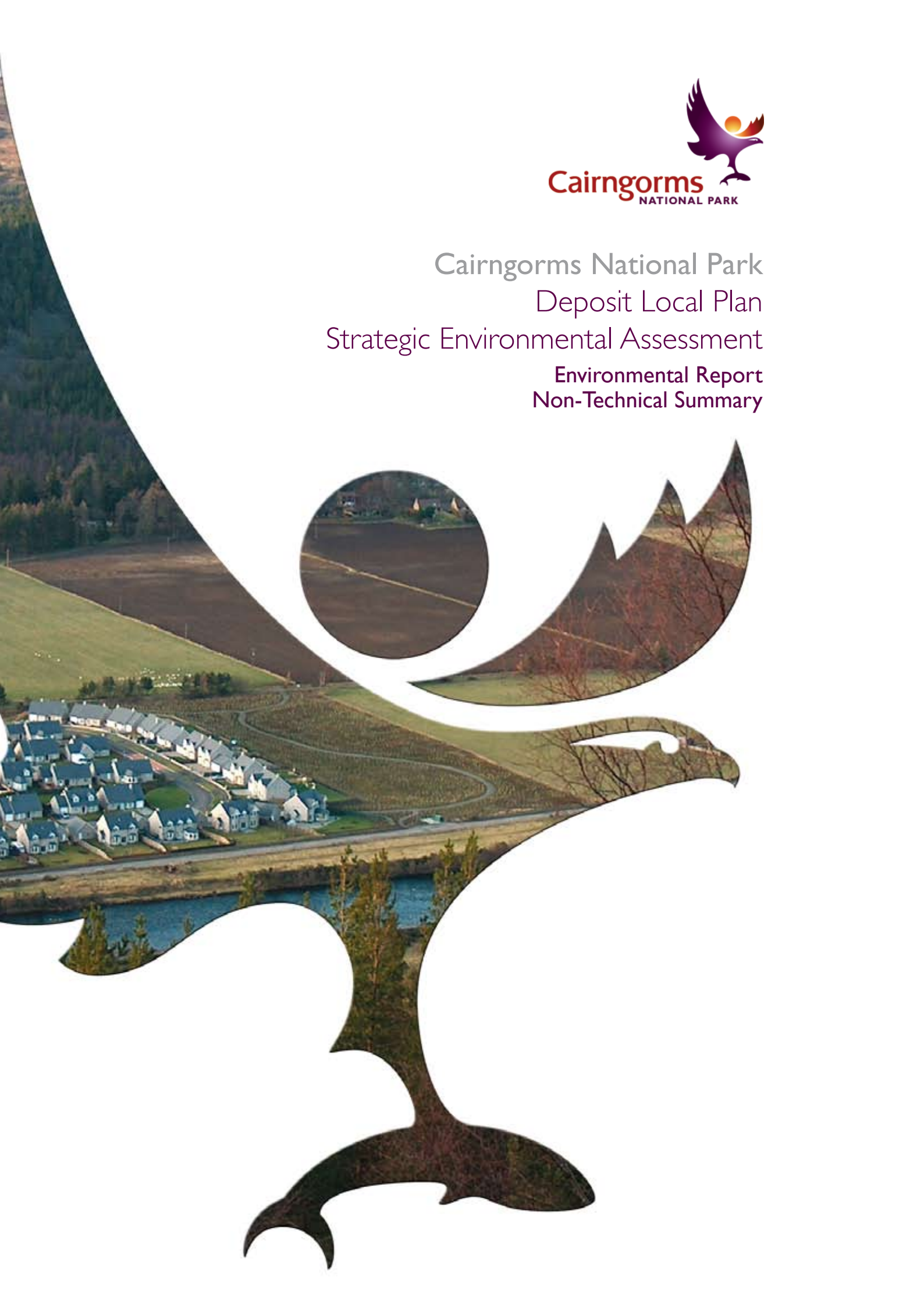




Cairngorms National Park  
Deposit Local Plan  
Strategic Environmental Assessment  
Environmental Report  
Non-Technical Summary



## Introduction

This is a non-technical summary of the Environmental Report of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Cairngorms National Park Deposit Local Plan. It explains:

- what the SEA is;
- why it has been done;
- what effects the Deposit Local Plan would be likely to have on the environment.

