



A Draft Plan for the Future
Strategic Environmental Assessment
Environmental Report



HOW TO COMMENT

THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK - DRAFT PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

This Environmental Report is published for public consultation alongside the Draft National Park Plan (comprising two documents – 'Looking to 2030' and 'Priorities for Action 2007-2012'). The consultation period for both runs to 30th June 2006.

Comments are requested at any time before 30th June 2006 and should be sent to:

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Further copies of the Environmental Report and its Non-Technical Summary, can be obtained from the same address. Copies of the Draft National Park Plan and the accompanying State of the Park Report are also available.

Copies of all these documents are available to view at the National Park Authority offices in Grantown-on-Spey (14, The Square) and Ballater (Station Square); or at local libraries within the National Park.

The documents can also be downloaded from the Cairngorms National Park Authority website: www.cairngorms.co.uk

For a large print version of this publication, please contact the Cairngorms National Park Authority on tel: 01479 873535

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I. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

I.1 This is a non-technical summary of the Environmental Report, part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Draft National Park Plan (The Cairngorms National Park – A Draft Plan for the Future).

It explains:

- what the SEA is;
- why it has been done;
- what effects the draft Park Plan is 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.

I.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment, or SEA for short, is a way of making sure that environmental implications are carefully considered when a plan is developed. It is a formal part of the plan process that is a legal obligation. It is required by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004. These implement a European Directive that requires SEA to be carried out on certain kinds of plans and programmes.

I.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.

I.4 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 should be changed to introduce measures that will make the effects less harmful or serious. Equally, the SEA should highlight opportunities to strengthen the positive environmental effects

of the plan. The end result should be a plan that is unlikely to lead to significant harm to the environment, and should maximise the positive benefits to the environment.

I.5 The SEA process is also about making public the information used to predict the effects of the plan on the environment, and how they were predicted. The public have an opportunity to comment on the SEA process at this stage, through publication of the 'Environmental Report', which accompanies publication of the Draft National Park Plan. This is the current stage of the process.

Summary of the SEA process

I.6 The SEA process can be broken down to a set of stages that happen as the Park Plan is being prepared.

- i. Describe the current condition of the environment in the area and how it is changing or has changed. Predict what the environment would be like in the future without the plan being made;
- ii. Consider how different approaches to the plan could have different environmental effects;
- iii. Predict what effects the draft Park Plan would have on the environment;
- iv. Decide on ways of reducing any harmful effects and increasing any positive effects of the Park Plan on the environment and change the Draft Park Plan accordingly;
- v. Publish the Draft Park 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 the stage the Park Plan and SEA are at just now);

- vi. Take note of the comments on the Environmental Report and make any changes to the Park Plan or SEA that result from them;
- vii. Continue to revise the Park Plan and do any extra assessment that is required as a result of the SEA or comments on the Environmental Report;
- viii. Submit the finalised Park Plan and an updated Environmental Report to Ministers;
- ix. Publish the Park Plan and write a formal statement of how the SEA has been carried out with the Park Plan and how it has affected the Park Plan;
- x. Keep measuring what effects the Park Plan actually has on the environment as it is implemented, 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 Draft Park Plan

- 1.7 The objectives of the Draft Park Plan have been assessed, to identify the likely significant effects on the environment. Overall, the objectives are considered to have a positive effect on the environment, and there are no likely negative effects identified.
- 1.8 This might be expected, given the aims of the Park which are the starting point for the plan.

The aims are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- 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.
- 1.9 The plan's objectives have therefore been developed to deliver these aims specifically seeking a positive effect on the environment. Aims for economic development, communities and recreation have also been developed so that they do not have a damaging effect on the environment. They should at least result in a neutral impact, if not positively benefiting the environment.
- 1.10 All the significant effects that have been predicted for each of the plan's objectives are explained in Section 9 and Annex 2 of the full Environmental Report. The uncertainties and difficulties of the assessment are also explained in the full Environmental Report.

The differences SEA has made to the Draft Park Plan

- 1.11 As a result of assessment, a number of the plan's objectives have been modified in order to strengthen their positive environmental effects. It has also identified some objectives which could be modified further to strengthen the positive environmental effects. These will be considered following the consultation on the Environmental Report. Any changes will be reported when the final Park Plan is published.

Next steps

- 1.12 After consultation on the Draft Park Plan together with the Environmental Report, any appropriate changes will be made and the final Park Plan will be prepared. Changes to the objectives or actions proposed in the plan will be assessed for their likely environmental effects. This assessment will be reported in an updated version of the Environmental Report that will accompany publication of the final Park Plan.

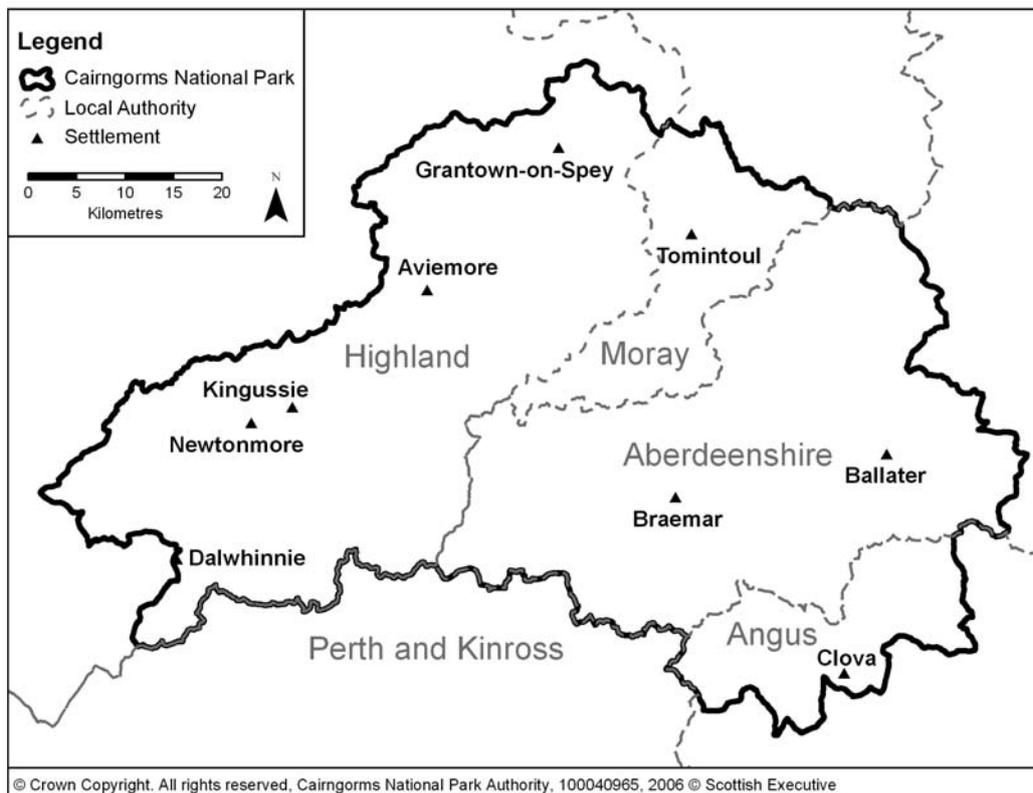
2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This is an Environmental Report in terms of the European Directive 2001/42/EC and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004 for the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan (Park Plan).
- 2.2 The Cairngorms National Park Authority is carrying out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Park Plan, and this Environmental Report accompanies the consultative Draft Park Plan.
- 2.3 The Environmental Report describes the SEA process that has accompanied development of the Park Plan so far. It follows a determination by the National Park Authority (18th July 2005) that SEA of the Park Plan should be undertaken.
- 2.4 A scoping process to identify a methodology for assessment and the likely significant effects of the Park Plan was then undertaken. A scoping report was sent to the Consultation Authorities (Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Historic Scotland) on the 22nd July 2005. Their comments, received on 26th August 2005, have informed the assessment methodology and process.

The Cairngorms National Park

- 2.5 Map 2.1 shows the boundaries of the Cairngorms National Park. It extends to 1,467 square miles and covers part of four local authority areas (Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Angus). The Park is centred on the Cairngorm mountains and extends to Granttown-on-Spey, Strathdon, Ballater, the heads of the Angus Glens, Dalwhinnie and Laggan.

Map 2.1 The Cairngorms National Park



This publication has been produced for public consultation. It assesses the likely environmental effects of the strategies contained in the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan documents. The maps contained are for information only and should not be used for navigational purposes. Reproduction is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holders. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the Cairngorms National Park Authority is not responsible for any errors or omissions.

The National Park designation

2.6 The Cairngorms National Park was established in September 2003. It is the second National Park in Scotland following the earlier establishment of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. It was established under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, which also required a new National Park Authority to co-ordinate management of the Park.

2.7 The National Park was established on the basis of:

- the outstanding national importance of its natural and cultural heritage;
- the area's distinctive character and coherent identity;
- the special management needs of the area.

2.8 The aims of the National Park are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- 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 National Park Authority

2.9 The National Park Authority is a Non-Departmental Public Body. It has a board of 25 members, of which 20 are appointed by the Scottish Ministers, (10 on nomination by the four local authorities) and five are elected by residents of the National Park.

2.10 The general purpose of the National Park Authority as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 is to ensure that the National Park aims are collectively achieved

in a co-ordinated way. The Park Authority is therefore an enabling organisation that must work with and through other bodies to bring added value to the management of the Park, and to achieve the four aims.

2.11 The National Park Authority must ensure that the four aims are achieved collectively. However, if there appears to be a conflict between the first aim and the other aims, greater weight must be given to the first aim (Section 9(6) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000).

The Cairngorms National Park and the planning system

2.12 Unlike a local authority, the Park Authority is not a full Planning Authority. Instead it shares planning powers in the Park area with the four constituent local authorities. The Park Authority is responsible for preparing a Local Plan for the area, but only operates the development control function on applications that it considers to be of significance to the aims of the National Park.

2.13 Development control functions within the National Park are shared by the Park Authority and the four constituent local authorities. Planning applications are made to the local authorities in the first instance, and the National Park Authority has a power to 'call-in' applications to be decided by the Park Authority where it considers they are of significance to the aims of the National Park. In practice, this has meant that so far the Park Authority has called in around 16 per cent of the planning applications within the National Park area for determination.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND...cont

The Cairngorms National Park Plan

2.14 The Park Plan is the strategic management plan for the National Park. The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 requires the National Park Authority to prepare a Park Plan setting out its policy for:

- Managing the National Park, and
- Co-ordinating the exercise of:
 - i) the authority's functions in relation to the National Park, and;
 - ii) the functions of other public bodies and office holders so far as affecting the National Park.

2.15 The purpose of the Park Plan is to ensure that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in a co-ordinated way. The Park Plan covers all sectors relevant to the aims of the Park and provides the strategic context for the work of all public bodies in the Park. Once approved by Ministers, all public bodies must have regard to the Park Plan in the discharge of their relevant functions.

2.16 The Park Plan sets out the strategic direction for the Park in the long-term, looking at least 25 years ahead. It also identifies the priorities for action in the coming five year period. The Plan will be reviewed at five yearly intervals.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE SEA AND PARK PLAN CONTEXT

The purpose of the SEA

3.1 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) described in this Environmental Report is an “assessment of the effects of the plan on the environment” under the terms of European Directive 2001/42/EC.

3.2 Article 1 of the Directive states that its objective is:

“to provide for a high level protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment.”

3.3 For some plans or programmes, the integration of environmental considerations may be a new idea. Given the aims and purpose of the National Park Plan, SEA should provide a transparent way to record the decision making process and support delivery of the Park's aims.

Structure of the National Park Plan

3.4 The Draft Park Plan comprises two parts:

- Looking to 2030 – This looks 25 years ahead and sets out the long-term vision and strategic objectives for the Park;
- Priorities for Action 2007-2012 – This looks to the next five years and identifies the immediate priorities where action needs to be taken.

3.5 The Draft Park Plan has been developed through discussion with a wide range of partners and interests, and is now subject to a formal public consultation. This consultation period is being used to inform the development of the final Park Plan. In particular, work programmes for each Priority for Action are being developed in parallel with the consultation, and will be informed by responses.

3.6 The contents of the consultative Draft Park Plan are shown in Figure 3.1 over the next two pages.

3.7 The SEA focuses on the long-term strategy, set out in Looking to 2030, which sets the framework for future action and gives a clear direction for the management of the Park through a set of objectives. It does not, at this stage, assess the proposed Priorities for Action identified in the plan.

3.8 These prioritise, within the broad range of objectives, those areas in which action should focus over the next five years. At this stage they therefore remain at a strategic level and reflect the objectives, so a separate assessment is unlikely to be useful. However, as these proposals are developed into agreed action programmes, further assessment may be required. This will either be carried out when updating the Environmental Report to accompany the final Park Plan, or when developing the more detailed plans and strategies that will result from these programmes. This is discussed further in Section 9.

