

# Cairngorms National Park Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism 2011-2016



## Summary

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### Acknowledgements

The Cairngorms National Park Authority commissioned The Tourism Company ([www.thetourismcompany.com](http://www.thetourismcompany.com)) to produce the **Cairngorms National Park Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism 2011-2016** under the guidance of the Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Forum.

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A large print version of this booklet is available.

Please contact the Cairngorms National Park Authority on 01479 873535. Other formats are available on request.

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## Introduction

In 2005, shortly after designation, the Cairngorms National Park became the first National Park in the UK to be awarded the prestigious European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECSTPA). The award was made on the



basis of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy which set out what the tourism industry and key partners wanted to achieve in the early years as a new National Park. In 2011 the real test came with re-application for the Charter and an assessment

on what had been achieved so far. The Park passed with flying colours.

This booklet is designed for businesses, organisations and communities involved in the tourism industry in the Cairngorms National Park. It briefly explains the story so far and outlines plans for the next five years.

### What is sustainable tourism?

The UN world Tourism Organisation defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”.

To be sustainable, tourism needs to be competitive and profitable as well as environmentally and socially responsible. Sustainable tourism essentially means good, successful and beneficial tourism – a concept relevant to everyone.

### Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Forum

The Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Forum (CSTF) includes representatives of local businesses, communities and conservation interests. It has been instrumental in developing a new Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism 2011-2016. A full list of members can be found at:

[www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk).

## Success stories so far

As part of the ECSTPA re-application process, an external verifier visited the Cairngorms National Park for a two-day assessment visit, to see what was happening on the ground, and to meet a variety of people from the tourism industry. Several developments were highlighted.

### **Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP)**

The CBP has evolved from the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce and several other geographical and sectoral business groups to provide a strong business voice for the Cairngorms National Park. It has three aims:

- Promotion – of the Cairngorms as a great place to visit;
- Development – of the Cairngorms as a destination;
- Advocacy – speaking out on behalf of local businesses.

### **Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT)**

COAT is an innovative environmental charity promoting sustainable access to the Cairngorms National Park. It has five main strands of activity:

- Upgrading and developing community path networks;
- Repairing eroded upland paths;
- Developing a suite of structured health walks;
- Working on delivery of strategic long distance routes;
- Providing information about outdoor access.

### **Cairngorms National Park brand**

The Cairngorms National Park brand provides a strong identity for the Park and now features prominently on entry signage and a range of visitor publications. The brand identity is available free of charge for use by local businesses, organisations and communities who meet simple quality and environmental standards.



## Co-ordination of ranger services

Rangers promote the enjoyment, understanding and care of the National Park. Twelve ranger services cover the Park, employed by a variety of organisations including local authorities, private estates, charitable trusts and one community group. Nine services receive grant support from the CNPA. These services, while still individually run, are working increasingly collaboratively and using the National Park brand to connect their work to the Park.

## Research

Data about tourism in the Cairngorms National Park is vital, and is collected in a variety of different ways. Some key pieces of recent research include:

- **Visitor Survey**

A year-long survey of visitors was carried out in 2003/04 when the Park was first designated and this was repeated in 2009/10. The full report and a summary booklet is available at [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk). It includes information on visitor demographics, motivations and spending patterns.

- **Economic & Social Health of the Park**

An economic baseline report was commissioned in 2002 to gather data on the economic profile of the Park. This was updated in 2010 and the full report and summary booklet are available at [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk). It includes information on population, employment, income and housing.

- **Business Barometer**

The Cairngorms Business Partnership runs a quarterly business barometer. This short survey asks businesses about trends in business performance, investment, visitor origin and growth constraints.

# Strategy vision and key principle

## Our vision for tourism

The Cairngorms National Park is a renowned, world-class destination, based on an exceptional visitor experience, well conserved natural resources and a diverse cultural heritage, supporting a thriving tourism economy that delivers year round jobs and prosperity across the area.

The key principle for tourism that underpins this strategy is:

## **National Park = Opportunity + Responsibility**

That the status of the Cairngorms as a National Park provides a powerful opportunity for developing and promoting its tourism proposition but one that is matched by a responsibility to deliver an exceptional experience for visitors and give high priority to caring for the environment.

The strategy also sets out six strategic objectives, which are explored in more detail on pages 7-12.

## Strategic Objective 1: Tourism Growth

To seek significant growth in the value of tourism generated and retained in the Cairngorms National Park in the next five years, leading to an increase in the profitability of businesses and local prosperity.

A survey of tourism businesses showed that many need to see more growth in order to achieve sufficient profitability. The emphasis is placed on the growth of tourism value to the local economy, but this will also mean growth in volume of visitors. Priorities are to:

- Grow year-round tourism;
- Increase length of stay in the Park; and
- Increase spend per head and income retained locally.

