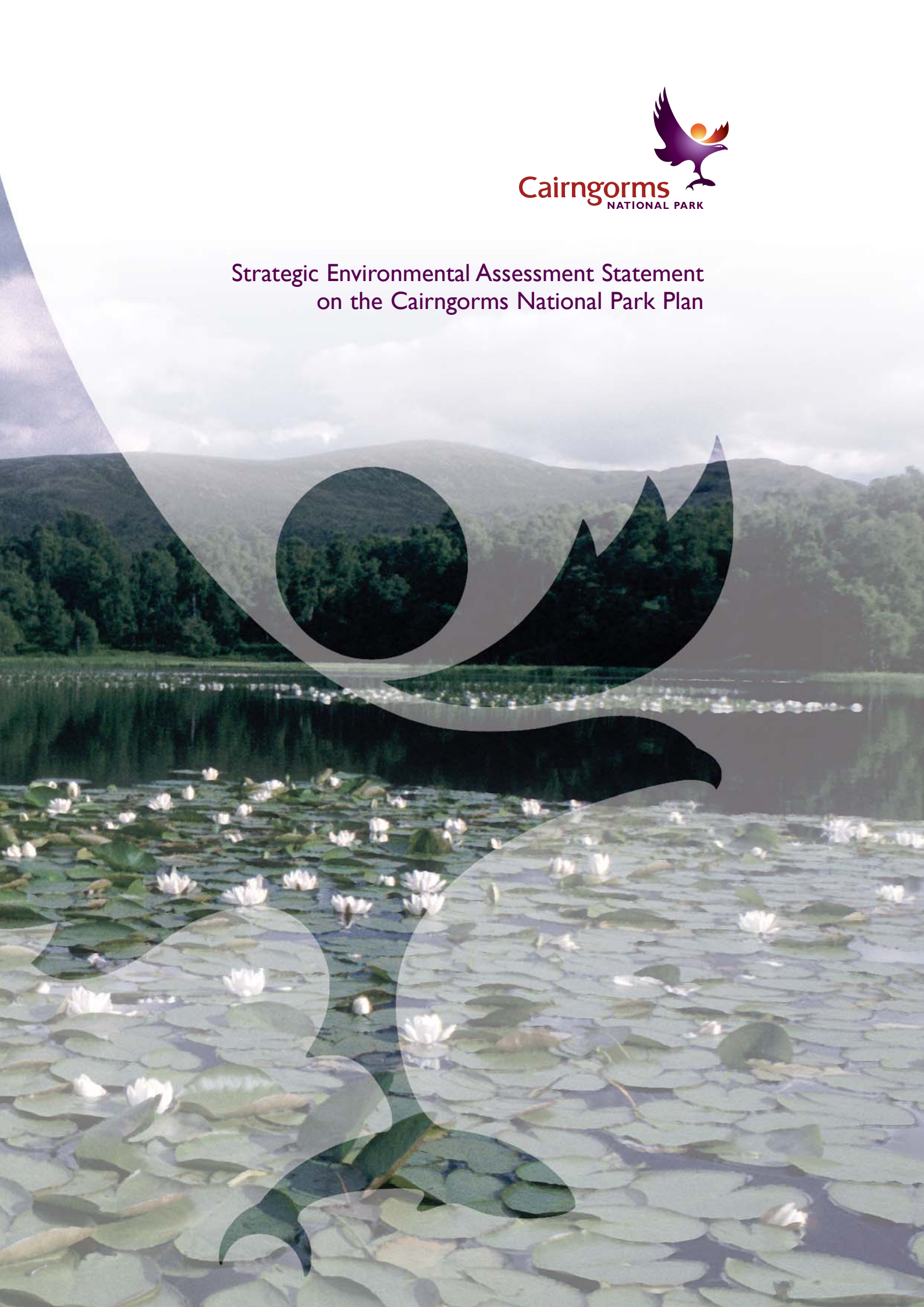




Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement  
on the Cairngorms National Park Plan



# **Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement of the Cairngorms National Park Plan**

**(Plan subject to Ministerial approval)**

**TITLE PAGE****Name of Responsible Authority**

Cairngorms National Park Authority

**Title of Plan**

Cairngorms National Park Plan

**Purpose of Plan**

To set out how the four aims of the National Park will be achieved in a collective and co-ordinated way.

**What prompted the Plan**  
(e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)

Legislative requirement of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000

**Subject**

Management of the National Park

**Period covered**

25 year vision and 5 year priorities for action (2007-2012)

**Frequency of updates**

5 year review programme (first review due 2012)

**Area of Plan**

Cairngorms National Park

**Summary of nature/content of Plan**

National Park management plan covering three themes: Conserving and Enhancing the Park; Living and Working in the Park; Enjoying and Understanding the Park.

**Date adopted**

Submitted to Ministers for approval

**Contact Details**National Park Plan Officer  
Cairngorms National Park Authority  
14 The Square  
Grantown-on-Spey  
Morayshire  
PH26 3HG**Date**

6 December 2006

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	4
2. Strategic Environmental Assessment of the National Park Plan .....	4
3. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the National Park Plan .....	5
3.1 Addressing the environmental issues .....	5
3.2 How the Environmental Report has been taken into account .....	8
3.4 How comments on the Environmental Report have been taken into account.....	9
3.5 Assessment of changes made in completing the plan .....	14
4. Effects on Natura interests.....	16
5. Reasons for completing the plan in its final form .....	17
6. Monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementing the National Park Plan	18

ANNEX I: Natura Sites – Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas in the Cairngorms National Park.

