

**Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan**  
**Responses from people who wish to remain anonymous**

Response numbers 1-15

Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012 -2017

Outcome No .4

We strongly urge the CNPA to consider not only the qualities of wilderness within the Park itself, but out-with its boundaries e.g. The vision of wind-farms on distant hills when viewed from within the Park, destroys the wilderness experience for many. Therefore we believe that the CNPA should be strongly opposing all developments in wild areas visible from the CNP.

Outcome No. 6

There are many outdoor activity businesses in the CNP and many new aspiring companies that would like to work in this resource-rich 'natural playground'. These businesses use the land/rivers/mountains, and are reliant upon the natural resources, in some cases without much regard for the resource. We would strongly urge the CNPA to encourage an accreditation scheme that would provide a positive choice for customers seeking an experience that they can trust and is not damaging or having a negative impact upon the natural environment within the Park.

## Park Plan 2012 -17

Q1	Its ruggedness and its softness. Best witnessed in late winter early spring when you come down from the high mountains where it is full on winter conditions and when you descend to the 600M mark it's spring.
Q2	They maybe miss out how grounded people who live here feel. There is a general air of contentment, there are not many places with that.
Q3	See above
Q4	There are too many in my view. Condense Suggest 1& 2 combined, 3&5 too, 6&7&8 too, 9-12 combine, 13-15 combine, you could condense 16-23 into 2 outcomes.
Q5	Too many outcomes. 1 – begs the question how many more? 1? 100 ?..combine 2&3. Not sure what 4 means and how can you measure this? 5 – why is targeted advice limited to land managers, yes they are an important component but we all have a role to play. 6 the economy needs to be sustainable and by that I mean financially. 8&9 could be combined.
Q6	No.6 – to me it is the biggest challenge we have in the Park. There are some good businesses in the park and there are some accomplished business people BUT too many of the businesses are marginal. Lots of people are very busy and work long hours but I don't believe many are financially successful. That can't be good for those individuals or the Park.
Q7a	Yes
B&C	Yes, but what about the adults that live in the park especially those that come from elsewhere to live here, they don't seem to be targeted.
D	I can lead walks in the outdoors to introduce / develop people's knowledge of the Park landscape, wildlife etc.
8a)b)	Yes
9a)b)	Yes
10	I agree about the protection of the wildness. I struggle with the concept of enhancing wildness. Either it is wild or not. I don't believe you can manufacture wildness.
11	Yes it is appropriate but what about for communities, individuals and businesses (I realise there is CBP).
12	See comments relating to Q6. The special qualities of the Park is of use to some businesses i.e. tourism businesses ( but what they really need is more customers). Do you actually want more businesses or more people working in businesses in the park? To me the weakness is that we have too many small fragile businesses why not build up the successful ones?
13	All seems reasonable however does not seem to cover building outwith "settlements" which I take to mean towns, villages clusters of houses whereas there are many houses outwith settlements. I understand there is a policy to promote building around settlements rather than individually set houses. But these are an important part of the park and for many the type of house they wish to live in.
14	Yes, but am concerned that some of the incentives to go low carbon are being/will be removed by government. I note in the indicators you would like

	20% increase in travel in travel by foot/bike to work. Why not all journeys? The to/from work ones may be the hardest to tackle due to the distances and times of day people have to travel.
15	Yes. The issue here will be funding. For communities to be incentivised to go down the renewable route there needs to be demonstrable funding available, it is unlikely communities will be able to fund such projects 100% themselves.
16	Yes.
17,18	Yes, but to me it seems a bit vague and idealistic. Am not sure how you would measure you have achieved it.
19	Unfortunately run out of time to go through in great detail, but having scanned them they look reasonable.
20	I presume this relates to land use. Opportunity – to plant and grow more trees and we need to do this if you keep on encouraging us to go down the woodfuel route. Threat – due to current economic crisis but also high prices being paid for produce there could be an element of land managers to be more aggressive with regards to yields required/desired.
21,22,23,24	Generally agree.
25,26	Agree
27	I believe you should widen who you are targetting the advice to, see comment above.
28	Agree
General comment	You have asked individuals to comment revert on this plan. It is 118 pages!! Apart from those who have the luxury to review this during the working day it is being done at night/early morning – if you want people to respond you have to make it easy. Some of the language is tedious much of the document is repeated. It is confusing, you have 4 aims, 10 outcomes, 8 policies could you not structure it so that the 18 outcomes/policies come under the 4 aims. It is in PDF. I could fill in the PDF for the response form but not the questions form, hence the word doc, seems inconsistent. The main document in PDF is in 2 columns requiring one to scroll up and down to read it unless one has a v big screen. I presume you did not want us to print it out!
	As pointed out above the biggest challenge is the economic one and I feel there is too much bias towards tourism, that only works if tourists have money to come here! We need to support the other industries – construction and its support services, the small number of good manufacturing businesses, agricultural support services etc.

