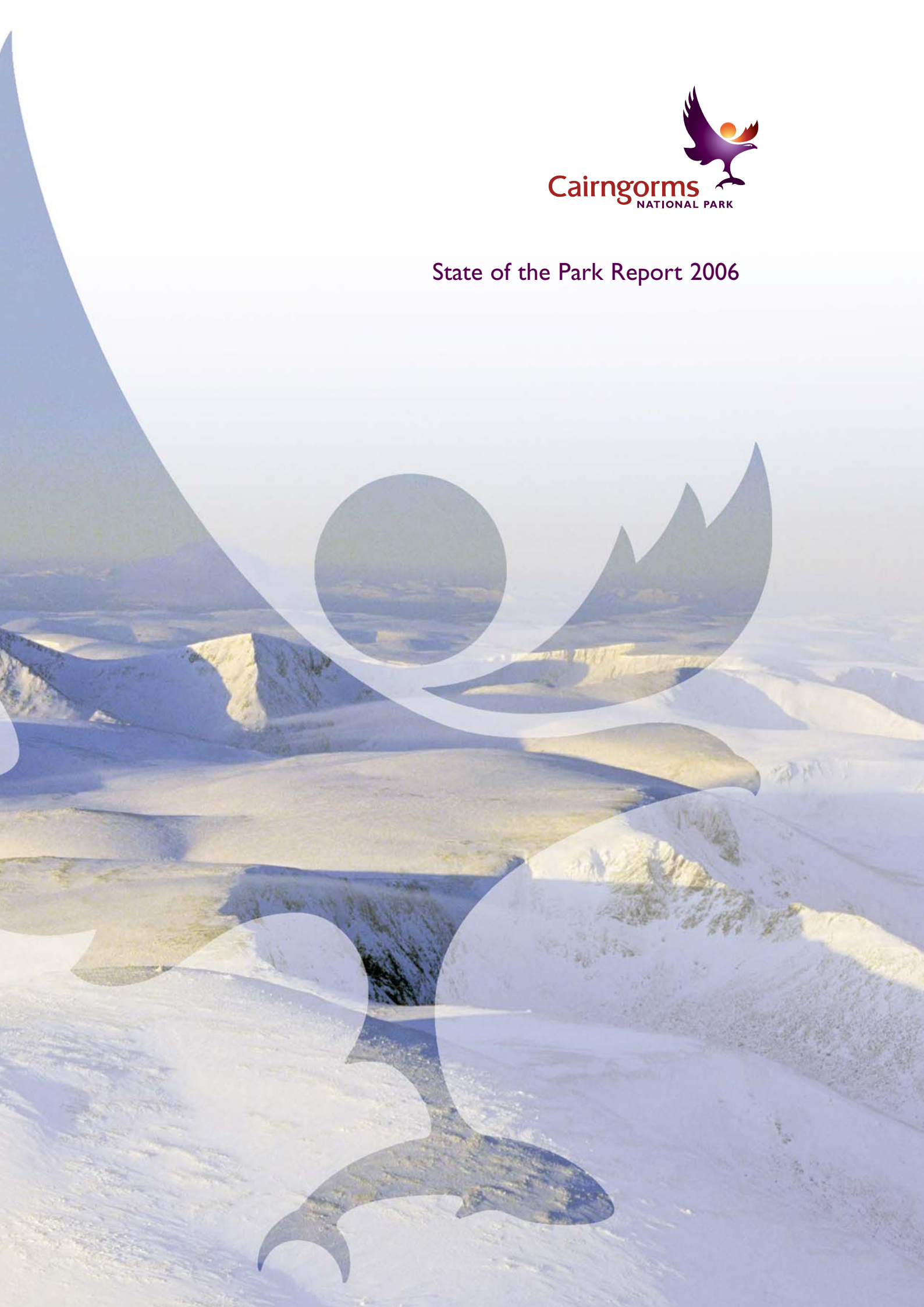




State of the Park Report 2006



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Front cover photo: David Gowans.

FOREWORD

State of the Park Report:

Sound planning is based on good evidence, identifying what we know, and also what we do not yet understand. This publication brings together for the first time all our current knowledge about the Cairngorms National Park and has informed development of our first National Park Plan. It covers all aspects of life in the Park, from its habitats and species, through to the characteristics of local communities, the local economy and outdoor recreation.