ANNEX II: Strategic Objectives and five year outcomes assessed to have a likely or uncertain effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2, including effects on Natura interests.

ANNEX III: Score sheets for additional strategic objectives and five year outcomes (available separately in electronic format from [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)).

# 1. Introduction

This Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement accompanies the completed National Park Plan. It records how the SEA has informed development of the plan, including how opinions expressed on the Environmental Report have been taken into account in finalising the plan.

Once the National Park Plan is approved by Ministers, this Statement will be published as the 'Post-Adoption SEA Statement' required by section 18(1)(a)(iii) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

# 2. Strategic Environmental Assessment of the National Park Plan

The National Park Plan has been subject to a process of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. This has included the following activities:

- Taking into account the views of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Ministers (Historic Scotland) regarding the scope and level of detail appropriate for the Environmental Report;
- Preparing an Environmental Report on the likely significant effects of the draft plan on the environment, including consideration of:
  - baseline data relating to the current state of the environment;
  - links between the plan and other relevant strategies, policies, plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives;
  - existing environmental problems affecting the National Park;
  - the plan's likely significant effects on the environment (positive and negative);
  - measures envisaged for the prevention, reduction and offsetting of any significant adverse effects;
  - management alternatives available within the plan;
  - links between the plan and other relevant strategies, policies, plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives;
  - monitoring measures to ensure that any unforeseen, environmental effects can be identified and appropriate remedial action taken.
- Public Consultation on the Environmental Report alongside the Draft National Park Plan from 31<sup>st</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006;
- Taking into account the Environmental Report and the results of consultation in completing the plan;

- Committing to monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan. This will also allow identification of any significant, unforeseen, adverse environmental effects and appropriate remedial action.

### **3. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the National Park Plan**

The National Park Plan sets out a framework to deliver the four aims of the National Park:

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

The aims set out clearly an agenda for the plan to deliver positive environmental benefits. Moreover, the aims are to be delivered collectively and in a co-ordinated way, requiring a sustainable development approach throughout the plan.

In exercising its own functions, including preparation of the National Park Plan, the National Park Authority's purpose is to ensure these four aims are achieved collectively and in a co-ordinated way. However if, after applying a collective approach, there appears to be a conflict between the first aim – to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area – and the other three aims, then Section 9(6) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act requires that greater weight be given to the first aim.

This legislative context means that the conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural resources must run through the whole Plan. The SEA process has been a key tool in ensuring that the plan as a whole is consistent with the first aim, to conserve and enhance natural and cultural resources, while addressing all four aims collectively.

#### **3.1 Addressing the environmental issues**

The Environmental Report identified the key environmental trends and issues affecting the area (Environmental Report, Fig. 5.2). These issues are shown

below with an additional column signposting the sections of the plan in which they have been addressed.

<b>Fig. 3.1.1 How key trends and issues are addressed in the plan</b>			
<b>Resource:</b>	<b>Key trends:</b>	<b>Key issues:</b>	<b>Addressed in plan by:</b>
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some continued habitat loss, fragmentation and deterioration</li> <li>• Vegetation limited by grazing pressure</li> <li>• Continued introductions of non-native species</li> <li>• Increase in native woodland cover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecosystem integrity and connectivity</li> <li>• Impact of non-native species</li> <li>• Impact of climate change</li> <li>• Impact of recreation</li> <li>• Impact of development</li> <li>• Incomplete data</li> </ul>	Strategic Objectives for: 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage 5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management 5.2.5 Transport and Communications 5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation
Designated Nature Conservation Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing account of external impacts on sites (Nature Conservation Act 2004)</li> <li>• Recent expansion of Natura 2000 designations</li> <li>• Review of NNR designations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management practices</li> <li>• Long-term security of management objectives</li> <li>• Integration with wider land-use</li> </ul>	Strategic Objectives for: 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageing population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implications for community dynamics</li> <li>• Implications for development patterns</li> <li>• Implications for human resources</li> </ul>	Strategic Objectives for: 5.2.2 Sustainable Communities 5.2.3 Economy and Employment
Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land-use change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of new development</li> <li>• Extension of forest cover</li> <li>• Agricultural changes from CAP reform</li> <li>• Impact of visitors</li> </ul>	Strategic Objectives for: 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation
Landforms and Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in woodland cover</li> <li>• Decline in heather moorland cover</li> <li>• Increase in research on landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of development</li> <li>• Recreation pressure</li> <li>• Connectivity of land cover</li> <li>• Impacts of tracks and footpaths</li> <li>• Renewable energy developments</li> <li>• Perceptions of 'wildness'</li> </ul>	Strategic Objectives for: 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage 5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soil erosion on higher slopes and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts of recreation</li> </ul>	Strategic Objectives for: 5.1.2 Conserving and