Figure 3.1 Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan contents

Looking to 2030:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 National Parks in Scotland
 - National Park Designation
 - National Park Aims
 - Purpose of the Park Authority
 - International Context
- 1.2 The Park Plan
 - Purpose of the Park Plan
 - How the Draft Plan has been Developed
 - Structure of the Draft Park Plan
 - Relationship to Planning and Development Control
 - Relationship to other Plans
- 1.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment

2. The Cairngorms - A Special Place

- Why is the Cairngorms a National Park?
- The Special Qualities of the Cairngorms

3. Managing the Park in a Changing Environment

- A Brief History of the Cairngorms
- Responding to External Changes
- An Integrated Approach
- Managing Conflict
- Diversity within the Park
- Building on Experience
- Guiding Principles

4. Vision - the Park in 25 years time

5. Conserving, Enhancing and Managing the Park

- 5.1 Introduction - Conserving and Enhancing the Special Qualities
- 5.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Heritage
 - Landscape
 - Nature Conservation
- 5.3 Sustainable Use of Natural Resources
 - Soils
 - Water
 - Air
- 5.4 Integrated Land Management
 - Farming and Crofting
 - Forestry
 - Moorland Management
 - Deer Management
 - Fisheries Management
- 5.5 Conserving and Enhancing the Cultural Heritage
 - The Built and Historic Environment
 - Culture and Traditions

6. Communities Living and Working in the Park

- 6.1 Introduction - Encouraging Sustainable Development
- 6.2 Economy and Employment
- 6.3 Education and Training
- 6.4 Sustainable Tourism
- 6.5 Transport and Communications
- 6.6 Housing
- 6.7 Renewable Energy
- 6.8 Waste Management
- 6.9 Strengthening Communities

7. Understanding and Enjoying the Park

- 7.1 Introduction - Understanding and Enjoying the Special Qualities of the Park
- 7.2 Outdoor Access and Recreation
- 7.3 Visitor Services
- 7.4 Learning and Understanding

8. Implementation

- 8.1 A Partnership Approach
- 8.2 Priorities for Action 2007-2012

9. Monitoring and Review

- 9.1 Monitoring Delivery of the Plan
- 9.2 Monitoring the 'Health' of the Park
- 9.3 Proposed Health Indicators
- 9.4 Explanation of Proposed Indicator Themes
- 9.5 Review of the Park Plan
- 9.6 Interim Reporting and Review

Priorities for Action 2007-2012:

1. Introduction

2. Vision - the Park in 25 Years Time

3. Guiding Principles

4. Priorities for 2007-2012

- 4.1 Identifying the Priorities
- 4.2 Proposed Action Programmes - what should be achieved by 2012?
 - Conserving and Enhancing the Park's Biodiversity and Landscapes
 - Developing Sustainable Deer Management
 - Supporting Integrated Land Management
 - Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access
 - Making Housing Affordable and Sustainable
 - Making Tourism and Businesses Sustainable
 - Developing Awareness and Understanding of the Park
- 4.3 Timetable for Developing Action Programmes
- 4.4 What about other work required?
- 4.5 Implementing the Plan and its Priorities - A Partnership Approach

5. Monitoring and Review

- 5.1 Monitoring the Priorities for Action
- 5.2 Monitoring the 'Health' of the Park
- 5.3 Review of the Priorities for Action

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE SEA AND PARK PLAN CONTEXT...cont

Links to other plans and programmes

3.9 The Park Plan provides the context and strategic direction for all other plans, policies and strategies that are relevant to the aims of the Park. In particular, these include:

- The Cairngorms Local Plan;
- Core Paths Plans;
- Forestry and Woodland Framework;
- Sustainable Tourism Strategy;
- Strategic Deer Plan;
- Housing Strategy;
- Outdoor Access Strategy.

Wider context of the Park Plan

3.10 At the same time, the Park Plan sits within the context of wider regional, national and international policy. It must recognise the statutory obligations and responsibilities that flow from legislation as well as taking account of the policy direction and targets set out by other plans, policies and strategies.

3.11 The type of policies and plans that influence the Park Plan are summarised below. The relevant legislation and policies are listed in greater detail in Annex 1 of the Environmental Report. The Annex also identifies the main environmental objectives or targets of these plans that are relevant to the Park Plan, and the sections of the Park Plan to which they are pertinent.

International policy

3.12 There is a range of international legislation and policy which sets out environmental obligations and a context for the Park Plan. This includes European Directives such as the EU Air Quality, Water Framework, Birds and Habitats Directives.

National legislation and policy

3.13 Relevant national legislation includes the Wildlife and Countryside (Scotland) Act 1981, the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, and the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003. In some cases, national legislation interprets the implementation of European Directives. Other national policy such as the UK and Scottish Biodiversity Strategies, Waste Strategy or River Basin Management Planning also guides the environmental objectives of the Park Plan.

3.14 The Scottish Executive's Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) set out national planning policy and guidance on how it is interpreted. The National Planning Framework sets out the Scotland-wide planning context.

Regional policy

3.15 More localised plans and policies also set a context for the Park Plan, such as catchment management plans, local authority waste plans or local biodiversity action plans. These help to inform development of the Park Plan, but may also have a role to play in implementing the Park Plan, working towards some of its objectives.

4.METHODOLOGY

The Cairngorms National Park Authority's approach to SEA

- 4.1 The Park Authority's approach to carrying out the SEA is based on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Scottish Executive guidance and the desire to integrate the SEA process closely with the development of the Plan itself. The aims and objectives of the Park include explicit reference to a wide range of environmental topics. The procedure which is formalised through SEA is therefore central to the process of developing the Park Plan.
- 4.2 The Park Authority chose to carry out SEA of the National Park Plan internally rather than employ consultants to carry out the work as a contract. It was felt that by doing the SEA 'in-house', it could be better integrated with the plan-making process and would lead to an improved plan. It was also felt that the Park Authority contained much of the necessary expertise and knowledge of the National Park and could use the SEA process to develop skills that would be employed in SEA of other plans and programmes produced by the National Park Authority.

The SEA process

- 4.3. The SEA process reflects the development of the Park Plan itself and can be divided into a number of different, but overlapping stages:

- i. Screening whether plan is likely to have significant environmental effects;
- ii. Collating and forecasting baseline information;
- iii. Scoping the likely significant environmental effects;
- iv. Developing environmental objectives and criteria;
- v. Assessing the Plan and alternatives;
- vi. Publishing the Environmental Report with the Draft Park Plan;
- vii. Modifying and finalising the Park Plan and revising the Environmental Report;
- viii. Finalising monitoring proposals;
- ix. Post-Adoption Statement of: how environmental considerations have been integrated in the plan; and how the environmental report, consultation responses and public opinions have been taken into account;
- x. Monitoring significant environmental effects of plan to inform review.

Each of these stages is now considered in more detail.

SEA Screening

- 4.4 An initial screening consultation was issued to the Consultation Authorities on 21 March 2005. All consultees agreed with the National Park Authority's view that the Park Plan could have significant environmental effects. The National Park Authority determined that the Park Plan should be subject to SEA on the 18th July 2005.

4.METHODOLOGY...cont

Environmental baseline

4.5 The collation of information to form the environmental baseline for the SEA was aided by the production of The State of the Park Report, part of the process of preparing the National Park Plan. The report draws together existing information on the Park's resources and special qualities as a baseline to inform development and assessment of the National Park Plan. It will also inform future plans and policies in the Cairngorms National Park.

The State of the Park Report comprises four sections:

- natural resources;
- cultural resources;
- visitor and recreation resources;
- economic and social resources.

In each section the report identifies as far as possible:

- current extent of the resource;
- relative importance of the resource;
- current state of the resource;
- key trends affecting the resource;
- limitations of existing data and information gaps.

4.6 The report provided much of the environmental baseline data against which the potential effects of the Park Plan can be assessed, and against which implementation of the Park Plan can be monitored. The State of the Park Report is published alongside the Draft Park Plan.

SEA scoping

4.7 Following the determination to carry out SEA, the National Park Authority sent a Scoping Report to the Consultation Authorities on 22nd July 2005.

It set out what the potential effects of the Park Plan could be, and proposed a methodology for assessment, including the SEA objectives that would be used for assessment. The Consultation Authorities provided the National Park Authority with their responses on 26th August 2005.

Developing environmental objectives and criteria

4.8 The SEA scoping report set out an environmental baseline together with SEA objectives and criteria for assessment of the Park Plan. These were modified following receipt of the Consultation Authorities' comments on the Scoping Report and are described in Section 6 of this Environmental Report. The objectives and criteria were further refined during the assessment.

Assessing the Park Plan

4.9 Each strategic objective of the Park Plan is subject to assessment against the SEA objectives, in order to predict likely environmental effects. The nature of these potential effects is recorded on detailed assessment sheets similar to that shown in Figure 4.1 opposite.

4.10 The assessment of each strategic objective was made by the judgement of the team responsible for preparing the Park Plan, together with a judgement from specialist staff in the Natural Heritage group of the Park Authority. This ensures that the SEA remains an integral part of the plan making process, but also involves the judgement of specialist staff not directly involved in the plan team. More detailed commentary on judging the significance of effects is given in Section 8 of this report, recording the assessment.

Figure 4.1 Example of SEA assessment sheet

Figure 4.1 Example of SEA assessment sheet		
Draft Park Plan Objective:	The draft plan objective and reference.	
Purpose of objective:	What the plan objective is supposed to achieve and why.	
Identify objective options including consideration of alternatives where relevant:	Detail of what policy options were considered in developing the plan objectives, what alternatives (if any were possible) were considered and decisions taken so far.	
Prediction of direct and indirect effects of objective: Detailed assessment of the plan objective against each SEA objective and reasoning behind predictions.		
SEA Objectives	Score	Reasoning for score
1		
2		
etc		
Summary of objective's effects:		A brief summary of the effects of the plan objective based on the detailed assessment.
Options for mitigation or modification:		Amendments to strengthen the positive effects or mitigate the negative effects of the plan objective.

4.11 A matrix of scores is used to summarise the effects. It can also be used to help identify trends in the effects of objectives, and help identify cumulative effects. An example of the assessment matrix is shown in Figure 4.2 below.

4.12 In order to make the scoring simple to understand and analyse, a system of five categories of effect is used for the assessment. These run from strongly positive effects through to strongly negative effects and are shown in Figure 4.3 (overleaf) with symbol codes.

Figure 4.2 Example of SEA assessment summary

Park Plan objectives	Cairngorms National Park SEA objectives			
	1	2	3	SEA objectives, 4, 5 etc
Objective 1a				
Objective 1b				
Objective 2a				
Objective 2b				
Objective 2c				
etc				

Figure 4.3 Environmental effect scoring

Symbol:	Description of effect:
++	strongly positive effect
+	positive effect
=	neutral or no effect
-	negative effect
--	strongly negative effect
?	uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted
/	not applicable

The Environmental Report

4.13 This Environmental Report provides a summary of the SEA process to accompany the Consultative Draft Park Plan, and provides the information required of an Environmental Report as set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations.

Modifying the Park Plan and revising the Environmental Report

4.14 Both the Draft Park Plan and the Environmental Report are subject to consultation. The Park Plan is expected to develop as work on the priorities for action continues and responses from the consultation are received. An SEA consultation report will be prepared by the National Park Authority to collate comments on the SEA. A Park Plan consultation report will also collate comments on the Draft Park Plan. Both reports will be published by the National Park Authority to accompany the final Park Plan.

4.15 The likely environmental effects highlighted by the SEA, and any comments on this Environmental Report, will also inform any revision of the objectives in preparing the final Park Plan and maximising the positive effects on the environment. The final Park Plan will be accompanied by an updated Environmental Report that takes into account comments on this Report and any changes to the Park Plan.

Finalising monitoring proposals

4.16 Proposals for monitoring the significant environmental effects will be finalised, informed by the responses to the Draft Park Plan and the Environmental Report.

Statement of compliance and environmental considerations

4.17 A formal stage of the SEA process required by the Directive is a statement of how environmental considerations have been integrated in the plan; how the environmental report, consultation responses and public opinions have been taken into account; and the reasons for developing the plan as finalised, in light of other reasonable options considered. This statement will be prepared at the time of submission of the Park Plan to Ministers.

Monitoring significant environmental effects of the plan to inform review

4.18 This stage of the SEA process will be carried out as part of the ongoing monitoring and review of the Park Plan. It is anticipated that monitoring of the significant environmental effects of the Plan will be supplemented by more strategic monitoring of the state of the Park against health indicators (many linked to the state of the environment) that are being developed through the consultation process.

Consultation in the SEA process

- 4.19 This Environmental Report is subject to consultation with the Draft Park Plan. It is hoped that the Consultation Authorities and public will provide comments on the likely significant environmental effects of the Park Plan as well as on the Plan itself.
- 4.20 The SEA process has involved two formal stages of consultation so far. The Consultation Authorities have been asked firstly for screening opinions and secondly for scoping opinions.