5 December 2011

Cairngorm National Park Authority  
Grantown-on-Spey  
PH26 3BR

Dear Sir

I thought I would give you some feedback on the Boat of Garten presentation on the Park Plan Outcome and the local Development Plan. It is the first time we have attended a meeting like this.

Of the 12 preferred outcomes only 3 were discussed. That has to be unsatisfactory.

The lucky 3 were shrouded in woolly language that was impenetrable to most people in the room. One has to wonder if the thinking was equally woolly. I have since learnt that it might be "Town planning" speak. If so surely it is simply bad manners to use it on an audience of laymen and women. Whatsmore I really believe that everyone including the park would have got much more out of the evening had it been presented in straightforward language. I found the wooliness robbed the evening of any grip or decisiveness; any sense of helping to decide a particular course of action. As a result we were all battling against the Park rather than working with it and the presenter became a bit defensive.

How did you arrive at the proposed outcomes?

Were they as a result of a SWOT or other analysis that could not be shared with us?

What are your strategies for achieving the outcomes?

Can we comment on those?

What is your action plan for each outcome?

If I may be so bold as to make a suggestion it would be to pick say 15 movers and shakers from each village, split them into 2 or 3 groups and over a winter get them to thrash out each "outcome" and how to achieve them. (3 sessions)

A flip chart would encapsulate each session therefore a scribe and a chairman would be required for each group. Perhaps they could be the same person.

If it hadn't been for Karen Derrick and the scribe on the flip chart the whole evening would have been a complete waste of time. As it was it was a missed opportunity.

Turning to the Local Development Plan

Of the 7 main issues the words "development" "Housing" and "growth" appear in 5 of them.

It is no surprise then that the "affordable" housing issue completely hijacked the discussion.

There is no doubt that the provision of housing is a very real issue that affects almost everything in a dynamic community. Since when was a house ever affordable? Taking on a mortgage of 3 or 4 times salary was always daunting. Affordability comes down to the ability to finance the provision of housing.

Quite rightly Banks and Building Societies will only lend money to people who can demonstrate an ability to service and repay their mortgage. Quite rightly Housing Associations and local councils will only rent accommodation to people who they believe can pay the rent.

Quite rightly developers will only build houses when they are assured of making a sale.

Affordable is a dangerous term as it gives the impression that there is a Fairy godmother who can wave her wand and provide sufficient houses to house key workers and fill our schools and lets not forget our old people. Sadly this is not the case; there is no fairy godmother except in the case of the Social Housing where the criteria are different.

There have to be other ways.

Are our key workers paid enough?

Do they prioritise housing above lifestyle?

History tells us that farmers, whisky distillers, railway operators and even the Boat Hotel in very recent times and our golf club have all provided or subsidised housing. The list goes on.....

In my view it is dishonest of the Park not to meet this issue head on and tell us how it really is instead of saying there will 25-40% affordable housing which I don't believe they can guarantee far less deliver.

Perhaps there could be a number of small developments of say 15-20 houses which would be more universally acceptable instead of the big headline grabbing proposals. There was no feeling that the real issues; the nuts and bolts of each village were being considered in any depth or how and when they would be delivered. This was a pity as we had all completed questionnaires and surveys. All told this was a pretty negative experience.

SECTION 2. The Cairngorms National Park (pages 13-15)  
Questions 1 to 3

This section needs rethinking and probably removing as it seriously threatens the credibility of the rest of the Draft Plan, particularly as it comes so early in reading.

The response to "what makes the National Park special?" makes this document sound like a weak advertising feature for a holiday brochure.

Consequently this section, at best, annoys the reader and creates the impression of a CNPA as a remote, lightweight administration attempting a cheap PR exercise. Much worse, for the Draft Plan, this part seriously undermines the credibility of the work that has gone into it. This "introduction" turns the reader off from participating further.

And for what value? A description of the area that appears in many other places sufficiently describes it for the purpose of a strategic plan.

SECTION 3 Vision and Strategic Objectives (pages 16-22)

I do not agree with the Vision Statement and Strategic Objectives nor why they should be different from the original four aims of the National Park as set up by the Scottish Government. Why not use them?