	plateaux	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of information on soil use and development</li> </ul>	<p>Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage</p> <p>5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources</p> <p>5.1.4 Integrated Land Management</p> <p>5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation</p>
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acidification (atmospheric)</li> <li>Decline in native fish stocks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diffuse pollution from agricultural ground</li> <li>River modification</li> <li>Catchment processes and flood management</li> <li>Availability for consumption</li> <li>Impact of recreation</li> </ul>	<p>Strategic Objectives for:</p> <p>5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage</p> <p>5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources</p> <p>5.1.4 Integrated Land Management</p> <p>5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation</p>
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate change – increasing temperature and precipitation expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Atmospheric pollution</li> </ul>	<p>Strategic Objectives for:</p> <p>5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources</p> <p>5.2.5 Transport and Communications</p>
Access and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing range of outdoor recreation activities</li> <li>New public right of responsible access</li> <li>More managed path networks</li> <li>Increased level of upland path provision and repair</li> <li>Diversification of ski centres into summer activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development increasing or reducing access opportunities</li> <li>Impact of access on habitats and species</li> <li>Landscape impact of access infrastructure</li> <li>Accessibility of environment for all</li> </ul>	<p>Strategic Objectives for:</p> <p>5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism</p> <p>5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation</p>
Energy and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing demand for renewable (particularly wind farm) sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential impact of transmission pylons and wind farm developments</li> <li>Use of non-renewable energy sources</li> </ul>	<p>Strategic Objectives for:</p> <p>5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources</p> <p>5.2.4 Housing</p>
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abandonment or conversion of farm steadings</li> <li>Significant demand for new housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decay of listed buildings</li> <li>Impact of development on settlement character</li> </ul>	<p>Strategic Objectives for:</p> <p>5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage</p> <p>5.2.4 Housing</p>

The data underpinning the plan and baseline information are drawn largely from the State of the Park Report. This report includes a technical annex on natural resources written by Scottish Natural Heritage, representing the most up-to-date collation of peer-reviewed information.

The development of the plan sought to integrate environmental objectives throughout. Section 3.1 of the plan describes the integrated approach taken



which is designed to ensure that conservation of the natural and cultural heritage is built into the plan throughout. Where there are strategic objectives for sectors which could have negative environmental effects, such as housing or economic development, these have been framed in such a way as to be at least consistent with the special natural and cultural qualities, and where possible actively enhance those qualities.

The following table signposts sections of the National Park Plan which are particularly relevant in identifying how environmental considerations have been integrated throughout.

<b>Fig. 3.1.2 Signposting to relevant sections of the National Park Plan</b>	
Aims of the National Park and the integrated approach to its management	→ <b>Section 3.1</b>
The special natural and cultural qualities of the National Park	→ <b>Section 3.2</b>
The changing environment of the National Park	→ <b>Section 3.3</b>
Strategic objectives setting the management framework	→ <b>Section 5</b>
Priorities for action setting out the difference the plan should make in the next five years	→ <b>Section 6</b>
Monitoring and review	→ <b>Section 8</b>

### **3.2 How the Environmental Report has been taken into account**

The Environmental Report assessed all the strategic objectives for their likely environmental effects and included a brief commentary on each objective where a significant effect was identified. It also identified some proposed mitigation and modification within the plan as a result of the assessment. Some objectives were modified immediately as a result of assessment, and the revised objectives were incorporated into the draft plan. Others were identified for further consideration in completing the plan.

Most of the changes identified were to enhance the positive environmental effects of the plan – to make the most of the opportunity to contribute towards the aims of the National Park. For example, most involved changes to ensure that the natural and cultural heritage would be sufficiently protected or to strengthen positive actions to enhance these resources.

### 3.4 How comments on the Environmental Report have been taken into account

The Environmental Report was published for public consultation alongside the Draft National Park Plan. The consultation period ran from 31<sup>st</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006. The Environmental Report was included in the package of documents sent out to consultees, and to those who requested a copy of the plan, as well as being available to download from the Cairngorms National Park Authority website.

While 124 responses to the draft plan were received, only 13 responses (including the Consultation Authorities) responded specifically to the Environmental Report. The comments made in the responses to the Environmental Report are detailed in the table below, with a note on how these have been addressed. Full copies of consultation responses are available on request.

<b>Fig. 3.4 How comments on the Environmental Report have been addressed</b>	
<b>Comment:</b>	<b>How it has been addressed:</b>
<b>Consultation Authorities:</b>	
<b>Historic Scotland</b>	
Content with the SEA objective used to assess the impact on the historic environment, but suggests some amendments to criteria – to include setting of archaeological sites.	Noted for future SEA assessments. Objectives (c) and (d) of Landscape, Built and Historic Environment (5.1.2) have been amended to include reference to surroundings of sites and settlements.
Welcomes modifications made to objectives as a result of assessment. The modification to objective 7.2a) could also refer to cultural heritage.	Objective amended (now objective 5.3.3a)).
Supports intention to modify forestry objectives to take account of impacts on the historic environment.	Forestry objectives have been modified more generally and now have more recognition of forestry's wider role and interactions, although the historic environment is not specifically mentioned. The new section 5.1.2 achieves closer integration of the historic environment and landscape, cross-referenced to all land management objectives.