This is an important publication, not only for the Cairngorms National Park Authority as we seek to co-ordinate the management of the Park for the nation, but also for anyone with an interest in the Park. It is a first step in gaining a more complete picture of just why this part of Scotland is so important.

From this basis, we can now begin to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge that it has highlighted; so that when we come to review our Park Plan in five years, we can do so on the basis of an increased understanding of the Park.



Andrew Thin
Convener
Cairngorms National Park Authority
March 2006

Aithisg air Cor na Pàirce:

Tha deagh phlanadh stèidhichte air deagh fhianais, a' comharrachadh nan rudan is aithne dhuinn, agus cuideachd nan rudan nach eil sinn fhathast a' tuigsinn. Tha am foillseachadh seo a' toirt còmhla airson a' chiad uair gach fiosrachadh a tha againn mu Phàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh a chaidh a chleachdadh ann an dealbh a' chiad Phlana againn airson na Pàirce Nàiseanta. Tha e a' gabhail a-steach gach nì a bhuineas do bheatha sa Phàirc, bho a h-àrainnean agus gnèithean, gu feartan nan coimhearsnachdan ionadail, an eaconamaidh ionadail agus cur-seachadan a-muigh.

'S e foillseachadh cudromach a tha an seo, chan ann a-mhàin do Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh nuair a tha sinn a' feuchainn ri rianachd na Pàirce a cho-òrdanachadh don dùthaich, ach cuideachd do dhuine sam bith le ùidh sa Phàirc. 'S e a' chiad cheum ann a bhith a' faighinn dealbh nas coileanta air dìreach carson a tha an ceàrn seo de dh'Alba cho cudromach.

Bhon stèidh seo, faodaidh sinn tòiseachadh a' lìonadh cuid de na beàrnan a tha e air a chomharrachadh; gus nuair a bhios sinn a' dèanamh ath-sgrùdadh air Plana na Pàirce againn ann an còig bliadhna, gum bi sinn ga dhèanamh le barrachd tuigse mun Phàirc.

Andrew Thin
Neach-gairm
Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh
Am Màrt 2006

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 The Cairngorms National Park	8
1.2 The State of the Park Report	8
1.3 How the State of the Park Report has been prepared	9
1.4 Consultation on the Draft State of the Park Report	9
1.5 Limitations of the Report	10
1.6 Review and Monitoring of the State of the Park	10
2. NATURAL RESOURCES	11
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 The Area	12
2.2.1 Geology, Landforms and Soils	12
2.2.2 Climate	14
2.2.3 Landscape	16
2.2.4 Land-Use	18
2.2.5 Nature Conservation Designations	20
2.2.6 Information Gaps – The Area	22
2.3 Habitats	22
2.3.1 Introduction	22
2.3.2 Woodland	23
2.3.3 Wetland and Water	25
2.3.4 Farmland and Grassland	27
2.3.5 Upland and Mountain	29
2.3.6 Information Gaps – Habitats	31
2.4 Animals	32
2.4.1 Mammals	32
2.4.2 Birds	34
2.4.3 Reptiles and Amphibians	36
2.4.4 Fish	37
2.4.5 Invertebrates	39
2.4.6 Information Gaps – Animals	41
2.5 Plants	41
2.5.1 Bryophytes	41
2.5.2 Lichens	42
2.5.3 Fungi	43
2.5.4 Vascular Plants	44
2.5.5 Information Gaps – Plants	46
3. CULTURAL RESOURCES	47
3.1 Introduction	48
3.2 The Historic Environment	48
3.2.1 Historic Landscapes	48
3.2.2 Designed Landscapes and Gardens	51