This non-technical summary can be read on its own or as part of the full SEA Environmental Report.

Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA for short, is a way of making sure that environmental problems are carefully considered when a plan is made. It is a formal part of the Local Plan making process and was required by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004. The regulations implement a European Directive that requires SEA to be carried out on some kinds of plans and programmes.

The idea behind SEA is that by making sure that environmental features such as plants and animals, air quality, human health or historic remains are considered as the Plan is made, then it is less likely that the Plan will harm them. SEA helps to make sure that environmental considerations are taken into account by the Plan in two main ways.

Firstly, the SEA predicts what effects the Plan is likely to have on the environment and whether they are considered significant. Secondly, if the SEA does predict 'significant' effects, the Plan must be changed to introduce measures that will make the effects less harmful or serious. The end result should be a Plan that is less likely to lead to significant harm to the environment.

The SEA process is also about giving the public the information used to predict the effects and explaining how they were predicted. The public have an opportunity to comment on the SEA process at this stage, when the Environmental Report of the SEA process is published with the Deposit Local Plan.

## Summary of the SEA Process

The SEA process can be broken down to a set of stages that happen as the Local Plan is being prepared.

- Describe the condition the environment at the moment and how it is changing or has changed in the past. Predict what the environment would be like in the future without the plan being made.
- Predict how different ways of making the plan could have different environmental effects.
- Predict what the effects of the policies and proposals in the Local Plan would have on the environment.
- Decide on ways of reducing any harmful effects of the Local Plan on the environment.
- Publish the Local Plan and an SEA Environmental Report that explains what the SEA is and how it has been done and place them 'on Deposit' so that people can comment on them. (This is the stage the Local Plan and SEA are at just now.)
- Take note of the comments on the Environmental Report and make any changes to the Local Plan or SEA because of them.
- Continue to revise and modify the Local Plan so it can be adopted and do any extra assessment that is required.
- Adopt and publish the Local Plan with an up to date Environmental Report of the SEA and write a formal statement of how the SEA has been carried out with the Local Plan, how it has affected the Local Plan, and why the Local Plan has been adopted with certain proposals rather than others that were considered in the SEA process.
- Keep measuring what effects the Local Plan actually has on the environment when it is used so that changes can be made in the future if they are needed and so that it is possible to predict effects more accurately in the future.

## Summary of the Likely Significant Effects of the Deposit Local Plan

The policies and proposals in the Cairngorms National Park Deposit Local Plan have been assessed and the Environmental Report of the SEA prepared.

### The Predicted Effects of Local Plan Policies

The policies in the Local Plan are mostly considered likely to have positive effects on the environment. This might be expected given that the Local Plan must help to deliver the aims of the Park:

- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage;
- to promote sustainable use of the natural resources;
- to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
- to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

The Local Plan is also intended to help to deliver the objectives of the National Park Plan. The National Park Plan is a strategic management plan for the Park. It sets out how the Park should be managed to achieve the aims of the Park, co-ordinates the work of the National Park Authority, and co-ordinates the work of other public bodies in the Park.

This means that many of the policies in the Local Plan are supposed to protect and improve the quality of the environment so that few harmful effects on the environment could be caused by development.

The Local Plan also has policies that support development that could have harmful effects on the environment. However, for a development to be given planning permission it needs to fit with all the policies in the Plan. This means that a development that could have harmful effects on the environment needs to find ways of avoiding or minimising the effects in order to be approved. The predicted effects are described in Section 8 and Appendix 2 of the Environmental Report.

### The Predicted Effects of Local Plan Proposals

A number of proposals in the Local Plan are considered likely to result in significant harmful environmental effects and a few proposals are considered likely to have significant positive effects.