Difficulties encountered in the SEA process so far

- 4.21 SEA is intended to improve the plan-making process and to provide the public, as well as the plan-makers, with clear information about likely environmental effects of the plan. During the process so far, a number of factors have created difficulties or uncertainties that have affected both the consultative Draft Park Plan and the SEA.

Information gathering and availability

- 4.22 Both the Park Plan and SEA require information that is as accurate and up to date as possible. The State of the Park Report has gathered together a wide range of current information on the environmental resources of the Park, but it also identifies limitations to this information.
- 4.23 The new geography of the Park boundary means that many data sets cannot be interrogated or analysed at the Park level, because they have been collated for different boundaries. For example, a significant amount of data is collated at local authority level, which therefore requires extraction from four different sources, which do not match the Park boundary. This can be compounded by the fact that data is often held in different formats. This is an issue that will be addressed over time as the Park Authority identifies research priorities and carries out monitoring that will give an increasing knowledge base.

Difficulties in the assessment of plan objectives

- 4.24 In identifying relevant SEA objectives and criteria, it was difficult to identify the appropriate aspects of human health and population to consider in assessment. Schedule 2 of the Regulations identifies both of these topics as suitable for inclusion. However, it has proved difficult to separate the environmental effects on these two topics from the socio-economic effects that might be considered in a broader and separate sustainability appraisal.
- 4.25 The Park Plan SEA has combined these topics into one SEA objective (11) 'to maintain a sustainable and healthy population'. The criteria used for assessment relate to effects on human health and wellbeing, which are considered to include access to key services. The criteria used are:
- Provide for housing and service needs of local communities;
 - Ensure access to services for communities;
 - Encourage healthy lifestyles.
- 4.26 A second difficulty encountered was the limited ability to predict likely practical effects of objectives that are pitched at a high strategic level. By its nature, the Park Plan takes an overview and sets a strategic direction. The effects of many objectives will therefore depend on when, where and how they are implemented through specific action plans. However, despite this problem, as described further in Section 8, it has proved possible to assess whether the direction set by the plan's strategic objectives will support or work against the SEA objectives.
- 4.27 This means that SEA will need to be carried out on more detailed implementation plans as and when they are prepared. This will therefore form part of a hierarchy of assessment

5. ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND ISSUES

Environmental baseline of the Cairngorms National Park

5.1 The current environmental conditions form the baseline for considering potential impacts. In the absence of change, the current trends are considered likely to continue. This section of the Environmental Report describes the current environmental baseline and trends that are considered relevant to the National Park and Park Plan.

5.2 Figure 5.1 summarises the key environmental baseline facts. Maps 5.1 to 5.6 provide an overview of the distribution of a range of environmental features in the National Park. Detailed data is available in the State of the Park Report, available from the National Park Authority.

Figure 5.1: Key baseline facts

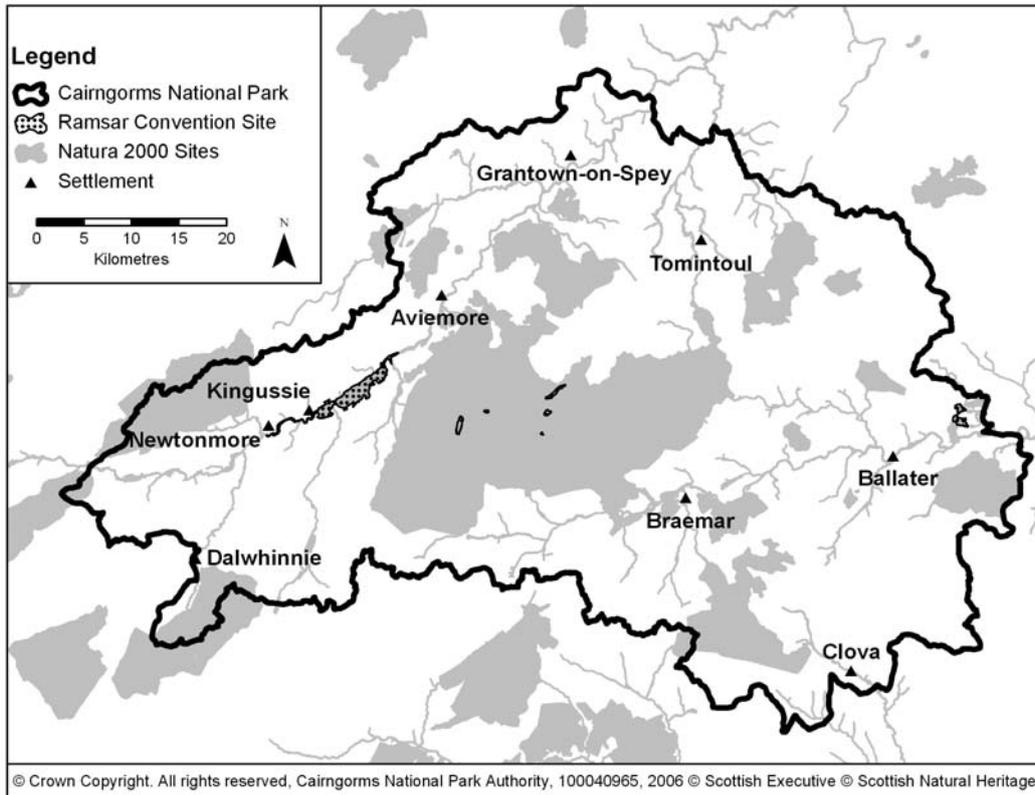
Resource	Key facts
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% of UK's threatened species present. • 12.5% of Scotland's semi-natural woodland cover. • Habitat types present include: montane; dwarf shrub heath; conifer woodland; broadleaved and mixed woodland; acid grassland; fen, marsh and swamp; standing water; rivers and streams. • UK BAP Species include: upland oak and birch woodland; bog woodland (largest extent in Scotland); juniper; capercaillie; black grouse; scottish crossbill. • Habitats listed under Annex I of EU Habitats Directive include: dry heaths; alpine and boreal heaths; sub-arctic willow scrub; siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands, nardus grasslands; calcareous flushes. • Close proximity of lowground, woodland, water, upland and montane habitats.
Designated Nature Conservation Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39% of Park area designated for natural heritage. • 19 SAC sites. • 12 SPA sites. • 46 SSSIs (some of which are of geological importance). • 3 Ramsar Sites. • 6 National Nature Reserves.
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 SSSIs with soils of international importance. • 12 SSSIs with soils of national importance. • High proportion of undisturbed soils (only 2% cultivated). • Podzols form 50% of soil cover including internationally significant alpine podzols on the plateau. • Peat forms 13% of soil cover.
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 Census: 16,024 people. • Population density 0.04 people/Ha (lower than Scottish average). • 25.8% of population over 60 (higher than Scottish average). • Average health index in top 25% of Scotland (based on deprivation indices).

Figure 5.1: Key baseline facts...cont

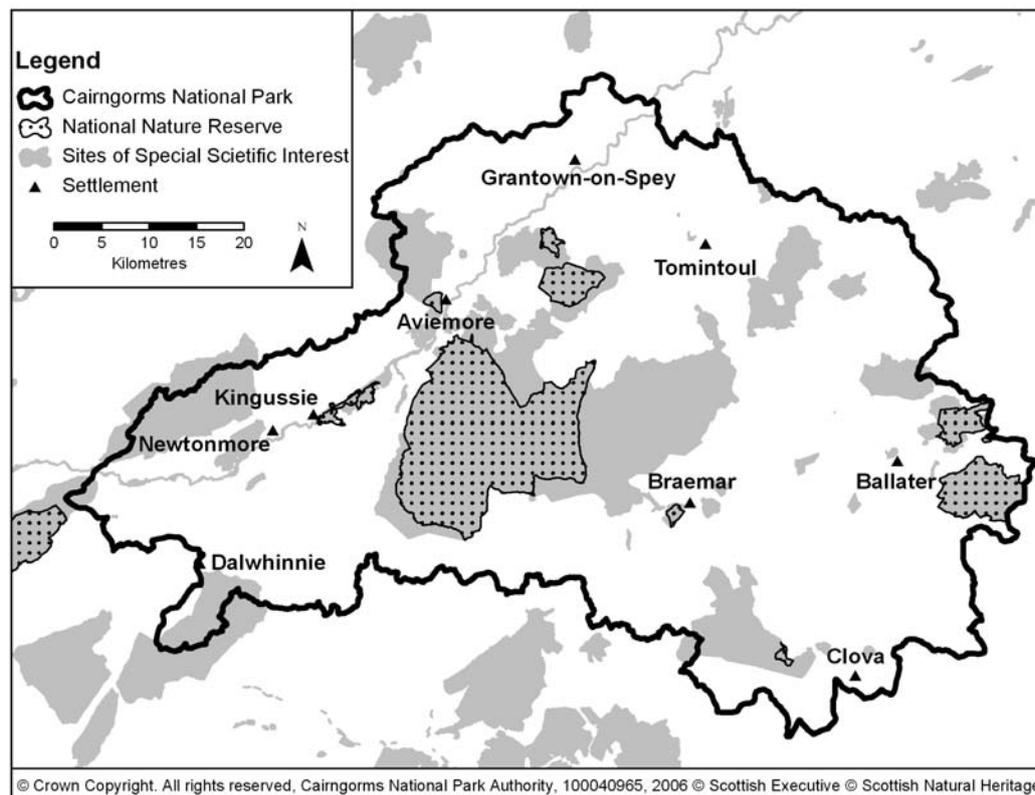
Resource	Key facts
Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 designated Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes. • 60 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. • 424 listed buildings. • 3 Conservation Areas. • 4778 records in NMRS. • Large number of historic landscapes. • Potential for survival of many unknown remains in upland areas.
Earth Heritage Landforms and Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 National Scenic Areas. • 30 GCR sites (of which some are part or all SSSI). • Granite massif and plateau. • Internationally important landform record. • Coherent identity of landscape across park from landform and landcover. • Land-use cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% dwarf shrub heath; • 28% montane habitats; • 11% coniferous woodland; • 2% broadleaved/mixed woodland; • 3% improved grassland; • 0.4% built areas.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,362km of running water habitat. • 81% of streams classified as excellent (A1) or good (A2) (SEPA 2003). • 20 sq km standing waters. • Catchments of 6 major rivers.
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively low atmospheric pollution.
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual precipitation over 2250mm on summits and under 900mm in straths. • Average annual snow cover 200 days on summits and 50 days on low-ground. • Prevailing winds from south-west.
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public right of responsible access. • 49 Munros including 5 summits over 4000 feet. • 3 ski centres. • National Cycle Network Route 7. • 1 Long Distance Route (Speyside Way). • 179 Rights of Way. • Around 40 promoted path networks.
Energy and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant energy generation within the Park.
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Conservation Areas. • Distinctive local vernacular architecture.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND ISSUES...cont

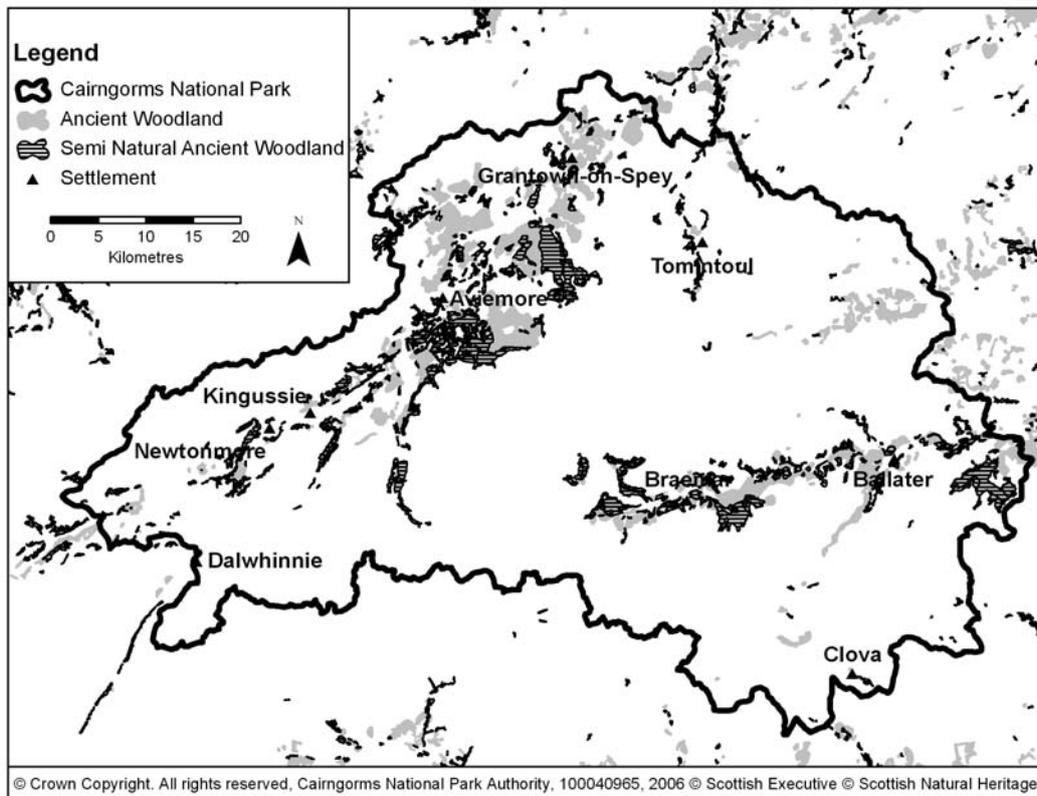
Map 5.1 International nature conservation designations