Detailed suggestions for indicators and targets.	Comments will be used in selecting indicators for State of the Park monitoring.
<b>Scottish Environment Protection Agency</b>	
Specific links should also be made to the National Waste Strategy, National Waste Plan and relevant local authority waste strategies or plans.	Reference included in national policy context for Waste Management (section 5.2.6).
Additional baseline information on groundwater, flooding, contaminated land and waste could have been used.	Noted for monitoring and future SEA assessments.
Would be helpful to outline trends in waste management.	Noted for monitoring and future SEA assessments.
Seeks clarification on whether effects for objectives 5.3.2b) and 5.3.2c) are + or ++.	Likely effects clarified as part of completion and revisions.
Queries reference to national targets in objective 6.8a).	Reference changed to 'contribute to national targets' (now objective 5.1.3 Energy a).
Detailed comments on monitoring indicators and targets.	Comments will be used in selecting indicators for the State of the Park monitoring.
<b>Scottish Natural Heritage</b>	
Strongly recommends that the links with Natura are explained.	See Section 4 of this report.
Strongly recommends including additional baseline information about the Park's landscapes which refers to their distinctiveness, importance and value.	Text added to vision and special qualities of plan to refer to distinctiveness and importance of landscapes.
Strongly recommends stating that there are extensive areas, largely within the montane parts of the Park, that are valued for their wild land qualities.	References to wild land qualities added to the vision, while actions to conserve and enhance wild land qualities added to the priority for action 'Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes'.
A key landscape issue affecting biodiversity in the Park is overgrazing and trampling by herbivores – strongly recommends this is listed as such.	Addressed through greater recognition of wider grazing impacts in the priority for action 'Supporting Sustainable Deer Management'.
As a key special quality of the Park that could be affected by policies and proposals in the plan, strongly recommends an additional criterion	Noted for monitoring and future SEA assessments.

under SEA objective 6 'to maintain and enhance wild land qualities'.	
Advises that any possible effects – whether large or small – on Natura qualifying features identified through SEA should be considered for 'likely significant effects' that would trigger the need for appropriate assessment.	See Section 4 of this report.
Simply maintaining the status quo or delivering outcomes that need to be delivered throughout Scotland only merits a score of = rather than + or ++.	Noted. Plan has been checked to ensure added value over and above national policy context.
There are some strategic objectives that are not yet worded tightly or clearly to deliver the positive effects that have been attributed to them in the SEA.	Noted and objectives amended where possible.
There are a number of objectives which in our view have been correctly scored as having no or only modest positive effects, but which could be reworded to add value and increase their positive scores.	Some objectives have been reworded to ensure a more positive approach, specifically to enhance as well as conserve the natural heritage.
There is an opportunity to increase the positive effects by stating clearly the ends or outcomes to which the processes should be employed.	The 25 year vision has been rewritten to give a clearer sense of the long-term outcomes and five year outcomes have been added to the priorities for action.
<b>Other Respondents:</b>	
<b>Aberdeenshire Council</b>	
Key issues are not supported by data shown in the report.	Key issues are identified from data in the State of the Park Report and ongoing consultation to develop the plan.
May be necessary to specify the links between the National Park Plan and the Local Plan.	Links specified in the plan (Section 2.4).
Would like to see more plan alternatives recorded.	Noted.
Detailed consideration of objectives is robust and thorough, but it does not appear to adopt the precautionary principles in some instances – eg continuation of agricultural activity	Noted. There does remain significant uncertainty over the effects of many objectives at this strategic level. The potential effects should inform future planning and ongoing management

could have negative effects under the precautionary principle.	decisions.
Need more detailed consideration of the cumulative effects between the National Park Plan and the Local Plan.	The Local Plan takes the Park Plan as its strategic context, and should therefore be consistent with the Park Plan. The SEA of the Local Plan will consider the potential effects of its policies and proposals, which are at a more detailed level than the Park Plan, and will therefore seek to clarify, where it can, uncertainties inherent in assessment of a more strategic plan.
<b>Alvie and Dalraddy Estates</b>	
We believe the SEA process as described considers the natural heritage issues out of balance with social, cultural and economic considerations. Information in the State of the Park Report is not entirely accurate and is selective. We consider assessment relies too much on the accuracy and relevance of environmental designations.	The requirement to focus on environmental effects is set by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. Environmental designations are a key tool for managing natural heritage interests of national and international importance and are therefore relevant to assessing potential effects on the natural heritage.
<b>British Association for Shooting and Conservation</b>	
Queries whether SEA assessment was carried out in-house or independently.	The SEA was carried out in-house in order to integrate environmental considerations with plan preparation. Staff with specialist expertise from outwith the plan preparation team were involved in the assessment stage.
<b>Kincraig and Vicinity Community Council</b>	
The Environmental Assessment omits economic activity which we see as being crucial to survival.	The requirement to focus on environmental effects is set by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.
<b>Ramblers Association Scotland</b>	
Surprised that the Priorities for Action are not assessed for sustainability.	It is difficult to predict the likely effects of actions given the strategic level of the plan and resultant uncertainty about how, when, where actions will be implemented. The five year outcomes are the focus for implementation, towards which all actions are directed.