The Vision as stated while altruistic is unachievable and incredible. People affect nature and always to the detriment of nature. The natural landscape and wildlife that have developed have been preserved because of the relatively low numbers of people that live in and visit the area. This has historically been due to the time/distance from high density populations, limited local employment opportunities, limited opportunities for developers to profit, and the climate. Consequently it has been less intruded upon than other parts of the UK and developed Europe. This is changing as populations grow and people have the opportunities to travel for leisure. This is what the CNPA has to address and is one of the essential conflicts within its remit. It should be explicit on how to address them.

While the Plan by its nature is strategic and cannot cover the detail of implementation it should not contain meaningless statements.

Many of the statements in this section are unnecessary since the opposite of them are clearly stupid. Why would anyone aim for a Park "where people and nature do NOT thrive together"?

There is a need to define a "sustainable economy" and "sustainable tourism" and "sustainable development" in some detail and in one place so that they are clearly understood in the context of the Draft Plan. These statements are used liberally and are too general to be useful – so much depends on individual opinion and actual implementation as to how they impact upon one another and the overall outcome.

For example how will visitor numbers increase without impacting the natural landscape?

I suggest this section could be better utilised to envision what will the Park look and feel like in 20 – 50 years time if we continue as per the existing Plan and actions. How many visitors, what size the settlements? How will the footpaths erode the land and impact the wildlife. How is the wildness retained and will it be more like a "Park" in the more common sense of the word?

SECTION 4 (pages 23 – 56)

The most important outcomes to me are 2, 3 and 4 and I would like to see 3 enhanced to cover more species than just the "important ones."

After these, 7 and 8 are the ones I care most about.

**Question 8. Outcome 2**

The indicators are quite weak and I suggest further input is taken from experts and stakeholders to improve on them. For example, a measure of the status of "rare and threatened species". A statement on how the ecosystems are enhanced as a result of the actions taken.

**Question 9. Outcome 3.**

I agree with the Draft Plan and have nothing to add but would support input from the conservation organisations such as John Muir Trust, Scottish Wildlife Trust, RSPB etc.

**Question 10. Outcome 4.**

I agree with the Draft Plan and have nothing to add but would support further input from the conservation organisations

**Question 12. Outcome 6**

I agree with and support the Draft Plan but suggest an addition to the targets that such that no work package under this has a negative effect on the indicators and achievements of the targets and beyond for 2,3 and 4.

**Question 13. Outcome 7.**

I agree with and support the Draft Plan but suggest additional targets that all built developments are on existing developed space and that a masterplan for the Park is developed to show the type of developments needed to support the other outcomes. For example: carbon neutral developments within existing settlement boundaries maximising on local business and employment opportunities, with active transport route access. Some more detail within these indicators would be of value.

**Question 15. Outcome 9**

I think the Work Package on innovation in Affordable Housing should be given a priority since it has been identified as a high priority and challenge elsewhere and is a common theme across the Park.

**Question 16. Outcome 10**

Additional indicators and targets for this outcome should be added to ensure zero impact on Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 otherwise the "Park experience" will be seriously degraded. There should not be upgrading of routes for active transport where there has been a long tradition of travel on foot/pony through the straths. These routes should be maintained only to prevent further erosion of the impact of increased use.

Any mountain bike cluster must avoid areas identified in 2,3 and 4 and have some "barrier" areas to protect against intrusion. No new paths or part routes should be created. These targets have to be carefully considered to ensure the visitor experience remains of a high quality.



There should be indicators built into this section so that if wildness is being lost and species harmed by visitor impact action is taken early.

Question 28

I disagree with developing a new settlement at Am Camus Mor. I would prefer to see the Aviemore settlement improved upon. Before providing for any new settlements the CNPA should explicitly state what they are to provide and how they support the Plan Outcomes. If not then why not leave built developments in existing settlements to the County/Shire Councils and reduce the costs of the planning departments to the taxpayer?

I cannot see how the community and business outcomes identified earlier in this Draft Plan require the area of new developments in the Local Development Plans.

Road development is inconsistent as is, with transfer to a low carbon economy therefore why is the Draft Plan supporting it? If the Draft Plan is to include content on road networks it needs to address the low carbon economy issues and affect on the Park.

Some general comments:

I find the Draft Plan from section 4 onwards well structured and relatively easy to read and understand. Some good work has gone into developing it.

The consultation process was well publicised and relatively easy to use given the complex nature of the document.