The potential negative effects caused by proposals can be grouped into three categories:

- Loss, damage or disturbance to important species or habitats and ecosystems (considered likely at An Camus Mor new settlement, Boat of Garten, Carr-Bridge and Nethy Bridge);
- Damage to the water environment including streams, rivers, lochs, ground water, wetland habitats, flood plains (considered likely at Carr-Bridge);
- Potential harmful effects on landscape character or settlement character and the setting of towns or villages in the landscape (considered likely at An Camus Mor new settlement, Aviemore, Boat of Garten, Carr-Bridge, Kinraig, Nethy Bridge and Newtonmore).

There is some uncertainty about the potential cumulative effects (what happens when many small effects are added together) of the proposals on the river systems of the Dee and Spey. These river systems are protected under European law and the Park Authority is undertaking a separate assessment of the Local Plan's implications for them.

The Local Plan's proposals may also have some significant positive environmental effects. In Cromdale, the identification of sites for future housing may have a positive effect on the landscape character and settlement character of the village by reinforcing the settlement structure and giving it a more coherent identity. Many proposals for housing also make an important contribution to housing for a local community. Taken together, they provide an important resource for the population of the Park that is considered to be a positive effect of the Local Plan.

All the significant effects that have been predicted from the proposals are explained in Section 9 and Appendix 2 of the full Environmental Report. It is often difficult to predict exactly what effects a proposal will have on the environment as the Local Plan does not control how any future development is used. The uncertainties of the assessment are also explained in the Environmental Report.

### **The Differences SEA has made to the Deposit Local Plan**

Because the Local Plan has been written with environmental considerations in mind, it has tried to avoid leading to harm to the environment from the start. This means that relatively few changes to the Local Plan have made due to the SEA alone. However, the SEA has helped to refine the Deposit Local Plan from the previous consultative draft version. It has also provided a systematic method for assessing environmental factors that are important to the Local Plan and recording the predicted effects of the Plan.

It is hoped that the publication and consultation on the Environmental Report with the Local Plan will make it easier for people to comment on both the Local Plan and any environmental concerns they have about the Local Plan or SEA.

### **The Next Steps**

Once the deposit period has ended, the next steps and estimated timescale will be:

- **Deposit of Local Plan and Environmental Report** – 9 July to 28 September 2007
- **Local Plan Modifications** – assess objections and comments to the Local Plan and, informed by comment on the SEA, make necessary modifications and apply SEA to modifications. September 2007 to March 2008
- **Publish Modifications** – publish modifications to Local Plan for further consultation. September 2007 to March 2008
- **Prepare for Public Inquiry** – take forward all maintained objections to Local Plan. March to May 2008
- **Public Inquiry held** – July 2008
- **Reporter's Report** – received and considered. October 2008
- **Modified Local Plan** – publish modification made in light of the Reporter's Report and

consider further representations. October to November 2008

- **Update the Environmental Report** to accompany the completed Local Plan. October to November 2008
- **Prepare a Post Adoption Statement** setting out how the SEA process has informed the Local Plan, the reasons for the decisions made and framework for future assessments associated with the Local Plan. November 2008
- **Adopt and publish the statutory Local Plan.** November 2008

### **How to Comment**

The Cairngorms National Park Deposit Local Plan, together with the Environmental Report, is 'on deposit' for consultation between 9 July and 28 September 2007.

Copies of the Deposit Local Plan and full Environmental Report are available to view at the National Park offices in Grantown-on-Spey and Ballater; at local libraries within the National Park, and in Highland Council service points in Badenoch and Strathspey.

The full Environmental Report, as well as the Deposit Local Plan, can be downloaded from the Cairngorms National Park Authority website: [www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning/localplan](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning/localplan). A CD with the Environmental Report, or hard copy of the Environmental Report are available from the Park Authority at the address below. Hard copies of the Local Plan are also available from the Park Authority. Comments and objections on the Local Plan and comments on the Environmental Report should be made in writing by 28 September 2007.

Comments should be sent to:

#### **Local Plan/Policy Officer**

Cairngorms National Park Authority  
Ground Floor  
Albert Memorial Hall  
Station Square  
Ballater  
Aberdeenshire  
AB35 5QE

Tel: 013397 53601

Email: [localplan@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:localplan@cairngorms.co.uk)