3.2.3	Land Ownership and Management	51
3.2.4	Forestry and Woodland	52
3.2.5	Sporting Management	53
3.2.6	Food and Drink	54
3.2.7	Traditional Land-based Skills	54
3.2.8	Information Gaps – Historic Environment	55
3.3	The Built Environment	55
3.3.1	Introduction	55
3.3.2	Archaeological Sites and Scheduled Ancient Monuments	56
3.3.3	Built Heritage – Architectural and Historical Interest	57
3.3.4	Built Heritage – Settlements and Conservation Areas	60
3.3.5	Military Buildings and Battlefields	61
3.3.6	Roads, Railways and Drove Roads	61
3.3.7	Information Gaps – The Built Environment	62
3.4	Culture and Traditions	62
3.4.1	Introduction	62
3.4.2	Language	63
3.4.3	Folklore Sites and Tales	64
3.4.4	Dress	64
3.4.5	Music and Dance	64
3.4.6	Games and Sport	65
3.4.7	Crafts	66
3.4.8	Gemstone, Pearls and Precious Metals	67
3.4.9	Information Gaps – Culture and Traditions	68
3.5	Material Resources	68
3.5.1	Introduction	68
3.5.2	Museums, Heritage and Interpretation Centres and Libraries	68
3.5.3	Literature and Poetry	69
3.5.4	Written Records	69
3.5.5	Maps, Digital and Oral Records	70
3.5.6	Information Gaps – Material Resources	70
4.	VISITOR AND RECREATION RESOURCES	71
4.1	Introduction	72
4.2	Data Sources	72
4.2.1	Basis of Data Collection	72
4.2.2	National Statistics	72
4.2.3	Tourism in Scotland	73
4.2.4	Visitor Attraction Monitor	73
4.2.5	Visitor Surveys	73
4.2.6	People and Traffic Counters	73

CONTENTS...cont

4.3	Visitor Numbers and Characteristics	73
4.3.1	Visitor Numbers and Spend	74
4.3.2	Visitor Trends	75
4.3.3	Visitor Profile	76
4.3.4	Accommodation	77
4.3.5	Visitor Attitudes and Perceptions	78
4.3.6	Reasons for Visiting	78
4.3.7	Activity Intentions	79
4.3.8	Information Gaps – Visitor Numbers and Characteristics	79
4.4	Visitor Attractions and Locations	80
4.4.1	Popularity of Attractions	81
4.4.2	Natural Attractions	82
4.4.3	Information Gaps – Visitor Attractions and Locations	83
4.5	Recreational Activities and Networks	83
4.5.1	Activity Types	83
4.5.2	Hillwalking, Mountaineering, Climbing and Orienteering	84
4.5.3	Snowsports	85
4.5.4	Cycling and Mountain Biking	86
4.5.5	Watersports	87
4.5.6	Angling	87
4.5.7	Shooting and Fieldsports	88
4.5.8	Horse-riding	88
4.5.9	Other Activities	89
4.5.10	Clubs	89
4.5.11	Information Gaps – Recreation Activities and Networks	89
4.6	Visitor Facilities and Information Centres	89
4.6.1	Tourist Information Centres	89
4.6.2	Commercial Promotion	90
4.6.3	Community Websites	90
4.6.4	Visitor Information	90
4.6.5	Information Gaps – Visitor Facilities and Information Centres	90
4.7	Outdoor Access	90
4.7.1	Promoted Paths	91
4.7.2	Rights of Way	91
4.7.3	Transport	92
4.7.4	Outdoor Access Events	93
4.8	Access for All	93
4.8.1	All Abilities Access Survey	93
4.9	Ranger Services	94
4.9.1	Information Gaps – Ranger Services	96
4.10	Information and Interpretation	96
4.10.1	Information Gaps – Information and Interpretation	96

5. SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESOURCES	97
5.1 Introduction	98
5.2 Population	98
5.2.1 General	98
5.2.2 Population Density	98
5.2.3 Age Distribution	99
5.2.4 Gender	99
5.2.5 Ethnic Group	99
5.2.6 Occupational Status	99
5.2.7 Information Gaps – Population	100
5.3 Economy	100
5.3.1 General	100
5.3.2 Labour Market	100
5.3.3 Industry and Employment Structure	101
5.3.4 Agriculture	103
5.3.5 Estates	104
5.3.6 Information Gaps – Economy	105
5.4 Society	105
5.4.1 General	105
5.4.2 Measures of Deprivation	105
5.4.3 Social Capital	106
5.4.4 Social Infrastructure	106
5.4.5 Childcare	107
5.4.6 Young People	107
5.4.7 Crime and Community Safety	107
5.4.8 Information Gaps – Society	108
5.5 Infrastructure	108
5.5.1 General	108
5.5.2 Transport Services	108
5.5.3 Telecommunications	109
5.5.4 Energy	109
5.5.5 Waste Management and Disposal	109
5.5.6 Recycling Facilities	109
5.6 Housing	110
5.6.1 Demographic Background	110
5.6.2 Housing Stock and Tenure	110
5.6.3 House Prices and Affordability	111
5.6.4 Housing Development	111
APPENDICES	112
1. Public Bodies Consulted	112
2. Glossary	112

I. INTRODUCTION





I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 The Cairngorms National Park

The Cairngorms National Park is the second National Park to be designated in Scotland. It was established in 2003, following the earlier designation of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs in 2002. The new legislation, the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, creates National Parks that are tailored to Scottish circumstances and distinct from National Parks elsewhere.