### How can I get involved?



Promote special offers for longer staying visitors, or those visiting out of peak season. Use and promote local products and services to increase the amount of visitor spend that is retained locally. Contact the Cairngorms Business Partnership to find out about all-year-round promotional opportunities and campaigns through [www.visitcairngorms.co.uk](http://www.visitcairngorms.co.uk), mobile apps, publications and social media.

## Strategic Objective 2: Customer Focus

**To ensure that the expectations and needs of all visitors to the Cairngorms National Park are fully understood and addressed.**

The recent visitor survey showed that while levels of visitor satisfaction are generally high, there are some areas of weakness. We need to address this by capturing information on visitor needs, both at a Park level and within individual businesses. It's particularly important that all visitors have a great experience, regardless of background, age, race, social status, income or ability. The better experience visitors have, the more likely they are to return.

### How can I get involved?



Get up-to-date visitor information by looking at the recent Cairngorms Visitor Survey, and by carrying out your own visitor research. The Delivering an Outstanding Visitor Experience (DOVE) project, run by the Cairngorms Business Partnership, lets you gather data using a small handheld computer, and compare your results with similar businesses. User-generated content websites, such as TripAdvisor, can also be a great way to keep track of, and if appropriate, respond to visitor opinions. And don't forget to react to the feedback. Often very small changes can make a big difference to customer satisfaction. The Cairngorms Business Partnership runs business workshops that can help you make the most of visitor research.



## Strategic Objective 3: Special Qualities

To strengthen awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park and provide outstanding, distinctive experiences based on them.

There is a clear market trend showing that visitors are seeking distinctive destinations and looking for authentic experiences. The Cairngorms National Park offers an array of special landscapes, unique wildlife and habitats, a variety of cultural heritage attractions and a huge choice of recreational activities. Together they offer real opportunity to develop visitor experiences that connect people to the place. Wildlife tourism in particular has potential as a key growth market.

### How can I get involved?



Find out more about the Cairngorms National Park and how you can market your business or community with the Cairngorms Business Partnership. The CNPA has produced a guide to developing visitor information and interpretation about the Park – **Sharing the Stories of the Cairngorms National Park** – available at [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)

## Strategic Objective 4: Geographical Diversity

To recognise different parts of the Cairngorms National Park, promote their individual qualities, meet their needs and help them benefit more from tourism.

The mountain core that defines the National Park also acts as a barrier between the various communities, which tend to have their own distinctive identity, traditions and links to areas outwith the Park. The Cairngorms Marketing Strategy developed by the CBP describes the Park as ‘one dish with five distinct flavours’, promoting the National Park as a whole but also the five individual areas of the Park: Badenoch & Strathspey; Royal Deeside & Donside; Tomintoul & Glenlivet; Atholl and Glenshee; and the Angus Glens. Some areas are more popular with visitors than others and this objective aims to encourage visitors to visit other areas of the Park.

### How can I get involved?



Explore the Park yourself! How well do you know other areas of the Park?

Visit and gather information about areas that you don't know so well and make this available to visitors. Or why not make contact with a similar business elsewhere in the Park and come up with a joint offer such as a two-destination accommodation package or reciprocal ticket discount for attractions?

## Strategic Objective 5: Environmental Impact

To minimise negative environmental impacts from tourism and gain support for the conservation, management and enhancement of the Cairngorms National Park's natural resources and heritage.

The Cairngorms was designated as a National Park because of its outstanding landscape, culture and biodiversity, but how do we ensure that the very things that attract so many visitors are protected for the future? This objective includes encouraging visitors, businesses and other organisations to consider their environmental impacts at both a local and global scale. It also considers the effect of tourism and visitor pressures on communities and land managers.

### How can I get involved?



Think about the environmental impact of your business. There's great advice on offer from organisations such as:

Business Environment Partnership

[www.greenbusinesspartnership.org.uk](http://www.greenbusinesspartnership.org.uk)

Energy Saving Trust

[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

Your business could even be accredited through the Green Tourism Business Scheme

[www.green-business.co.uk](http://www.green-business.co.uk)

Whatever steps you take, let your visitor know about them. You could also think about supporting, or encouraging your visitors to support, local conservation or outdoor access projects.

## Strategic Objective 6: Leadership and Partnership

To strengthen the engagement of public and private stakeholders in the development, promotion and management of tourism in the Cairngorms National Park and provide co-ordination and leadership.

The National Park has a huge number of stakeholders, covering five local authority areas, and one of the key aims of this strategy is to bring people together around a shared agenda for tourism in the Park. Current economic conditions are likely to mean that public bodies face significant budget cuts, so it will be particularly important to focus resources and avoid duplication. The Cairngorms Business Partnership has a key role as the business voice in the Park.

### How can I get involved?



If you haven't already, get involved in a local organisation – whether that's the Cairngorms Business Partnership, your local community tourist association or a sectoral group like the Cairngorms Attractions Group or Creative Cairngorms. Working together with other businesses will keep you up-to-date with what's going on, and give you a stronger voice to influence the work of others.