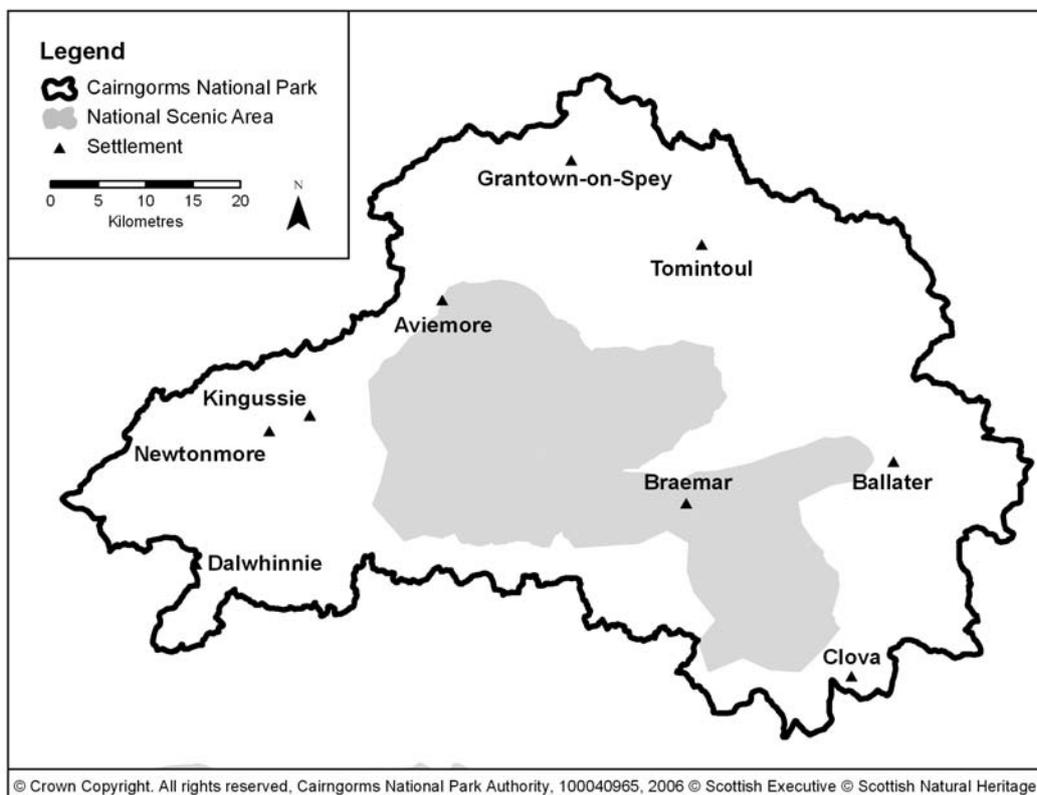
Map 5.2 National nature conservation designations



Map 5.3 Ancient woodland sites

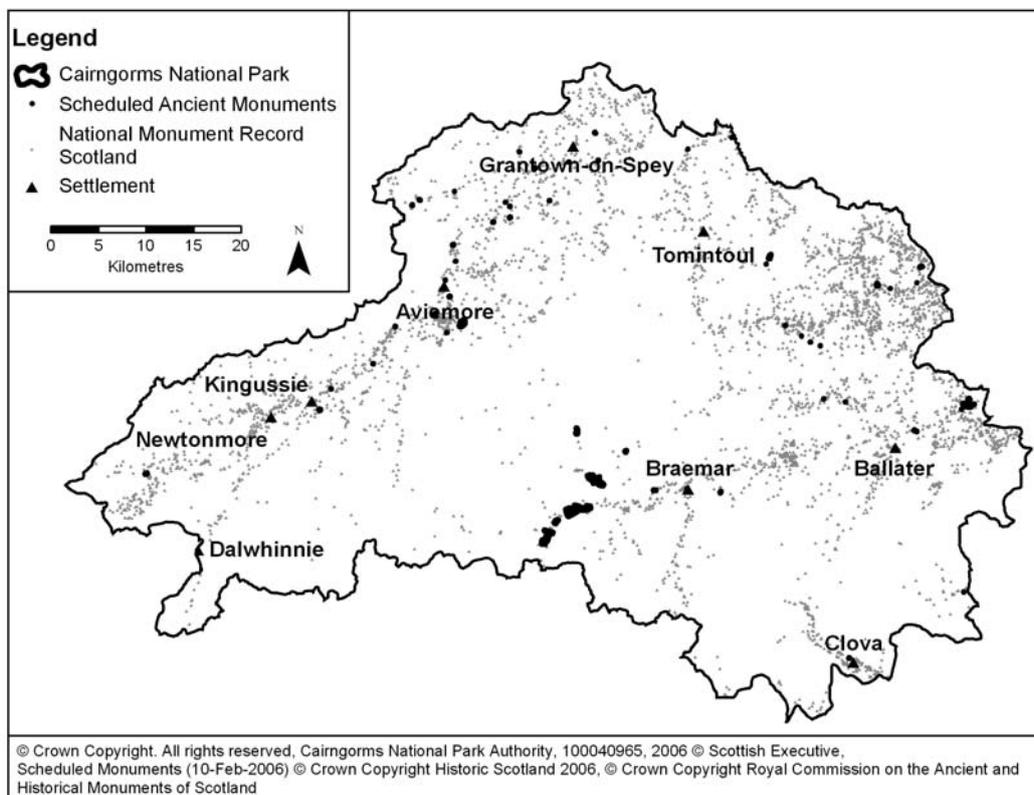


Map 5.4 National Scenic Areas

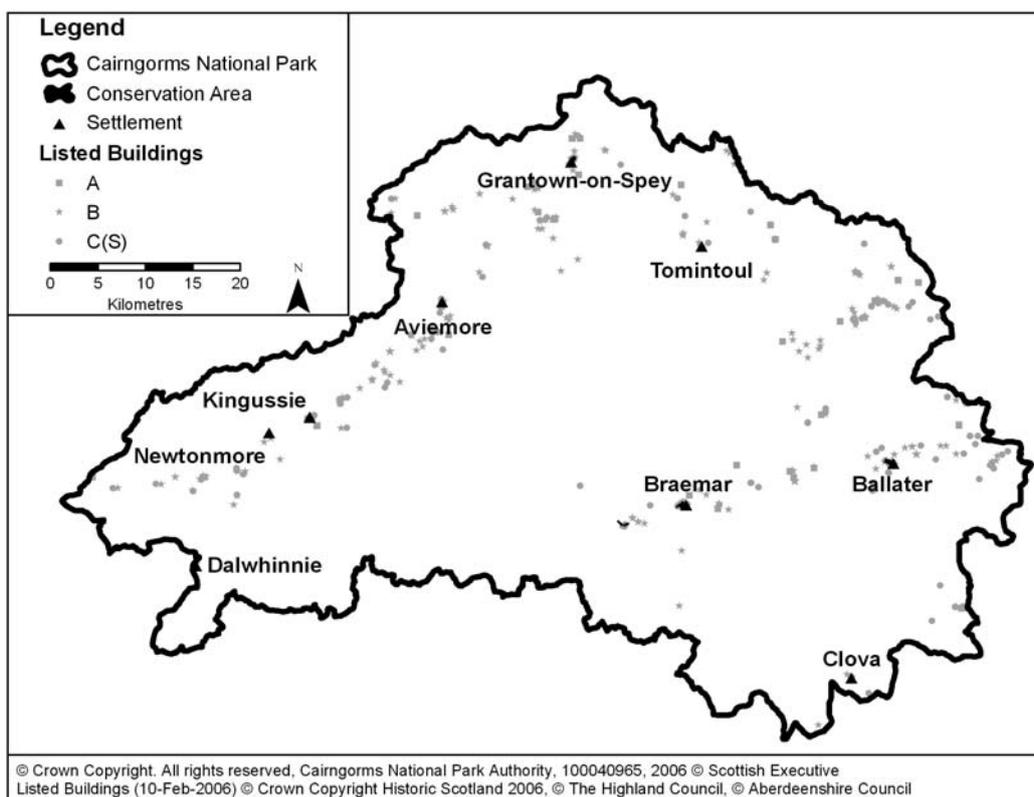


5. ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND ISSUES...cont

Map 5.5 Scheduled Monuments and other monument records



Map 5.6 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas



Environmental issues in the Cairngorms National Park

5.3 The State of the Park Report and key issues research provide information on the current trends and issues in each environmental resource category in the Cairngorms. Figure 5.2 summarises the key trends and issues for each.

Figure 5.2: Key trends and issues in the Cairngorms

Resource	Key trends	Key issues
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some continued habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration • Vegetation limited by grazing pressure • Continued introductions of non-native species • Increase in native woodland cover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem integrity and connectivity • Impact of non-native species • Impact of climate change • Impact of recreation • Impact of development • Incomplete data
Designated Nature Conservation Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing account of external impacts to sites (Nature Conservation Act 2004) • Recent expansion of Natura 2000 designations • Review of NNR designations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management practices • Long-term security of management objectives • Integration with wider land-use
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications for community dynamics • Implications for development patterns • Implications for human resources
Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land-use change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of new development • Extension of forest cover • Agricultural changes from CAP reform • Impact of visitors
Landforms and Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in woodland cover • Decline in heather moorland cover • Increase in research on landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of development • Recreation pressure • Connectivity of land cover • Impacts of tracks and footpaths • Renewable energy developments • Perceptions of 'wildness'

Continued over ▶

5. ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND ISSUES...cont

Figure 5.2: Key trends and issues in the Cairngorms...cont

Resource	Key trends	Key issues
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil erosion on higher slopes and plateaux 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of recreation • Lack of information on soil use and development
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acidification (atmospheric) • Decline in native fish stocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diffuse pollution from agricultural ground • River modification • Catchment processes and flood management • Availability for consumption • Impact of recreation
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change – increasing temperature and precipitation expected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmospheric pollution
Access and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing range of outdoor recreation activities • New public right of responsible access • More managed path networks • Increased level of upland path provision and repair • Diversification of ski centres into summer activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development increasing or reducing access opportunities • Impact of access on habitats and species • Landscape impact of access infrastructure • Accessibility of environment for all
Energy and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing demand for renewable (particularly windfarm) sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impact of transmission pylons and windfarm developments • Use of non-renewable energy sources
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abandonment or conversion of farm steadings • Significant demand for new housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decay of listed buildings • Impact of development on settlement character

Limitations of data

5.4 The Cairngorms National Park is one of the most closely studied geographical areas in the UK and so has a wealth of environmental information that can be used to provide a baseline. However, a number of factors limit the value or usability of data:

- Information is fragmented across the National Park area, with some sites or areas having been more closely studied than others. Of particular relevance to the Park Plan is that the wealth of information on the uplands and mountains of the Cairngorms is not reflected in as comprehensive a manner for the straths and lowlands.
- The geography of the National Park boundary is new, and data has not been collected on this basis in the past. The Park boundary cuts across four local authority areas, and different sections of other agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage which means that data has often been collected for different areas using different standards and methodologies in the past.

- Data is held in different forms. Some data is well suited to straightforward assessment and query, whereas others are not.

Evolution of the environment without the Park Plan

5.5 The Directive requires the likely evolution of the environment without the Plan to be considered. The trends identified above are expected to continue in the absence of new policy or actions to address them. There are a number of negative trends that would reduce the special qualities of the Park and threaten its coherence and integrity over time.

5.6 The underlying purpose of the National Park designation is to integrate the management of different sectors and areas within the Park in order to take a co-ordinated approach to addressing these issues and delivering the Park aims.

6. SEA OBJECTIVES

SEA objectives

- 6.1 The SEA objectives (Figure 6.1) are informed by the need to cover the range of issues outlined in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations (Annex 1 (f) of the Directive: biodiversity; population; human health; fauna; flora; soil; water; air; climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage; landscape; and the inter-relationship between those issues).
- 6.2 The SEA objectives are also informed by the key environmental resources, trends and issues that are relevant to the Cairngorms National Park, set out in Section 5.