	These have therefore been assessed as part of the process of completing the plan.
<b>RICS Scotland</b>	
Recognises the contribution SEA makes to environmental sustainability, but care should be taken to ensure that the requirements and level of detail required do not become unnecessarily onerous.	Noted.
<b>Rothiemurchus Estate</b>	
There is no analytical basis for asserting that the trends identified are expected to continue in the absence of new policy.	Trends are identified from review of existing information through the State of the Park Report. It is necessary to make some assumptions about the potential effects of existing policies on the continuation of the existing baseline. The important information is what effect this plan may have on that baseline.
Report does not set out how the SEA objectives relate to the draft plan objectives or how the SEA criteria are derived.	Criteria are derived from the environmental resources and issues set out in the Environmental Report.
<b>RSPB Scotland</b>	
As no negative effects were identified, this really means that the plan objectives were assessed at too high a level. It appears the best assessment is of the detailed plans and subsequent implementation strategies as acknowledged.	It is difficult to assess meaningfully a plan of this strategic nature, as acknowledged in the report. The uncertainties must be considered where more detailed plans are prepared and in ongoing decision-making.
Question whether the data is available to underpin the proposed indicators. Better to slim down to a smaller more specific set of indicators.	The monitoring programme will be agreed as part of the overall State of the Park monitoring, to be developed jointly with partners in 2007. This will identify what data is available.
<b>Woodland Trust for Scotland</b>	
Suggests inclusion of area of non-native conifer woodlands planted on ancient woodland sites as a baseline statistic and as criterion in SEA objectives 1 and 2.	Noted as baseline information available for monitoring and future SEA assessments.
<b>Individual</b>	

Achieving these objectives may mean declaring some areas 'strict nature reserve areas'.	The SEA objectives are not the plan objectives. The SEA objectives are used as a check, but do not in themselves mean that the plan must seek to achieve these.
---	---

### 3.5 Assessment of changes made in completing the plan

In completing the plan, a number of changes and additions have been made to the draft. Where new strategic objectives have been added these have been assessed against the SEA objectives.

In the Priorities for Action, five year outcomes have been added. In a strategic plan there remains much uncertainty about how it will be implemented, but the five year outcomes are the focus – these set out what difference the plan seeks to make over the five years. Therefore these have been assessed against the SEA objectives.

To assess the detailed action programmes would not add value to the planning process at this stage, as there remains too much uncertainty about how, when, where and by whom they will be implemented. However, assessing the outcomes has highlighted the need for the potential environmental effects to be considered in any subsidiary strategies and plans, and to be monitored as an integral part of delivery.

A summary of the assessment of changes is shown below. The detailed score sheets are available separately as Annex III.

Summary – Assessment of Priority for Action Outcomes														
PARK PLAN OUTCOME	SEA OBJECTIVES													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
6.1 Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes														
6.1 i	?	?	?	?	/	+	?	/	/	?	/	/	/	+
6.1 ii	?	?	?	?	/	?	/	/	?	?	/	/	/	?
6.1 iii	?	?	?	?	/	+	/	/	/	?	/	/	/	+
6.1 iv	+	+	+	+	?	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	?
6.1 v	?	+	+	+	?	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.1 vi	+	+	+	+	?	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.1 vii	+	+	+	+	+	?	/	/	?	/	/	/	/	/
6.1 viii	?	?	?	/	/	?	/	/	?	/	/	/	/	/
6.1 ix	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	/
6.2 Integrating Public Support for Land Management														
6.2 i	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	?	?	?	/	/	?
6.2 ii	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	?	?	?	?	?	?
6.2 iii	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	?	?	?	?	?	?
6.3 Supporting Sustainable Deer Management														
6.3 i	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

<b>Summary – Assessment of Priority for Action Outcomes</b>														
	<b>SEA OBJECTIVES</b>													
<b>PARK PLAN OUTCOME</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
6.3 ii	?	?	?	?	/	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.3 iii	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.3 iv	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.3 vi	/	/	/	/	/	/	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
<b>6.4 Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access</b>														
6.4 i	/	/	/	/	/	/	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.4 ii	/	/	/	/	/	/	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.4 iii	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	/	?	?	/
6.4 iv	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.4 v	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	/	?	?	/
6.4 vi	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	+	?	?	/
<b>6.5 Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable</b>														
6.5 i	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.5 ii	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	?	/	/	/	?	/	/
6.5 iii	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.5 iv	?	?	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	?	/	/	/	/
6.5 v	/	/	/	/	/	/	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
6.5 vi	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/	?	/	/
6.5 vii	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	?	/	/	/
<b>6.6 Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable</b>														
6.6 i	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
6.6 ii	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.6 iii	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	+	/	/	/
6.6 iv	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	+	?	?	+	+	+	+
<b>6.7 Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park</b>														
6.7 i	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	?	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.7 ii	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	/	/	/	/	?	?
6.7 iii	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.7 iv	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.7 v	?	?	?	?	/	?	?	/	/	?	?	/	/	?
6.7 vi	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6.7 vii	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?

