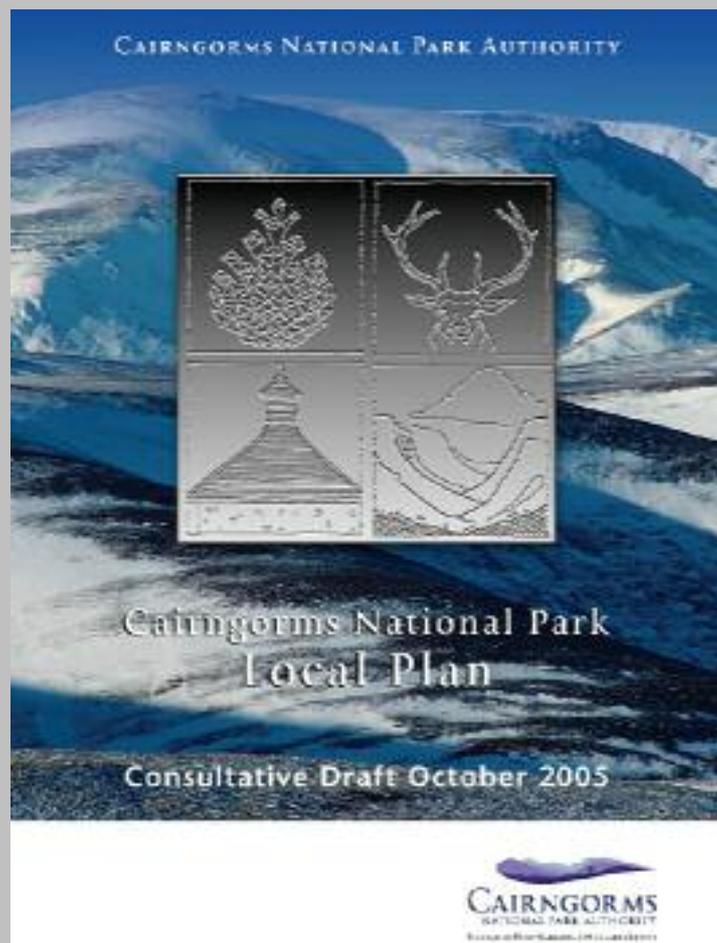


STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT
non-technical summary

20 December 2005

of the consultative draft
Cairngorms Local Plan



1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1. This is a non-technical summary of the Environmental Report of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan. It explains what the SEA is, why it has been done, and what effects the consultative draft 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.
- 1.2. 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, which implements a European Directive that requires SEA to be carried out on some kinds of plans and programmes.
- 1.3. 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 unlikely to lead to significant harm to the environment.
- 1.4. The SEA process is also about making public the information on what the plan's effects could be so that people can understand what the predicted effects of the plan on the environment will be, and how they were predicted. The public have an opportunity to comment on the SEA process when the 'Environmental Report' of the SEA process is published with the plan.

Summary of the SEA process

- 1.5. The SEA process can be broken down to a set of stages that happen as the Local Plan is being prepared.
 - 1) Work out what condition the environment in the area is in and how it is changing or has changed. Predict what the environment would be like in the future without the plan being made;
 - 2) Predict how different ways of making the plan could have different environmental effects;
 - 3) Predict what the effects of the policies and proposals in the consultative draft Local Plan would have on the environment;
 - 4) Decide on ways of reducing any harmful effects of the Local Plan on the environment and change the consultative draft Local Plan;
 - 5) Publish the consultative draft Local Plan and an SEA Environmental Report that explains what the SEA is and how it has been done so that people can comment on them; **(This is stage the Local Plan and SEA are at just now)**
 - 6) Take note of the comments on the Environmental Report and make any changes to the Local Plan or SEA because of them.