Figure 6.1 SEA objectives

Cairngorms National Park SEA objectives	Relevant SEA environmental topics
1. To conserve and enhance the diversity of species;	flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water; soil, material assets, human health
2. To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats;	flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water; soil, material assets, human health
3. To maintain and enhance the integrity of ecosystems;	flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water; soil, material assets, human health
4. To protect, and where appropriate improve, water body status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park area;	water; flora, fauna, landscape, biodiversity, soil, human health, material assets
5. To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems;	water; flora, fauna, landscape, biodiversity, soil, human health, material assets
6. To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park;	landscape, flora, fauna, biodiversity, soils, material assets, cultural heritage, human health
7. To ensure responsible access for all;	human health, population
8. To maintain and improve air quality;	air; climatic factors, water; human health, flora, fauna, biodiversity, soil
9. To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable way;	flora, fauna, biodiversity, landscape, water; air; soil, material assets, human health
10. To conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment;	cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage, material assets, landscape
11. To maintain a sustainable and healthy population;	population, human health
12. To improve sustainable energy efficiency;	air; climatic factors, material assets
13. To reduce waste and pollution;	air; water; soil, flora, fauna, biodiversity, human health
14. To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment;	landscape, material assets, cultural heritage, human health, population, climatic factors

6.3 The 14 SEA objectives are a broad set of objectives that can be applied to assess the objectives of the Park Plan. To assess the plan's potential effect on these objectives, a set of more detailed and targeted criteria reflecting the key issues are required for each one.

6.4 These criteria are therefore used to determine the potential effects in relation to the SEA objectives, in the context of the environmental resources and issues relevant to the Cairngorms. The criteria are shown in Figure 6.2 below.

Figure 6.2 SEA criteria

SEA objectives	SEA criteria
<p>1. To conserve and enhance the diversity of species</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss of priority species* • Increase creation and improve condition of priority species' habitats • Minimise disturbance to and avoid deterioration of priority species and their habitats <p>* priority species are species that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • qualifying criteria of SPAs or SACs; • notified features on SSSIs; • listed in Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive; • listed as of community interest in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats directive; • species listed in schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended; or • listed in the UK BAP or Cairngorms LBAP.
<p>2. To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss of priority habitats* • Increase creation and improve condition of priority habitats • Minimise disturbance to and avoid deterioration of priority habitats • Ensure designated sites are in favourable condition • Consider impacts of new species <p>* priority habitats are habitats that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • qualifying criteria of SPAs or SACs; • notified features on SSSIs; • listed in Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive; • listed as of community interest in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats directive; • of naturally occurring wild birds, particularly those in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive and migratory species; • listed in the UK BAP or Cairngorms LBAP; or • native woodlands, including ancient woodland sites in the Ancient Woodland Inventory.

6. SEA OBJECTIVES...cont

Figure 6.2 SEA criteria...cont

SEA objectives	SEA criteria
3. To maintain and enhance the integrity of ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent fragmentation of habitats • Ensure development does not create new barriers to native species movement • Promote habitat networks in accordance with strategic priorities outlined in the National Park Plan
4. To protect, and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve water quality • Identify and avoid significant adverse downstream impacts • Ensure new development has appropriate SUDS
5. To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage flood risks • Minimise pollution risks • Identify sphere of influence and downstream impacts • Avoid interference with natural fluvial processes
6. To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance existing landscape character • Identify impacts on landscape character and experience • Avoid significant adverse impacts on landscape character • Ensure development is sited and designed to make a positive contribution to landscape character • Conserve geodiversity (geological and geomorphological features)
7. To ensure responsible access for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss/fragmentation of access networks and open greenspace • Create appropriate new access opportunities • Promote responsible and safe access provision and use
8. To maintain and improve air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise need for travel by private car • Minimise emissions from domestic and commercial premises

Figure 6.2 SEA criteria...cont

SEA objectives	SEA criteria
9. To use natural resources/ material assets in a sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce consumption of fossil fuels • Encourage use of local products • Conserve mineral resources • Conserve soil resources • Optimise recycling and reusing • Sustainable use of water
10. To conserve, and where appropriate enhance, the historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect archaeological sites of interest • Protect designed landscapes
11. To maintain a sustainable and healthy population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for housing and service needs of local communities • Ensure access to services for communities • Encourage healthy lifestyles
12. To improve sustainable energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise energy efficiency of existing infrastructure and new development • Minimise need for use of private cars • Increase sustainable energy production
13. To reduce waste and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase reuse and recycling of materials • Reduce production of waste • Adopt sustainable waste management practices
14. To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality in new building design • Maintain the character of settlements • Prevent loss of locally distinctive architecture

7. PARK PLAN STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVES

- 7.1 The Park Plan takes as its starting point the four aims of the Park:
- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
 - to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
 - 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.
- 7.2 The purpose of the Plan is to set out how these aims will be achieved collectively. However, if there appears to the Park Authority to be a conflict between the first aim and any of the other aims, greater weight should be given to the first aim.
- 7.3 These aims therefore set out a clear framework within which the development of the Park Plan is taking place. This immediately starts to guide the choices when considering alternatives to the strategic objectives of the Plan.
- 7.4 The first two aims are explicitly seeking positive environmental effects, and the protection of the environment is implicit within the other two aims. This means that the Park Plan is seeking positive environmental effects, while promoting socio-economic development and use of the area in ways that are consistent with positive environmental management.
- 7.5 When developing the strategic objectives, many potential alternatives were discounted at an early stage, because either:
- They would not optimise the potential to achieve all four aims collectively; or
 - They would conflict directly with the first aim, to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage.
- 7.6 Those options that were discounted for these reasons have not formed part of this assessment, as they are not realistic options for inclusion in the plan. At this strategic level, and given the clear framework set by the aims of the Park, there are therefore relatively few strategic alternatives to the objectives included in the Draft Plan.
- 7.7 The issue of alternative options therefore applies more to the wording of the objectives, in seeking to take an integrated approach and deliver all four aims of the Park collectively.

8. ASSESSMENT OF PARK PLAN OBJECTIVES

How environmental issues were considered in developing the Park Plan's objectives

- 8.1 The objectives of the Park Plan are a direct response to a number of the environmental issues facing the National Park and the need to deliver the four aims of the Park.
- 8.2 The special qualities of the National Park are closely linked to the natural and cultural heritage of the area and so many of the plan's objectives are specifically intended to provide robust protection to a wide range of environmental interests that are also reflected in the SEA objectives.
- 8.3 In particular, the aims which give the starting point for the Park Plan include 'conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage' and 'promote sustainable use of natural resources'. It is therefore not surprising that many objectives of the Plan explicitly seek positive environmental effects, and are in fact similar to the SEA objectives.
- 8.4 Further, the integrated nature of the Park Plan means that objectives for sectors which could have negative environmental effects have been developed to be explicitly consistent with the environmental objectives of the Plan. At the very least, all objectives have been framed in such a way to prevent damage to the special qualities of the Park (principally its natural and cultural environment), or where possible, to actively enhance those qualities.

The significant environmental effects of the Plan's objectives

- 8.5 The following section describes the predicted environmental effects of objectives in the Park Plan. Figure 8.1 summarises the predicted effects of all the Draft Park Plan objectives and shades those objectives that are considered likely to have significant environmental effects. The full assessment records of each plan objective are available in Annex 2.

Judgements of the significance of environmental effects

- 8.6 The judgements over whether predicted effects are significant or not are important to understanding the SEA process. It became apparent during the assessment that a large number of objectives may have some effect on the environment, but at this strategic level of plan, significance is difficult to judge.
- 8.7 In many cases, the significance of each objective on the environment will depend on how, when and where it is implemented. However, the purpose of the Park Plan is to set the strategic direction. In this context therefore, it is necessary to identify whether an objective is likely to have a significant effect. This does not preclude – indeed it prompts the need for – further assessment of implementation plans and strategies, when effects may be clearer.
- 8.8 Judgements of significance in the context of this Plan have therefore considered whether the plan objective gives strong and explicit support to the SEA objectives, or is likely to work actively against the SEA objectives.
- 8.9 Those plan objectives scored with either a strongly positive (++) or strongly negative (--) effect against one or more SEA objectives are considered to be likely to have a significant effect. It is these plan objectives that are shaded in Figure 8.1 overleaf.
- 8.10 Smaller positive or negative effects are an important consideration in developing the Plan, which seeks to maximise environmental enhancement. However, they have been considered as unlikely to be significant in the assessment.

8. ASSESSMENT OF PARK PLAN OBJECTIVES...cont

Fig. 8.1 SEA assessment summary														
Park Plan objectives	SEA objectives													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
5.2.1 a	=	=	+	/	/	++	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+
5.2.1 b	/	/	/	/	/	++	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+
5.2.1 c	/	/	/	/	/	++	=	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.1 d	/	/	+	/	+	+	+	/	+	+	/	/	/	/
5. Montane a	++	++	++	+	+	++	=	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5. Montane b	++	++	++	+	+	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5. Montane c	+	+	+	/	/	++	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 a	++	++	++	+	+	+	/	/	/	=	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 b	++	++	+	+	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 c	++	++	+	+	/	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 d	++	++	+	+	=	=	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 e	++	++	++	++	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 f	+	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 g	++	++	++	++	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 h	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	+	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 i	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.2 j	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	+	/	/	/	/	/
5.3 a	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	+	++	/	/	++	+	/
5.3.1 a	++	++	++	+	+	+	=	/	++	/	/	/	/	/
5.3.2 a	++	++	++	+	+	+	+	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
5.3.2 b	++	++	++	+	+	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.3.2 c	+	+	+	+	++	/	/	/	++	/	/	+	/	/
5.3.2 d	+	+	+	++	++	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.3.3 a	+	+	+	+	/	/	/	++	+	/	/	/	/	/
5.3.3 b	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	+	+	/	/	/	/	/
5.4 a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	=	+	/	/	?	/
5.4 b	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	/	/	++	/	/	/	/
5.4 c	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	/	+	/	/	/	/
5.4 d	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.4 e	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	+	/	/	+	/	/
5.4 f	+	+	/	+	+	/	/	+	+	/	/	+	++	/
5.4.1 a	+	++	++	++	+	+	/	/	+	+	/	/	/	/
5.4.1 b	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	/	?	/	/	?	/
5.4.1 c	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	/	?	?	/	/	/
5.4.1 d	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	/	?	+	/	/	/
5.4.2 a	++	++	++	=	+	++	=	/	/	?	/	/	/	/
5.4.2 b	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	/	+	/	/	/	/
5.4.2 c	++	++	++	+	+	++	=	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.4.2 d	++	++	++	=	=	++	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.4.2 e	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	+	?	/	/	/	/
5.4.2 f	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.4.3 a	++	++	++	+	+	++	++	/	/	+	/	/	/	/
5.4.3 b	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.4.3 c	+	++	++	++	++	++	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.4.4 a	++	++	++	+	+	+	=	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.4.4 b	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
5.4.4 c	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Fig. 8.1 SEA assessment summary...cont

Park Plan objectives	SEA objectives													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
5.4.4 d	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.4.4 e	?	?	?	/	/	?	=	/	/	?	/	/	/	/
5.4.5 a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.4.5 b	++	++	++	++	++	/	=	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.5.1 a	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+
5.5.1 b	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	++	/	/	/	++
5.5.1 c	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+
5.5.1 d	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	++	/	/	/	++
5.5.2 a	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.5.2 b	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.2 a	=	=	=	=	=	=	/	/	/	=	+	/	/	=
6.2 b	=	=	=	=	=	=	/	/	/	=	+	/	/	=
6.2 c	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
6.2 d	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
6.2 e	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
6.2 f	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
6.2 g	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
6.3 a	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.3 b	?	?	?	?	?	?	+	/	/	?	/	/	/	/
6.3 c	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.3 d	?	?	?	?	?	?	+	/	/	?	/	/	/	/
6.4 a	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	++	/	+	++	+
6.4 b	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	/	/	=	/	/	/	=
6.4 c	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.4 d	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.4 e	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.5 a	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	+	+	/	+	/	/	/
6.5 b	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	?	?	+	/	/	?	+
6.5 c	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.6 a	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	?	?	?	++	?	?	?
6.6 b	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
6.6 c	/	/	/	+	+	+	/	+	+	/	+	++	++	+
6.6 d	+	+	+	+	=	+	/	=	=	+	+	=	=	+
6.7 a	/	/	/	/	/	=	/	/	+	/	/	+	+	/
6.7 b	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	+	/	/	+	+	/
6.7 c	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.8 a	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	++	/	/	/	++	/
6.8 b	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	++	/	/	/	++	/
6.8 c	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+	/
6.8 d	/	/	/	/	/	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	+	/
6.9 a	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.9 b	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
6.9 c	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
7.2 a	=	=	=	=	/	=	++	=	=	/	+	/	/	/
7.2 b	+	+	+	+	/	+	++	/	/	+	+	/	/	/

Continued over ▶

8. ASSESSMENT OF PARK PLAN OBJECTIVES...cont

Fig. 8.1 SEA assessment summary...cont

Park Plan objectives	SEA objectives													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
7.2 c	=	=	=	?	?	=	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
7.2 d	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
7.2 e	=	=	=	=	/	=	++	/	/	=	/	/	/	/
7.2 f	+	+	+	+	=	+	+	/	=	+	/	/	/	/
7.3 a	=	=	=	=	=	=	++	/	=	=	/	/	/	/
7.3 b	=	=	=	=	=	=	++	/	=	=	/	/	/	/
7.3 c	+	+	+	=	=	=	+	+	=	+	/	/	/	/
7.3 d	+	+	+	+	/	=	++	/	/	+	+	/	/	/
7.3 e	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
7.3 f	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=	=	/	/	/
7.4 a	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	+	+	+	/	+	+	/
7.4 b	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
7.4 c	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
7.4 d	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
7.4 e	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
7.4 f	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	=	=	+	=	=	=	=
7.4 g	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Cumulative Score*	61	66	63	49	40	59	42	13	30	27	21	12	17	13

*Cumulative score calculated on basis of 2 points for each ++ and 1 point for each + score

Scoring Codes

++ Strongly positive effect + Positive effect = Neutral or no effect
 - Negative effect --Strongly negative effect ? uncertain effects / Not applicable

Commentary on likely significant effects

- 8.11 Overall, there are no negative effects identified. As noted above, this is largely due to the aims which give the starting point for the Park Plan, and the way in which an integrated approach has been taken to developing the Plan.
- 8.12 In many cases the mitigation built into objectives during the drafting of the Plan has resulted in a neutral score, where there

might otherwise have been a potential negative impact. There remain some objectives where the likely effects are simply too uncertain to record as positive, neutral or negative, and these have been recorded as such.