<b>Summary – Assessment of additional strategic objectives</b>														
	<b>SEA OBJECTIVES</b>													
<b>PARK PLAN OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
5.1.2 a)	?	?	+	?	+	+	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.1.2 d)	?	?	?	?	?	+	/	/	+	?	/	/	?	/
5.1.4 e)	?	?	?	?	/	?	/	/	+	/	/	/	/	/
5.1.4 g)	?	?	?	?	/	?	/	+	+	/	/	?	+	/
5.2.2 b)	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	/	/	?	/	/	/	?
5.2.3 d)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
5.2.5 b)	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	?	/	?	/	?	?	/
5.3.3 d)	?	?	?	?	?	?	+	/	/	?	/	/	/	/
5.3.4 a)	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	/	/	?	/	/	/	/

<b>Scoring Codes</b>	
<b>++</b>	<b>Strongly positive effect</b>
<b>+</b>	<b>Positive effect</b>
<b>=</b>	<b>Neutral or no effect</b>
<b>-</b>	<b>Negative effect</b>
<b>--</b>	<b>Strongly negative effect</b>
<b>?</b>	<b>uncertain effects</b>
<b>\</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>



The assessment shows that no negative effects are identified as a result of adding the new strategic objectives and five year outcomes to the plan. There are some positive effects, reflecting the fact that several of the additions explicitly seek environmental enhancement. Many of the effects however, remain uncertain, as is the case with the assessment of many of the plan's strategic objectives. This is due to their strategic nature, and the inherent uncertainty over how, when and where they may be implemented.

It was a useful part of the plan completion process to assess the additions made to the plan to ensure that these did not introduce potential adverse effects and to ensure that opportunities to maximise the positive effects continued to be taken in the final stages of completion.

#### **4. Effects on Natura interests**

The National Park contains 32 sites designated as either Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA) (see Annex I) under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. There is an obligation in law to prevent any activities being undertaken which are likely to have an adverse impact on the qualifying feature of interest, unless the activity is in the overriding public interest and there is no alternative available.

The National Park Plan does not, under current UK regulations, require an appropriate assessment to be carried out. However, the likely effects on Natura sites have been assessed through the SEA.

SEA objectives 1 (to conserve and enhance the diversity of species) and 2 (to conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats) include in their assessment criteria preventing the loss of priority species and habitats. These explicitly including the qualifying interests of SPAs and SACs, as well as those species and habitats listed in the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive.

The National Park Plan has therefore been assessed for likely impacts on these interests. The results of the assessment show that 44 of the plan's strategic objectives and four of the five year outcomes are likely to have an effect on conserving and enhancing the diversity of species and habitats that is either positive or strongly positive (see Annex II). Where these may affect Natura sites, it is because the plan objectives actively seek to protect and enhance species and habitats, in relation to site management or to the management of surrounding land. There are no negative effects identified in the assessment.

There are also 19 of the plan's strategic objectives and 15 of the five year outcomes that are assessed as having an uncertain effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2 (see Annex II). The assessment records an uncertain result because these plan objectives are too strategic to be able to make a prediction of likely effects on the criteria of these SEA objectives.

Given the strategic purpose of the National Park Plan, it is not possible to assess its objectives and outcomes further for effects on Natura interests at this stage. The objectives and outcomes remain at a strategic level and while it is possible to identify potential positive effects deriving from those objectives and outcomes that explicitly seek to conserve and enhance species and habitats, the likely effects of many can only be considered once information is available on how, where and when actions to achieve these objectives are to be implemented. It is therefore vital that there is provision to safeguard Natura interests in implementation of the plan and in subsidiary plans and strategies.

There are a number of mechanisms in place which should safeguard Natura interests through implementation of the plan. The Local Plan, which will set out how built development and planning should contribute to the objectives of the National Park Plan, will be subject to an appropriate assessment. Therefore the policies and settlement proposals which may affect Natura sites will be assessed for significant effects. Beyond the Local Plan, any operation affecting Natura sites is required to be subject to appropriate assessment.

The existing regulatory framework ensures that as work towards the plan's objectives proceeds, where potential effects on Natura interests are identified, these should be assessed. In preparing subsidiary plans and strategies that flow from the National Park Plan, the National Park Authority will carry out an SEA that assesses likely effects on Natura interests. Where the SEA identifies likely or uncertain effects on Natura interests, this flags up a need to consider the effects at the more detailed level of implementation and consider whether an appropriate assessment is required.

## **5. Reasons for completing the plan in its final form**

Consideration of the environmental effects of the plan has been integral to the process of developing the plan. The assessment has shown that the plan as a whole is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the environment, and although many potential effects remain uncertain at this strategic level, the plan is likely to have a positive effect on the environmental resources in the area.

Assessment has led to some changes and amendments, to ensure the plan includes mitigation of potential adverse effects and to maximise the positive effects. Based on the assessment and the changes made, the completed plan offers an effective way to meet the aims of the Park, including measures to minimise adverse environmental effects and to actively seek environmental enhancement.

## **6. Monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementing the National Park Plan**

Monitoring the significant environmental effects will form part of the approach to monitoring the State of the Park (see Section 8 of National Park Plan). The two principles which guide the approach to monitoring are:

- The need for a simple but robust approach that is easy to use;
- The need for a collective approach amongst all partners involved in implementing the plan.

It is therefore important that monitoring of significant environmental effects forms part of the monitoring framework for the plan as a whole, to ensure process informs management and review decisions, and to make data collation as efficient as possible.

A set of indicators will be identified to monitor the State of the Park. These will cover the natural, cultural, visitor and recreation and socio-economic resources of the Park. Within this set, indicators for the state of the natural and cultural resources will be used to monitor the significant environmental effects, linked to the baseline environmental characteristics and issues. Monitoring will be an ongoing process, but information will be collated to inform the five yearly review of the National Park Plan (which will be subject to SEA).

The indicators selected will monitor change that results from the management interventions set out in the plan, but will also take account of changes as a result of other external factors. They will therefore provide a mechanism to highlight unforeseen as well as expected changes.