## Cairngorms Marketing Framework

In 2010 the Cairngorms Business Partnership commissioned a marketing framework to determine aims, objectives and guiding principles for the marketing of the Cairngorms National Park. The work further developed the Cairngorms National Park brand, and included the development of personality attributes, a positioning statement and an endline for use in marketing.

### Endline

*Make it Yours*

For more information about the marketing framework, please contact the Cairngorms Business Partnership – email: [info@visitcairngorms.com](mailto:info@visitcairngorms.com) or tel: 01479 810200

## Want to find out more?

For more information about the marketing framework, and the brand and marketing guidelines, please contact the Cairngorms Business Partnership.

[www.visticairngorms.com/membership](http://www.visticairngorms.com/membership)

For the full version of the **Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism 2011-2016**, and other useful information for businesses, visit:

[www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)

### Other useful websites

VisitScotland

[www.visitscotland.org/business\\_support/sustainable\\_tourism](http://www.visitscotland.org/business_support/sustainable_tourism)

Energy Saving Trust

[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

Business Environment Partnership

[www.greenbusinesspartnership.org.uk](http://www.greenbusinesspartnership.org.uk)

Business Gateway

[www.business.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.business.scotland.gov.uk)








Green Tourism Business Scheme

[www.green-business.co.uk](http://www.green-business.co.uk)

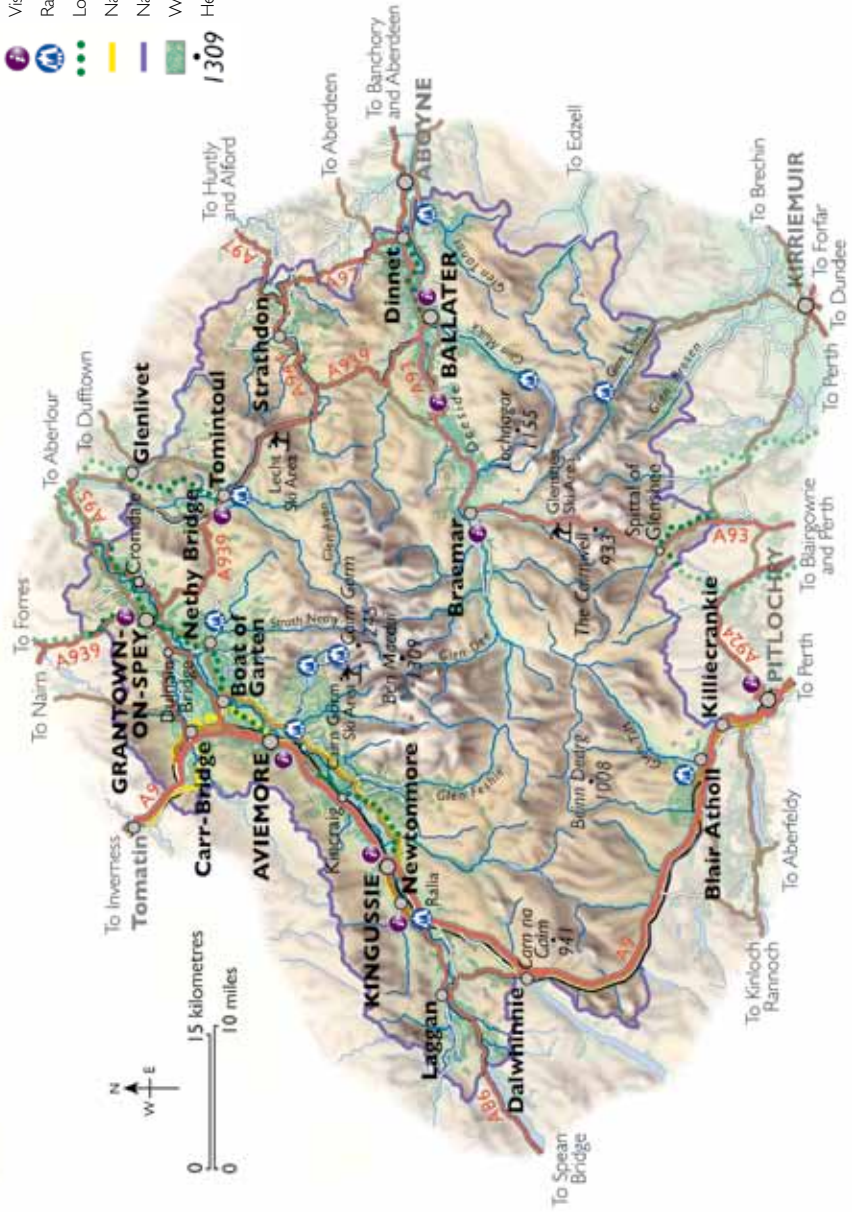
Tourism Intelligence Scotland

[www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk](http://www.tourism-intelligence.co.uk)



-  VisitScotland Information Centre
-  Ranger-base
-  Long distance footpath
-  National cycle route
-  National Park Boundary
-  Woodland
-  Height in metres

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