- 8.13 A commentary on each Park Plan objective that has been identified as having a likely significant effect on the environment (those shaded in Figure 8.1) follows.

Objective 5.2.1 a) Maintain and enhance the distinctive diversity of landscape character across the Park;

This objective explicitly seeks to maintain and enhance the landscape character of the Park and therefore will have a significant positive effect on SEA objective 6 (landscape). It is also likely to have a positive effect on the historic landscape and some habitats, through landscape management.

Objective 5.2.1 b) Ensure development complements and, where possible enhances the landscape character of the Park;

This objective seeks to protect and enhance the landscape through development, giving a lead for the Local Plan. It will therefore have a significant positive effect on SEA objective 6 (landscape).

Objective 5.2.1 c) Conserve and enhance the wild characteristics of areas within the Park;

This objective seeks to conserve and enhance a key component of the landscape character of the Park – the wildness that people associate with many areas. It will therefore have a significant positive effect on SEA objective 6 (landscape).

Objective Box 5.1 a) Improve long-term sustainability and restore the full range of montane habitats, through managing pressures from grazing, other land management and development;

This objective explicitly seeks enhancement of the montane habitats, one of the unique special qualities of the Park. It therefore has a significant positive effect on SEA objectives 1, 2, 3 and 6.

Objective Box 5.1 b) Demonstrate the highest standards in managing the impacts of recreation on montane habitats, soils and natural processes through sensitive path repairs, targeted advice and encouragement of the long walk-in;

This objective seeks to protect the montane habitats, one of the special qualities of the Park,

from recreation pressures. It therefore has a significant positive effect on SEA objectives 1, 2 and 3. It also has a positive effect on encouraging responsible access (SEA objective 7).

Objective Box 5.1 c) Retain and enhance the sense of wildness in the montane area through restoration of high altitude vehicle tracks, removal of redundant infrastructure and managing the impacts of motorised access, organised events, aircraft noise and commercial infrastructure;

This objective explicitly seeks to protect and enhance the sense of wildness from development, access and other infrastructure pressures. It therefore has a significant positive effect on conserving a key component of the landscape experience (SEA objective 6). It also has a positive impact on the habitats and species of the montane area and encouraging responsible access.

Objective 5.2.2 a) Conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats and species present throughout the Park through a landscape scale approach to habitat networks;

This objective explicitly seeks to conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats and species through networks and therefore has a significant positive effect on SEA objectives 1, 2 and 3. It also has a positive effect on the water environment and landscape (SEA objectives 4, 5, and 6) through more co-ordinated management.

Objective 5.2.2 b) Ensure all designated nature conservation sites are in good condition;

This objective explicitly seeks to ensure that designated sites, and therefore priority species are in good condition. It therefore has a strongly positive effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2. It also has a positive effect on other natural environment objectives (3, 4, 5 and 6).

8. ASSESSMENT OF PARK PLAN OBJECTIVES...cont

Objective 5.2.2 c) Engage all sectors in implementing international, national and local biodiversity targets;

This objective seeks to deliver effective implementation of the biodiversity targets relevant in the Park. It is a vital means by which the conservation of species and habitats can be achieved. It therefore has a strongly positive effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2. It also has a positive effect on SEA objectives 3, 4 and 6.

Objective 5.2.2 d) Ensure that populations of species given special protection under the Habitat Regulations, the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Nature Conservation Act are stable or, where appropriate, increasing;

This objective explicitly seeks to ensure that those species classified as priority species, are conserved and enhanced. It therefore has a strongly positive effect on SEA objectives 1 and 3. It also has a positive effect on ecosystems and the water environment.

Objective 5.2.2 e) Promote access to appropriate policy and funding mechanisms to support nature conservation;

This objective recognises that support mechanisms, including advice, are required to encourage land managers, businesses and communities to be actively involved in nature conservation. It therefore has a significant positive effect on the management of the natural heritage, and SEA objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4. It also has a positive effect on the water environment through management.

Objective 5.2.2 g) Promote appropriate reintroductions of species and reinstatements of habitats, with consideration of the likely impacts on existing species, habitats and ecosystems;

This objective actively promotes enhanced diversity of habitats and species through appropriate reintroductions and reinstatements, while recognising that potentially negative effects should be mitigated or avoided. It therefore has a significant positive effect on SEA objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Objective 5.3 a) All management and development in the Park should seek to make the most sustainable use of natural resources, including water and energy;

This objective gives explicit support to sustainable and efficient resource use, and is likely to have a significant positive effect on sustainability and energy efficiency across sectors in the Park, supporting SEA objectives 9 and 12. It is also likely to have a positive effect on the state of the natural resources, including biodiversity and landscape.

Objective 5.3.1 a) Prevent degradation and erosion of vulnerable montane and organic soils including peat;

This objective specifically targets the protection of soils, which underpin the natural heritage qualities of the Park. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on the biodiversity and ecosystems, and the sustainable use of resources, supporting SEA objectives 1, 2, 3 and 9.

Objective 5.3.2 a) Maintain and enhance the existing high water quality environment in the Park;

This objective gives explicit support to enhancing the quality of the water environment and is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on water quality, catchment processes and associated biodiversity and ecosystems, supporting SEA objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. It is also likely to have a positive effect on landscape surrounding water bodies and water-based recreation and access.

Objective 5.3.2 b) Adopt a catchment-scale approach to water management that integrates land use, nature conservation and flood management;

This objective recognises the interactions of the water environment with surrounding natural heritage and land use. By adopting a catchment scale approach to integration, it is likely to have a significant positive effect to biodiversity, ecosystems, catchment processes and the quality of the water environment, supporting SEA objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. It is also likely to have a positive effect on landscape and water-based outdoor access through more integrated management.

Objective 5.3.2 c) Encourage more sustainable patterns of water use by households, industry, agriculture and business;

This objective recognises that managing the demand for water can have as much, if not greater, environmental impact than managing its supply. By seeking more sustainable use across sectors, it is likely to have a significant positive effect on hydrological systems and the sustainable use of resources, supporting SEA objectives 5 and 9.

Objective 5.3.2 d) Promote sustainable flood management consistent with natural fluvial processes;

This objective gives strong support to natural river systems and flood management using floodplains and other sustainable solutions. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on hydrological systems, supporting SEA objectives 4 and 5. Through good management of river systems, it is also likely to have a positive effect on biodiversity and landscape.

Objective 5.3.3 a) Maintain, and where possible enhance, the existing high level of air quality;

This objective explicitly seeks to have a significant positive effect on air quality, whether that is maintaining the current high level, or where appropriate, enhancing it, supporting SEA objective 8.

Objective 5.4 b) Integrate support for all land and water management activities to deliver public benefits that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the Park;

This objective seeks to secure positive benefits from land and water management, targeted specifically at the special qualities of the Park. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on the biodiversity, ecosystems, water environment and cultural heritage, including the promotion of responsible access. (SEA objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10).

Objective 5.4 f) Reduce waste, energy use and pollution from all land management activities;

This objective explicitly seeks to minimise waste and pollution, giving strong support to SEA objective 13.

Objective 5.4.1 a) Manage agricultural production to be consistent with, and enhance, the special qualities of the Park;

This objective gives a strong direction that the agricultural sector should not damage, but should seek to enhance, the special qualities of the Park. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on the habitats, ecosystems and water environment of the Park, supporting SEA objectives 2, 3 and 4.

Objective 5.4.2 a) Maintain existing native woodland cover and expand to develop habitat networks that complement the landscape character of the Park;

This objective seeks expansion of one of the particularly valuable and characteristic habitats of the Park, which supports a distinctive range of species. It is therefore likely to have a strongly positive effect on biodiversity, ecosystems and landscape, supporting SEA objectives 1, 2, 3 and 6.

8. ASSESSMENT OF PARK PLAN OBJECTIVES...cont

Objective 5.4.2 c) Encourage a mix of tree species, ages and woodland structure to complement the landscape character of the Park;

This objective, by encouraging a mix of species, age and structure is likely to have a significant positive effect on biodiversity, ecosystems and the landscape character, supporting SEA objectives 1, 2, 3 and 6.

Objective 5.4.2 d) Encourage a gradation of tree and scrub cover from valley floor to tree-line in targeted areas and the re-development of woodland types that have declined;

This objective, through extension of scrub cover and regeneration of broadleaved woodland in particular, is likely to have a significant positive effect on biodiversity, ecosystems and the landscape, supporting SEA objectives 1, 2, 3 and 6.

Objective 5.4.3 a) Maintain extensive moorlands as a high value and sustainable resource for nature conservation, sport, agriculture, landscape and recreation;

This objective, through carefully planned grazing and muirburn regimes and active moorland management is likely to have a significant positive effect on the biodiversity and ecosystems of moorlands, together with the landscape and outdoor access values of moorlands, supporting SEA objectives 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7.

Objective 5.4.3 c) Manage the interaction of moorlands with surrounding land-uses to maintain the integrity of the moorland landscape, ecosystems and hydrology;

This objective, through explicitly recognising the interactions of moorlands with natural processes and surrounding land uses is likely to have a significant positive effect on the management of ecosystems, habitat networks, hydrology and landscape, supporting SEA objectives 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Objective 5.4.4 a) Manage deer populations at densities consistent with the special natural heritage qualities of the Park, particularly native woodland, montane and moorland habitats;

This objective gives strong direction that deer management must be consistent with the natural heritage, thereby reducing damage, and seeking enhancement where possible. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on biodiversity and ecosystems, supporting SEA objectives 1, 2 and 3.

Objective 5.4.5 b) Encourage removal and minimisation of physical barriers that impede passage of fish and affect river flow;

This objective seeks to minimise artificial barriers in natural river flows, so it is likely to have a significant positive effect on river fisheries and the water environment, supporting SEA objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Objective 5.5.1 b) Conserve and enhance the resources of the archaeological, historic and built environment;

This objective gives explicit support to the physical heritage of the Park. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on the historic and built environment, supporting SEA objectives 10 and 14.

Objective 5.5.1 d) New development and management of public space in settlements should complement and enhance the character, pattern and local identity of the built and historic environment;

This objective gives a clear direction for the Local Plan and planning policies to ensure that new development does not detract from, and where possible enhances the character of settlements and public space. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on the built and historic environment, supporting SEA objectives 10 and 14.

Objective 6.4 a) Maintain a high quality environment by encouraging sound environmental management and support for nature conservation by all those involved in tourism in the Park;

This objective seeks explicitly to ensure that tourism does not damage, but positively enhances the natural heritage qualities of the Park. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on the natural heritage, landscape and historic environment, in addition to encouraging sustainable business practice and responsible outdoor access. (SEA objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 13).

Objective 6.6 a) Increase the accessibility of rented and owned housing to meet the needs of communities throughout the Park;

This objective seeks to ensure access to housing, and is likely to have significant positive impact on human well-being (SEA objective 11). The effects on other environmental qualities and SEA objectives are uncertain. These effects will depend on how and where housing access is increased. A more complete assessment of the effects of housing allocations will be provided in the SEA Environmental Report of the Local Plan.