Once the plan is approved by Ministers the National Park Authority will lead a process with partner organisations to identify appropriate indicators. This will include consideration of which aspects give greatest insight into the

environmental qualities and changes, as well as what information is available and the resource implications of the requirement for new information.

**ANNEX I: Natura Sites – Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas in the Cairngorms National Park**

<b>Special Areas of Conservation</b>
Ballochbuie
Cairngorms
Coyles of Muick
Creag nan Gamhainn
Dinnet Oakwood
Green Hill of Strathdon
Insh Marshes
Ladder Hills
Morrone Birkwood
Morven and Mullachdubh
Muir of Dinnet
Glen Tanar
Caenlochan
Creag Meagaidh
Drumochter Hills
Kinveachy Forest
Monadhliath
River South Esk
River Spey

<b>Special Protection Areas</b>
Abernethy Forest
Ballochbuie
Craigmore Wood
Cairngorms
Loch Vaa
Lochnagar
Muir of Dinnet
River Spey Insh Marshes
Glen Tanar
Caenlochan
Creag Meagaidh
Drumochter Hills
Kinveachy Forest

**ANNEX II: Strategic objectives and five year outcomes assessed to have a likely or uncertain effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2, including effects on Natura interests.**

The table records the strategic objectives and five year outcomes of the plan which have been assessed as having a likely or uncertain effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2:

- 1) To conserve and enhance the diversity of species;
- 2) To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats.

This does not in itself mean that they have a likely effect on natura interests, as there are other criteria for these SEA objectives in addition to the effects on natura interests. However, this assessment flags up those objectives and outcomes that should be considered further for their effects on natura interests when the relevant information about their implementation is available.

<b>Strategic objectives assessed as having a strongly positive likely effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2:</b>	
5.1.2 Biodiversity a)	Conserve and enhance the condition and diversity of habitats and species present throughout the Park through a landscape-scale approach to habitat networks.
5.1.2 Biodiversity b)	Ensure all designated nature conservation sites are in favourable condition.
5.1.2 Biodiversity c)	Engage all sectors in meeting or exceeding international, national and local biodiversity targets.
5.1.2 Biodiversity d)	Improve the long-term sustainability and restore the full range of montane habitats through managing pressures from grazing, other land management, recreation and development.
5.1.2 Biodiversity e)	Ensure that populations of species given special protection under the Habitat Regulations, the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the Nature Conservation Act and European Directives are stable or, where appropriate, increasing.
5.1.2 Biodiversity f)	Promote access to appropriate policy and funding mechanisms to support nature conservation.
5.1.2 Biodiversity h)	Promote appropriate reintroduction of species and reinstatement of habitats and identify the likely ecological, economic and management impacts.
5.1.2 Geodiversity c)	Prevent degradation and erosion of soils, particularly vulnerable montane and organic soils.
5.1.3 Water a)	Maintain or where necessary enhance the existing high water quality and physical condition of waterbodies in the Park.
5.1.3 Water b)	Adopt a catchment-scale approach to water management that integrates land-use, nature conservation and flood management.
5.1.4 Land Management a)	Maintain and enhance a viable and productive land management sector that delivers private and public objectives and enhances the special qualities of the Park.
5.1.4 Farming and Crofting a)	Manage agricultural production to be consistent with, and enhance, the special qualities of the Park.
5.1.4 Forestry and	Enhance the condition of existing woodland cover and expand to develop habitat networks that complement the landscape character and other land-

Woodland Management b)	uses.
5.1.4 Forestry and Woodland Management c)	Encourage a full range of forest ecosystems from valley floor to natural altitudinal tree-line in targeted areas and the re-development of woodland types that have declined.
5.1.4 Moorland Management a)	Enhance moorlands as a high value and sustainable resource for nature conservation, sport, agriculture, landscape and recreation.
5.1.4 Moorland Management c)	Manage the interaction of moorlands with surrounding land-uses to maintain and enhance the integrity of the moorland landscape, ecosystems, key habitat networks and hydrology.
5.1.4 Deer Management a)	Manage deer populations at densities consistent with maintaining and enhancing the special natural heritage qualities of the Park, particularly native woodland, montane and moorland habitats.
5.1.4 Fisheries Management b)	Encourage removal and minimisation of artificial barriers that impede passage of fish and affect river flow.
5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism c)	Maintain a high quality environment by encouraging sound environmental management by all those involved in tourism in the Park.
<b>Strategic objectives assessed as having a positive likely effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2:</b>	
5.1.2 Biodiversity g)	Identify, prioritise and take action to address non-native species that pose a threat to the natural heritage and land management of the Park.
5.1.2 Biodiversity i)	Develop awareness and understanding of the interactions of land-uses, tourism, outdoor access and nature conservation amongst all interests.
5.1.2 Biodiversity j)	Identify and carry out a research programme designed to provide the information and monitoring on the habitats, species and ecosystems required to guide future decision-making.
5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources a)	All management and development in the Park should seek to make the most sustainable use of natural resources, including water and energy.
5.1.3 Water c)	Encourage more sustainable patterns of domestic, industrial, agricultural and recreational water use.
5.1.3 Water d)	Promote sustainable flood management consistent with natural fluvial processes.
5.1.3 Air a)	Maintain, and where possible enhance, the existing high level of air quality.
5.1.4 Land Management c)	Develop and promote best practice in land and water management and its interactions with people and other land-uses.
5.1.4 Land Management f)	Reduce waste, energy use and pollution from all land management activities.
5.1.4 Forestry and Woodland Management a)	Promote multi-objective forest and woodland management that delivers environmental, economic and social benefits.
5.1.4 Moorland Management b)	Demonstrate and enhance the delivery of biodiversity targets by moorland management.
5.1.4 Fisheries Management a)	Encourage co-ordination of fisheries management at river system and catchment level.
5.2.3 Economy and Employment c)	Promote 'green business' opportunities.
5.2.5 Transport and Communications c)	Ensure transport and communications infrastructure is managed and developed in ways consistent with the special qualities of the Park.
5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism h)	Encourage an optimum flow and spread of visitors across the Park and minimise social and environmental impact including traffic generated by visitors and conflicts between different forms of recreation.
5.3.2 Sustainable	Ensure that visitor information is targeted at specific audiences and encourages resource protection, responsible access, visitor safety, and the