- 7) Continue to revise the Local Plan and do any extra assessment that is required.
- 8) Publish a the finalised draft Local Plan and an up to date Environmental Report for consultation **(We expect this to happen in the Autumn of 2006)**
- 9) Make sure that comments on the SEA as well as the findings of the SEA are considered before the Local Plan can be adopted as the formal Local Plan.
- 10) Adopt the Local Plan and write a formal statement of how the SEA been carried out with the Local Plan, how it has effected the Local Plan, and why the Local Plan has been adopted with certain proposals rather than others that were considered in the SEA process.
- 11) Keep measuring what effects the Local Plan *actually* has on the environment as it is used so that changes can be made in 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 consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan

- 1.6. The consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan has been assessed and the Environmental Report of the SEA prepared. The following table summarises the significant effects that are considered likely if the plan was adopted as it stands.

The predicted effects of Local Plan Policies

- 1.7. The policies in the Local Plan are mostly considered likely to have some positive effects on the environment. This might be expected given that the Local Plan covers a National Park that was designated for the high quality of its environment and has four statutory aims that the Local Plan must help to deliver:
 - **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.**
- 1.8. These aims mean 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 kinds of development that could have harmful effects on the environment. However, developments must fit with all the policies so must find sites or ways of operating that will not cause harmful environmental effects. The predicted effects are described in Section 8 and Appendix 2 of the full Environmental Report.

The predicted effects of Local Plan Proposals

- 1.9. A number of proposals in the Local Plan are considered likely to result in significant harmful environmental effects. None of the proposals are predicted to have significant positive effects.
- 1.10. The significant harmful effects that have been predicted are either because of potential harm to wildlife and the way plants and animals live on or near the proposed sites, or, it is because the proposed sites will change how a settlement appears in the landscape or how it appears to live there. They are summarised in the table below.

Settlements	Reasons for harmful effects of proposals
Aviemore Boat of Garten Carrbridge Grantown on Spey Kincaig Nethy Bridge Rothiemurchus	The proposals are on ground that is valuable for wildlife. This can be because there are important plants or animals on or near the site that would be harmed by development or because the site gives shelter, food or access for birds, animals or plants.
Aviemore Boat of Garten Carrbridge Kincaig Nethy Bridge Newtonmore Rothiemurchus Braemar	The proposals are on sites that are likely to lead to big changes in the way that the settlement is seen in the landscape or what the settlement is like to live in. In some places this is because the proposed sites will turn a small village into a town or because they will block local views or lead to a pattern of development that will contrast with what's already there.

- 1.11. In most cases, the SEA and Local Plan have made efforts to reduce the significant effects summarised above. In some cases this is by changing the Local Plan proposals while in others it means that developers would be asked to investigate issues when they apply for planning permission. Only in a few cases are there impacts that can't be made less harmful.
- 1.12. 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 full Environmental Report.

The differences SEA has made to the consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan

- 1.13. At this early point in the Local Plan and SEA process, very few changes to the Local Plan have been made due to the SEA. This is because the Local Plan has been written with environmental considerations in mind and it has tried to avoid leading to harm to the environment from the start.
- 1.14. 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 environmental concerns they have about the Local Plan or

SEA. This should help to make comments on the Local Plan as relevant as possible and help improve the next draft of the Local Plan.

How to comment on the Environmental Report

- 1.15. The consultative draft Local Plan has been available for public consultation from November 2005. The Environmental Report of the SEA of the Local Plan has been published for consultation on 20 December 2005 and **comments on both documents are requested by 28 February 2006.** Comments should be sent to:

**Local Plan Team
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Albert Memorial Hall
Station Square
Ballater
Aberdeenshire
AB35 5QE**

Tel. 013397 53601

Email. planning@cairngorms.co.uk

- 1.16. The full Environmental Report of the consultative draft Cairngorms Local Plan SEA is available from the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Copies are available to view with the Local Plan at the National Park offices in Grantown on Spey and Ballater, at local libraries within the National Park, Highland Council service points in Badenoch and Strathspey.
- 1.17. The report can also be downloaded from the Cairngorms National Park Authority website: www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning/localplan
- 1.18. It can also be provided in printed form or on CD from the National Park Authority planning department on request. The contact details are the same as those displayed above for comments to be sent to.