Objective 6.6 c) Improve the physical quality, energy efficiency and sustainable design of housing in all tenures throughout the Park;

This objective explicitly seeks improvements in the environmental performance of housing through energy efficiency and sustainable design. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on the use of natural resources and energy, supporting SEA objectives 9 and 12.

Objective 6.8 a) Exceed national targets for better waste management through community and domestic scale schemes;

This objective seeks high performance on waste management and is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on the use of resources and waste and pollution, supporting SEA objectives 9 and 13.

Objective 6.8 b) Increase awareness of the benefits of effective waste management through reducing, re-using and recycling;

This objective, through raising awareness, is likely to have a significant positive effect on the sustainable use of resources and minimising waste and pollution, supporting SEA objectives 9 and 13.

Objective 7.2 a) Encourage people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and experience the outdoor environment;

This objective supports a positive approach to responsible outdoor access, supporting SEA objective 7.

Objective 7.2 b) Encourage responsible enjoyment of the Park so that its special qualities are understood and appreciated, and safeguarded now and for future generations;

This objective explicitly seeks to ensure that outdoor access is responsible, and safeguards the special qualities of the Park. It is therefore likely to have a significant positive effect on responsible outdoor access (SEA objective 7), as well as supporting the natural heritage qualities of the Park.

Objective 7.2 e) Encourage responsible management of outdoor access and develop a common understanding of the needs of managers and users;

This objective seeks to promote responsible access through management and those providing access opportunities, supporting SEA objective 7.

Objective 7.3 a) Develop and maintain a wide range of opportunities for visitors to experience and enjoy the special qualities, distinctiveness and natural and cultural heritage of the Park;

This objective strongly supports responsible outdoor access through understanding of the special qualities of the Park, supporting SEA objective 7.

8. ASSESSMENT OF PARK PLAN OBJECTIVES...cont

Objective 7.3 b) Ensure that visitors to the Cairngorms are aware of the range of opportunities, places to visit and things to do throughout the Park, and appreciate and respect its special qualities;

This objective explicitly supports responsible outdoor access (SEA objective 7) through reference to the special qualities, including natural heritage, of the Park.

Objective 7.3 d) Ensure that visitor information is targeted at specific audiences and encourages resource protection, responsible access, visitor safety and the health benefits of regular outdoor exercise;

This objective recognises the need for visitors to be aware of resource protection and responsible access issues, supporting SEA objective 7.

Cumulative and synergistic effects

8.14 In addition to the significant effects of individual plan objectives identified above, the assessment should consider the cumulative effects of the plan's objectives on each SEA objective. Where several plan objectives have a small, but not individually significant effect on one of the SEA objectives, they may cumulatively add up to a significant effect. The method used in the summary Figure 8.1 applies a point score to each positive (+) and strongly positive (++) result so that the cumulative effects can be identified.

8.15 From this analysis, all SEA objectives show a degree of positive score when their results are aggregated. The strongest cumulative positive effects are recorded against SEA objectives 1, 2, and 3 – conserving and enhancing species, habitats and ecosystems.

8.16 Synergistic effects are those that result from the interaction of the plan's different objectives – some may work against each other, or reinforce each other. The intention when drafting the plan was explicitly to ensure that synergistic effects are all positive – to take an integrated approach that means objectives for economic and social sectors do not undermine environmental objectives but are at least consistent with them. The assessment, which does not identify any likely negative effects, suggests that the synergistic effects of the plan will indeed be at least neutral, or in some cases positive.

Proposed mitigation and modification

Objectives already modified as a result of assessment

8.17 The assessment process highlighted opportunities to strengthen the following objectives to enhance their positive environmental effects. Changes have already been made during the drafting process, prior to the publication of the Draft Park Plan.

Objective 5.3 a) All management and development in the Park should seek to make the most sustainable use of natural resources, including water and energy;

This objective was added following assessment in order to give clear and explicit direction for all sectors to make more sustainable use of resources and energy, thereby seeking more positive environmental effects.

Objective 5.4.1 d) Make available land for those who wish to farm, particularly new-entrants;

This objective primarily seeks to encourage land to be made available for new farming entrants. Following assessment, a caveat was added to state that the locations should be consistent with good management of the natural and cultural heritage, to ensure that any new farming enterprises should not damage the special environmental qualities of the Park.

Objective 7.2 a) Encourage people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and experience the outdoor environment;

This objective primarily seeks to provide access and associated infrastructure to enable people to enjoy the Park. As well as meeting access needs, the caveat that outdoor access infrastructure should be appropriate to the landscape and natural heritage setting was added to this objective as a result of assessment.

Objective 7.4 a) Encourage learning about sustainable development in ways that are related to people's everyday lives and focus on the special character and distinctive identity of the Park, and the management required to conserve and enhance it;

In addition to learning about the management necessary, reference to the use of resources and energy was added to this objective as a result of assessment, to strengthen the objective and increase the likely positive environmental effects.

Objectives where further modification is being considered as a result of assessment

8.18. Assessment has highlighted opportunities to strengthen the following objectives, in order to enhance their positive environmental effects. Options for modification will be considered and, informed by any comments received during the consultation, changes will be incorporated in the finalised Park Plan.

Objective 5.3.1 a) Prevent degradation and erosion of vulnerable montane and organic soils, including peat;

Consider whether modification or an additional, more specific, objective relating to agricultural soil management would strengthen the positive environmental effects on the soil resource.

Objective 5.3.2 c) Encourage more sustainable patterns of water use by households, industry, agriculture and business;

Consider whether reference to wastewater treatment practices would strengthen the environmental effects of this objective, and where in the planning hierarchy this would be most appropriately addressed.

Objective 5.3.2 d) Promote sustainable flood management consistent with natural fluvial processes;

Consider whether greater clarity in the wording of this objective would emphasise a presumption against hard engineering solutions to flood management and give more explicit support to the use of natural flood plains and other management solutions, thereby strengthening the positive environmental effects.

Objectives 5.4.2 Forestry;

Consider whether a further objective, or modification to an existing objective, is required to address the potential impacts of forestry on the historic environment and cultural heritage features, part of the special qualities and environment of the Park.

8. ASSESSMENT OF PARK PLAN OBJECTIVES...cont

Objective 5.4.5 b) Encourage removal and minimisation of physical barriers that impede passage of fish and affect river flow;

Consider whether broader reference to river engineering works including fisheries management could strengthen the environmental effects of this objective.

Objective 6.5 b) Ensure transport and communications infrastructure is managed and developed in ways consistent with the special qualities of the Park;

Consider whether more specific reference to minor upgrading works and the need for appropriate design and assessment methods for upgrading works would strengthen this objective and thereby its positive environmental effects.

Objective 6.7 a) Help achieve national targets for greater renewable production through community and domestic scale schemes;

Consider if more explicit statement of policy against large-scale commercial wind farms within the Park, and in the surrounding landscape, together with reference to implementation through the Local Plan would strengthen this objective and its environmental effects.

Uncertainties and risks

8.19 The assessment has identified a number of objectives for which the likely environmental effects are uncertain. There are a number of reasons for uncertainty.

8.20 Some objectives relate to the provision of greater information or education. In these cases, the objectives may have an influence on the environmental resources of the Park, through improved understanding or management, therefore some effect is likely. However, in cases where the objective relates to education and information provision, there remains great uncertainty over when, where and how that information or knowledge may be put into practice. While the intention of these objectives is to inform good practice, assessment at this strategic level cannot assume particular effects.

8.21 Some objectives are simply pitched at too high a strategic level for a meaningful assessment of effects to be made. This is consistent with the purpose of the Park Plan and means that SEA should be carried out on more detailed implementation plans as and when these are developed.

8.22 The risk of the effects being other than that predicted in the assessment lies principally in the fact that implementation of the objectives may vary across time and space. It is the intention of the Park Authority that many of the objectives will be expanded upon in more detailed implementation plans, and through the work programmes being developed for each Priority for Action. Therefore the future assessment of the resulting plans and strategies will be a key part of managing this risk.

9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK PLAN AND SEA

Timetable

- 9.1 The Draft Park Plan, together with this Environmental Report, is open to public consultation until 30 June 2006.
- 9.2 On completion of the consultation, the Park Authority will work to finalise the Park Plan for the end of 2006. This will include:
- Revising and completing the long-term strategy set out in the vision and strategic objectives, informed by the consultation and SEA;
 - Developing agreed five year action programmes for each Priority for Action, informed by the consultation;
 - Applying SEA to any changes in the strategic objectives to inform completion of the Plan and to any development of the action programmes which require assessment beyond the objectives;
 - Preparing an updated Environmental Report to accompany the completed Park Plan;
 - Preparing a Post-Adoption Statement setting out how the SEA process has informed the final Park Plan, reasons for the decisions made and framework for future associated assessments.

Links to other plans and future assessments

- 9.3 As described in Section 4, the Park Plan provides the strategic context and lead for a number of other plans in the Park. The assessment, described in Section 8, highlights limitations to the Park Plan SEA, given the strategic nature of its objectives, and therefore the certainty that can be attached to likely effects.

- 9.4 This means that future SEA assessment of the plans and strategies that flow from the Park Plan and its priorities for action is a key part of assessing and monitoring the environmental effects of policies in the National Park.

The final Park Plan

- 9.5 The work programmes under each Priority for Action identified in the plan will be developed through the consultation period for the final Park Plan. These identify priorities within the broad range of objectives set out in the plan, and will set out action programmes to tackle these.
- 9.6 The Environmental Report accompanying the final Park Plan will identify how the likely environmental effects of these programmes will be assessed. It is unlikely that a useful assessment of all the programmes can be carried out as part of the Park Plan development – as this will remain at the strategic level and reflect the objectives already assessed. It may be more appropriate to assess the likely environmental effects of some actions that will flow from these programmes when the resulting, more detailed, plans and strategies are developed (for example the Core Paths Plan). In other cases it may be appropriate to assess the work programmes within the Park Plan assessment. The Environmental Report accompanying the final Park Plan will assess the areas for which a useful assessment can be made, and will signpost the future assessment of other areas.

9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK PLAN AND SEA...cont

- 9.7 The Environmental Report accompanying the final Park Plan will therefore consider whether any changes and developments to the action programmes require assessment at that stage. If not, it will signpost the future assessment that will be required.

Other plans and strategies

- 9.8 The Local Plan is one of the principal means by which many of the Park Plan objectives will be pursued, through planning and development control. The Local Plan, which has recently completed the second stage of consultation, is accompanied by an SEA, which assesses the likely significant effects of the planning policies and settlement proposals.
- 9.9 Other plans that will be prepared for the Park in the near future, including the Core Paths Plan, will also be accompanied by an SEA. These assessments will focus on the levels below the objectives of the Park Plan and assess the likely effects of more detailed policies and proposals.

Proposals for monitoring the environmental effects

- 9.10 A framework for monitoring the environmental effects of the Park Plan will be developed in parallel with the wider development of monitoring for the whole Plan. It is proposed to develop a set of health indicators, together with more detailed performance monitoring, for the Plan. This process will be informed by the consultation on the Draft Park Plan and this Environmental Report.

SEA indicators and targets

- 9.11 It is proposed to develop the SEA objectives and criteria set out in Section 6 into indicators and targets that can be used to monitor the environmental performance of the Park Plan against SEA objectives. These are not yet complete, and are expected to be further developed during consultation on the Draft Park Plan.
- 9.12 The initial proposal for SEA indicators and targets is shown in Figure 9.1 opposite.