Areas designated as a National Park in Scotland must satisfy three conditions:

- That the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage, or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage;
- That the area has a distinctive character and a coherent identity;
- That designating the area as a National Park will meet the special needs of the area.

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 also sets out four aims for Scottish National Parks:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- To promote the sustainable use of 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 the sustainable social and economic development of the area's communities.

The Park is a national asset for Scotland and the UK. It is an area that has long been considered a special place for its natural and cultural heritage, as a place to live, work and visit. The Park lies in the central highlands of Scotland and is centred on the large massif of the Cairngorm Mountains, a unique area of high ground in the UK.

The Park is easily accessible from many areas of Scotland and has good communications from the major centres of population surrounding the Park, including Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee and Perth.

I.2 The State of the Park Report

This is the first State of the Park Report prepared for the Cairngorms National Park. Its purpose is to draw together existing information on the current state of the resources in the Park. It provides a baseline to inform development of the Park Plan and other work within the Park. It will also provide a baseline for future monitoring of change in the Park.

The scope of information about resources in the Park is very wide. This report aims to provide information on the resources most relevant to the aims of the Park (see section 1.1). The report is therefore divided into four chapters:

- **Natural Resources;**
- **Cultural Resources;**
- **Visitor and Recreation Resources;**
- **Socio-Economic Resources.**

Each chapter is supported by a technical annex which presents a more detailed review of the information. While the report chapters provide an overview for the general reader, those with specialist interest may wish to refer to the annexes. The annexes are available in electronic form and can be downloaded from www.cairngorms.co.uk or supplied by the Cairngorms National Park Authority on request.

Within each chapter the report identifies, where possible, the scope of the resource in the Cairngorms; its relative importance in local, national or international contexts; its current condition; and relevant trends and observations.

There are a number of themes that cut across the division of the four chapters, reflecting the links between the resources of the Park. For example, landscape is both a natural and cultural resource, and underpins much of the attraction to visitors, in turn supporting much of the tourism industry and local economy. The relevant aspects of each resource are therefore covered in the appropriate section, with cross-reference to others.

1.3 How the State of the Park Report has been prepared

The report has been prepared by the Cairngorms National Park Authority based on research carried out by a consortium of consultants led by the Rural Development Company, in conjunction with Fraser Associates and Northern Ecological Services. The aim of their research was to draw together existing sources of information about the Park and to highlight areas where there is currently a lack of information. The technical annexes of the

cultural, visitor and recreation and socio-economic resources present their research in full.

The technical annex of the natural resources chapter has been written by Scottish Natural Heritage, drawing on a review of research in the Cairngorms over recent years. This work is also published separately by The Stationery Office as a book called 'The Nature of the Cairngorms: Diversity in a Changing Environment'.

1.4 Consultation on the Draft State of the Park Report

As this is the first State of the Park Report for the Cairngorms National Park, it is important to ensure that the information presented is as full and accurate as possible. Therefore the report was prepared as a draft and circulated for comment from July to September 2005. The draft report was publicly available to everyone, and comments were actively sought from



I. INTRODUCTION...cont

organisations and individuals with particular expertise or information. The responses to the draft helped add to the report and finalise it for publication. A list of public bodies consulted at this stage is given in Appendix I.

I.5 Limitations of the Report

Although there is a wealth of data on some aspects of the Park, others are less well researched or documented. The complex administrative boundaries of different organisations also present a significant challenge to collating data tailored to the Park area. The new geography of the Park boundary does not match the boundaries of existing data sets, many of which are held by local authority area or other regional divides.

Where possible, data has been manipulated to match the Park area as closely as possible. In some cases, however, it is not currently possible

to identify statistics or information relating to the whole Park area. Part of the purpose of the report is to identify these limitations, which can be addressed through a future programme of research and data collation.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority will therefore work with others to identify and address priorities for research in the next five years. These will help to provide a fuller picture of the state of the Park. Some of the main information gaps are identified in each section.

I.6 Review and Monitoring of the State of the Park

This first State of the Park Report provides a basis on which to build knowledge of the resources in the Park over the years ahead. The State of the Park Report will be reviewed and updated on a five-yearly basis, thereby helping to inform the five-yearly review of the Park Plan.