Tourism i)	health benefits of regular outdoor exercise.
5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation b)	Promote high standards of responsible enjoyment of the Park so that its special qualities are understood and appreciated, safeguarded now and for future generations to enjoy and the interests of others are respected.
5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation g)	Protect the more fragile areas of the Park from pressures arising from outdoor access and recreation.
<b>Strategic objectives assessed as having an uncertain effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2:</b>	
5.1.4 Farming and Crofting b)	Maintain a productive and viable agricultural sector.
5.1.4 Farming and Crofting c)	Encourage the continued development of crofting.
5.1.4 Farming and Crofting d)	Encourage access to land for those who wish to farm, particularly new-entrants.
5.1.4 Forestry and Woodland Management d)	Increase the value of timber and other local forest products, strengthen supply chains and develop new markets.
5.1.4 Deer Management b)	Encourage co-ordination of deer management across the Park.
5.1.4 Deer Management c)	Maintain and enhance the socio-economic sustainability of the deer resource.
5.1.4 Deer Management d)	Make accessible, research and use the best available data on habitat impacts, population models and good practice to inform deer management planning.
5.1.4 Deer Management e)	Where deer fencing is considered appropriate, minimise the impacts on public safety, deer welfare, biodiversity, landscape, cultural heritage and recreation.
5.2.4 Housing a)	Increase the accessibility of rented and owned housing to meet the needs of communities throughout the Park.
5.2.4 Housing d)	Ensure there is effective land and investment for market and affordable housing to meet the economic and social needs of communities throughout the Park.
<b>Five year outcomes assessed as having a likely positive effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2:</b>	
6.1 iv	Species and habitats identified as the highest priorities in the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the UK and Scottish Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and the Scottish Species Framework will be protected and under active conservation management.
6.1 vi	All the designated nature conservation sites in the Park will be in favourable condition, or under positive management to bring them into favourable condition. This will be enhanced further by the appropriate management of the surrounding land to increase the ecological integrity and viability of these sites.
6.1 vii	The habitat and water quality of rivers and wetlands will be enhanced through commencement of positive management initiatives guided by catchment management planning.
<b>Five year outcomes assessed as having an uncertain effect on SEA objectives 1 and 2:</b>	
6.1 i	A Landscape Plan for the Park will identify the natural, cultural and built landscape qualities, the factors influencing them and underpin actions for positive management.
6.1 ii	The key areas for the experience of wild land qualities will be identified, protected and enhanced as a major source of enjoyment of the Park and wild land qualities throughout the rest of the Park will be safeguarded.
6.1 iii	The location, scale, layout and design of all new development will make



	a positive contribution to the natural, cultural and built landscapes of the Park and the adverse impacts of some existing developments will be reduced.
6.1 v	There will be enhanced connectivity within habitat networks through practical implementation of a planned, landscape-scale approach, with early emphasis on lowland agricultural habitat networks and forest networks.
6.1 viii	The diversity of rocks, minerals, landforms and soils of international, national and regional value will be safeguarded and more widely appreciated, together with the natural processes underpinning them.
6.2 i	A diverse, viable and productive land management sector will continue to provide high quality primary produce such as food and timber, whilst delivering public benefits which are compatible with the Park's special qualities and will make a growing contribution to employment and the local economy.
6.2 ii	Public support for land management will be better integrated and directed at delivering tangible public benefits.
6.2 iii	The public benefits which land managers are asked to deliver with public sector support in the Park will be informed by sound information and determined through an open process involving land managers, communities and other stakeholders.
6.3 i	There will be a patchwork of deer densities across the National Park underpinned by an inclusive deer management planning process.
6.3 ii	Designated sites will be protected and enhanced and the deer range throughout the Park will be managed to a good environmental standard appropriate to the management unit. This standard will be agreed as an integral part of the deer management planning process.
6.5 iv	A greater percentage of visitors will contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the Park.
6.6 iv	New housing will be of a more sustainable design.
6.7 ii	Residents and visitors will appreciate the special qualities of the Park and understand more about their special management needs.
6.7 v	There will be more opportunities for people to become practically involved in caring for the Park and its special qualities.
6.7 vii	There will be more comprehensive and detailed information about the special qualities available in order to provide a better basis for conserving and enhancing them in the future.