Figure 9.1 Proposed SEA indicators and targets

SEA objectives	Indicators	Targets
1. To conserve and enhance the diversity of species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of priority species or associated habitats • creation of habitats for priority species • management of habitats for priority species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no loss of priority species • no loss of priority species' habitats • increase areas of habitat managed for priority species
2. To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of priority habitats • creation of priority habitats • management of priority habitats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no loss of priority habitats • increase creation of priority habitats • increase management for priority habitats
3. To maintain and enhance the integrity of ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuity of priority habitats • maintenance or creation of priority habitats to create networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no fragmentation of priority habitats • increase maintenance or creation of priority habitats to create habitat networks
4. To protect and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water quality • ecological status of water bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no deterioration in waterbody status
5. To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development permitted on the functional floodplain or other wetland • functioning wetland areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no development permitted on functional floodplain or wetland areas • no loss of areas managed as functioning wetlands
6. To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes to landscape character • developments that complement landscape character • loss/disturbance to geological/geomorphological features • sense of wildness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all developments that are consented and are considered to make a positive contribution to landscape character • no loss/disturbance to geological/geomorphological features • increase or decrease in development in remote areas

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9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARK PLAN AND SEA...cont

Figure 9.1 Proposed SEA indicators and targets ...cont

SEA objectives	Indicators	Targets
7. To ensure responsible access for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase or decrease in provision of access routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintenance or enhancement of existing access provision no loss of access to open greenspace
8. To maintain and improve air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pollution emissions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> decrease emissions
9. To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developments heated without fossil fuels use of local timber products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all development heated without fossil fuels preference for using local timber products
10. To conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> condition of the site or setting of an archaeological site of interest condition of the site or setting of a designed landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no developments having significant adverse effects on site or setting of archaeological site of importance to the National Park no developments having significant adverse effects on site or setting of designed landscape of importance to the National Park
11. To maintain a sustainable and healthy population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective housing land for local housing need provision of effective housing land close to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> local housing need demand met by supply of land and consents for development over plan period all housing land provided within easy reach of service or with additional services
12. To improve sustainable energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developments heated without fossil fuels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all development heated without fossil fuels
13. To reduce waste and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> total waste arisings percentage of waste recycled or reused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduce waste arisings all waste recycled or reused
14. To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> changes in settlement character loss of locally distinctive architecture through development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintenance and enhancement of settlement character ensure retention of locally distinctive architecture in development

ANNEX I

Checklist of relevant plans/programmes and environmental objectives

Relevant plans/programmes and relevant environmental objectives:			
Relevant policy	Relevant objectives/purpose	Relevant Park Plan sections	Comments
INTERNATIONAL POLICY			
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands 1971		5.2; 5.4	
EUROPEAN UNION POLICY			
Directive 79/409/EC; The Conservation of Wild Birds 1979	Requires Member States to sustain populations of naturally occurring wild birds by sustaining areas of habitats to maintain ecologically and scientifically sound levels.	5.2; 5.4; 7.2	
Directive 92/42/EC; The Conservation of Natural Habitats of Wild Fauna and Flora 1992	Requires Member States to sustain populations of naturally occurring flora and fauna by sustaining areas of habitats to maintain ecologically and scientifically sound levels.	5.2; 5.4; 7.2	
Directive 2000/60/EC; The Water Framework Directive	Requires Member States to achieve good ecological status of inland water bodies. Sets framework for integrated catchment management requiring river basin management plans.	5.2; 5.3; 5.4; 7.2	
Directive 1966/62/EC; Ambient Air Quality and Management	Establishes standards for air quality and sets limits for various pollutants.	5.3; 6.5	
EU Common Agricultural Policy	Sets policy for agricultural support with increased emphasis on rural development support.	5.4	
NATIONAL POLICY			
A Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture	Draws together strategy for production and support including agri-environment support.	5.4	
Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2002	Requires environmental impact assessment of bringing land into cultivation.	5.2; 5.4	
Scottish Forestry Strategy	Sets strategic priorities for forestry including management, planting and environmental stewardship.	5.4	

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NATIONAL POLICY...cont			
Relevant policy	Relevant objectives/purpose	Relevant Park Plan sections	Comments
River Basin Management Plans	Required by the Water Framework Directive. A Scotland River Basin Management Plan will be developed, to include several sub management areas.	5.2; 5.3; 5.4	The Park extends across the boundary of management areas.
Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003	Establishes right of responsible access to land and water.	7.3	
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Requires certain species to be protected.	5.2; 5.4	
Nature Conservation Bill (Scotland) 2004	Biodiversity, revision of SSSIs, crime prevention.	5.2; 5.4	
Climate Change; the UK Programme	Aims to cut the UK's carbon emissions by 60% by 2050.	5.3; 6.5	
Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales & NI: Working Together for Clean Air.	Set out objectives for 8 main air pollutants to protect health.	5.3; 6.5	
UK Biodiversity Action Plan	Identifies UK priority species and habitats where action to conserve is required.	5.2; 5.4	
Scottish Biodiversity Strategy	Identifies Scottish biodiversity priorities and lead partners for taking action.	5.2; 5.4	
REGIONAL/LOCAL POLICY			
Structure Plans	The Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Angus Council Structure Plans set out the strategic framework for an authority area.	5.5.1; 6.2; 6.5; 6.6; 6.9	
Community Plans	The Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Angus Council Community Plans, which set out how public services will be planned and delivered, through consultation and co-operation (among all public bodies, and with community bodies).	6.3; 6.9	

REGIONAL/LOCAL POLICY...cont			
Relevant policy	Relevant objectives/purpose	Relevant Park Plan sections	Comments
Spey Catchment Management Plan	3.1 Maintain the high water quality standards in the Spey and determine the ecological requirements and tolerance limits of fresh water pearl mussel and sea lamprey.	5.2.2; 5.3.2; 5.4; 6.8	
	3.6 Determine the extent of the problem of contaminated land within the Spey catchment and restore any such areas to beneficial use.	5.2.2; 5.3.2; 6.8	
	6.1 Conserve and enhance the Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey, freshwater pearl mussel and otter populations of the River Spey and its catchment.	5.2.2; 5.4.5	
	6.2 Conserve and enhance the fragmented and endangered water vole populations of the River Spey catchment based on an improved understanding of their distribution.	5.2.2	
	6.3 Conserve and enhance the riverine bird populations of the River Spey and its catchment based on an improved understanding of their distribution.	5.2.2	
	6.5 Conserve and enhance the specialist river shingle invertebrate populations of the River Spey catchment based on an improved understanding of their distribution.	5.2.2	
	8.2 Consider the potential for floodplain or riparian woodlands to contribute towards flood control, river bank stabilisation and assist with water quality management.	5.2.2; 5.4	
	8.3 Conserve and enhance scarce or threatened tree species associated with the river system.	5.2.2	
	9.2 Improve the adequacy of private water supply and wastewater facilities to meet existing demand and comply with existing consent.	5.3.2; 6.6; 6.8	

Continued over ▶

REGIONAL/LOCAL POLICY...cont			
Relevant policy	Relevant objectives/purpose	Relevant Park Plan sections	Comments
Spey Catchment Management Plan...cont	9.5 Prevent pollution or obstructions from significant structural works across the river or from ongoing maintenance and repair works nearby.	5.3.2; 5.4.5	
	9.6 Mitigate the impact of higher numbers of visitors on both water supply and wastewater systems and also on the natural heritage and fisheries of the river system.	5.2.2; 5.3.2; 7.2	
	9.7 Safeguard the quality and quantity of water in the sub-catchments of private distillery supplies and consider any positive application of heated water.	5.2.2; 5.3.2	
	10.1 Ensure that rights of access (to river banks and other water bodies) are exercised responsibly and any new strategy of access to rivers and lochs is fully integrated with all other relevant interests.	7.2; 7.3	
River Dee Catchment Management Plan	A revised draft is due to be published; 2005/06 objectives likely to be similar to River Spey Catchment Management Plan.		
Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan Project	The Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan Project (or LBAP) is a long-term initiative that seeks to initiate actions for biodiversity across the whole Cairngorms area and raise the awareness of protecting, enhancing and appreciating the biodiversity of the Park area.	5.2; 5.4; 7.3; 7.4	
Local Housing Strategy	The Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Angus Council Local Housing Strategies (and Delivery Plans). The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires local authorities to undertake a comprehensive assessment of housing needs and conditions, and to produce strategies to tackle the housing problems in their areas. Communities Scotland assess these local housing strategies (LHS) on behalf of Scottish Ministers.	6.6	

REGIONAL/LOCAL POLICY...cont			
Relevant policy	Relevant objectives/purpose	Relevant Park Plan sections	Comments
Local Transport Strategy	The Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Angus Council Local Transport Strategies set out how to maintain and improve infrastructure.	6.5	
Area Waste Plans	The Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Angus Council Area Waste Plans will set out a strategy for waste management, minimisation and recycling/composting.	6.8	
Economic Development Strategies	The Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Angus Council economic development strategies, as well as those developed by the Local Enterprise Companies (Scottish Enterprise Grampian, Inverness Nairn Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise Tayside).	6.2	
Scottish Planning Policy (SPPs)/ National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG)			
SPP1	Conserve important historic and cultural assets.	5.2.1; 5.5.1	
	Protect and enhance areas for recreation and natural heritage.	5.2; 7.3	
	Support better access by foot bicycle and public transport.	6.5; 7.2	
	Encourage energy efficiency through layout and design of development.	5.3; 6.6	
	Encourage prudent use of natural resources	5.3	
	Require good design.	6.6	
	Encourage improvement of the physical environment.	5.2; 5.5.1	
SPP2 Economic development (2002)	Identify supporting action eg for environmental improvement that can assist the delivery of economic development.	6.2; 6.4	
SPP3 Planning for Housing (2003)	Guide the design of new housing proposals, including where appropriate the preparation of planning briefs, particularly in relation to new settlements.	5.5.1; 6.6	Addressed in detail through the Local Plan.

Continued over ▶

Scottish Planning Policy (SPPs)/ National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG)...cont			
Relevant policy	Relevant objectives/purpose	Relevant Park Plan sections	Comments
NPPG 4 Mineral Working (2001)	Ameliorate significant environmental effects for proposed mineral developments.	5.2; 5.3	
	Facilitate recycling and re-use of material in waste tips and construction wastes where environmentally acceptable.	6.8	
NPPG 5 Archaeology (1994)	Require the protection, preservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of all nationally important sites of archaeological interest and their settings; and also for other unscheduled remains and their settings identified as particularly worthy of preservation.	5.2; 5.5	Addressed in detail through the Local Plan.
	Require the protection and where appropriate the enhancement of landscapes of historic importance including historic gardens and designed landscapes, and their settings.	5.2; 5.5	Addressed in detail through the Local Plan.
NPPG 6 Renewable Energy (2000)	Support Scottish Minister's commitment to renewable energy and provide positively for its development.	6.7	
	Define broad areas of search suitable for wind and other renewable energy developments or, where appropriate, specific sites.	6.7	
	Indicate whether there are areas or sites where, for overriding environmental reasons, proposals for renewable energy development would only be considered in exceptional circumstances.	6.7	
NPPG 8 Town Centres and Retailing (1998)	Promote the environmental improvement of town and other centres and retail and commercial leisure developments.	5.5.1	Addressed in detail through the Local Plan.
NPPG 10 Waste Management (1996)	Encourage development which assists in the reduction, re-use and recovery of waste for example through the re-use of buildings wherever practicable.	6.8	
	Protect groundwater:	6.8	

Scottish Planning Policy (SPPs)/ National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG)...cont			
Relevant Policy	Relevant Objectives/Purpose	Relevant Park Plan Sections	Comments
NPPG 11 Sport Physical Recreation and Open Space (1996)	Protect and enhance parks and open spaces and other land of recreational, amenity or wildlife value.	5.2; 5.5; 7.2	
	Identify public access routes, referring to other publications if appropriate, state the statutory position and indicate where the network requires to be augmented.	6.5; 7.2; 7.3	To be addressed in forthcoming Core Paths Plans
	Safeguard and improve public access to open space and to the countryside, especially Green Belts and promote new or replacement routes.	6.5; 7.2; 7.3	
	Promote planting of new woodlands for recreation, landscape and nature conservation benefits.	5.2; 5.4; 7.2	
	Safeguard nature conservation and cultural heritage designations and the character of the landscape from effects of sporting or recreational developments including the effects of increased traffic in rural areas.	5.2; 6.4; 7.2; 7.3	
NPPG 14 Natural Heritage (1999)	Protection and, where appropriate, enhancement of internationally, nationally and locally designated areas and sites (including potential SPAs and SACs).	5.2	
	Encourage the management and safeguard of features of the landscape of major importance for nature conservation or amenity, including field boundaries, woodlands, trees, lochs, ponds, watercourses and other wetlands.	5.2	
	Include policies for the conservation and/or enhancement of landscape character, including, where appropriate, wild land character.	5.2	
	Identify opportunities to extend native woodland cover and to maintain and enhance wetlands.	5.4	
	Provide for the conservation of biodiversity and the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage outside designated areas.	5.2; 5.4	

Continued over ▶

Scottish Planning Policy (SPPs)/ National Planning Policy Guideline (NPPG)...cont			
Relevant policy	Relevant objectives/purpose	Relevant Park Plan sections	Comments
NPPG 14 Natural Heritage (1999)...cont	Identify appropriate opportunities to improve public access for the purposes of enjoying and learning about the natural heritage.	7.2; 7.4	
SPP 15 Rural Development (2005)	Identify opportunities for re-use/conversion of agricultural buildings and set out the criteria against which applications for residential and business re-use will be assessed.	5.4; 6.2; 6.4	Addressed in detail through the Local Plan.
SPP 17 Transport (2005)	Encourage people to make more journeys by walking, cycling, and public transport.	6.5; 7.2; 7.3	
NPPG 18 Historic Environment (1999)	Include policies for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and its setting including listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments and historic gardens and designed landscapes.	5.2; 5.5	
NPPG 19 Telecomms (2001)	Specify development control criteria for radio telecommunications development including siting and design matters.	5.2	Addressed in detail through the Local Plan.
National Planning Framework Environmental Assessment Report (2004)	Spatial strategy for Scotland promoting economic diversification and environmental stewardship.	6	



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