Where I have not made specific comments I generally support the content or don't have a well formulated enough opinion to add anything and/or have just run out of time.

Thank you

## THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK PLAN 2012-20...

## Individual Participant

Question

**01****What makes the National Park Special to you?**

The wildness/wilderness experience, the sweeping views, the range of habitats and wildlife - especially the iconic birds - and the magnificent native pinewoods.

Question

**02****Do you agree with these descriptions of the special qualities?**

Yes - but Key Theme 4 is the most important: without the unique vastness of space, scale and height, the area would be just another mountain range.

Question

**03****Are there other special qualities you think should be explicitly identified in the National Park Plan?**

No - comprehensively covered.

Question

**04****Do you think the long-term outcomes should be updated and condensed? If so, how?**

No.

Question

**05****Do you agree this set of outcomes provides the right focus for the next five years? If not, what else is more important?**

Press for removal of derelict buildings and other eyesores that detract from the "special qualities". If owned by developers seeking other planning permissions, endeavour to link removal of dereliction to the other planning permission, as planning gain.

Question

**06****Which are the most important outcomes to you?**

In order of importance: 4,2,3,1,7,10,5,9,6,8.

Question

**07****Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)**

The respondent skipped this question.

Question  
**08**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

The respondent skipped this question.

Question  
**09**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

The respondent skipped this question.

Question  
**10**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

The respondent skipped this question.

Question  
**11**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

E: Inappropriate to aim for only 90% satisfaction for training and skills support. If 100% cannot be the aim, then probably better to channel funds elsewhere.

Question  
**12**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

A: The more businesses you create, the more buildings you need and so the more you diminish the "special qualities".

Question  
**13**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

The respondent skipped this question.

Question  
**14**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

The respondent skipped this question.

Question  
**15**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

The respondent skipped this question.

Question  
**16**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

The respondent skipped this question.

Question  
**17**

Do you agree with the key principle?

Yes

No

Question  
**18**

If not, why?

n/a

Question  
**19**

Do you agree with the opportunities and threats identified, if not why?

Yes.

Question  
**20**

What are the particular opportunities and threats that you think the Plan should address between 2012-17?

Address the problem of mountain bike damage on fragile habitats, especially on the plateau, where disturbance to rare birds could also be a problem.

Question  
**21**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

A: Yes: But if paths and other access become too intrusive, you destroy the basic value of the Park - its unspoilt wildness.

Question  
**22**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

A: Yes. For absolute clarity, I suggest the final sentence in the "Implications" column is changed to: This should include action towards the elimination of wildlife crime.

Question  
**23**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

A: Yes.  
B: Yes: But add a policy approach : To encourage the formation of a natural tree line.

Question  
**24**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

A: Yes.

Question  
**25**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

A: Yes.

Question  
**26**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

A: Yes.

Question  
**27**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

A: Yes.

Question  
**28**

Please start your answer with the appropriate letter, for example: A)

A: Yes - But not for An Camas Mor. A development on this scale would be inappropriate for a National Park in both size and location. Until complete - 20 years hence - the development would be "parasitic" on Aviemore's infrastructure and services.

Question  
**29**

Your comments

Response 6

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**Sent:** 22 November 2011 12:13  
**To:** Park Plan  
**Subject:** A brief comment on the Cairngorms National Park Plan  
**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Hello: I have read through with interest the Cairngorms plan on your website. I wouldn't say I have read all the fine detail of every single page, but enough to say that in general I pretty much agree with everything, and have only one comment to make, and that is a detail about the boundary.

We were very pleased when the National Park boundary was brought south to include Blair Atholl and, I believe, Killiecrankie. However, I do think that eventually it is desirable that it should also include, if not Pitlochry itself, then at least land to the north of it, including maybe Craigower, but more importantly, Ben y Vrackie. One has only to look round from the top to see that it is one of the southern 'foothills' leading to the Park.

I speak from personal interest of course. At my age I have limited stamina for long walks, but a good many times over the years I have walked straight out of the door at home, up over or near Ben y Vrackie on the way to Glen Tilt and eventually through the Lairig Ghru and on to Aviemore, with a night or two of high level camping. Wonderful and mind-healing!

### For Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012

First of all let me say that I am delighted to be part of the Cairngorms National Park. I have however reservations regarding attitudes and I would say it is now time for improvement in the way that we are all communicated with and decisions are made. There are plenty brochures and plenty e-mails going about but how about having direct village communications. It's also possible that this already exists and is not working out.

I don't know whether village community Councils should be a thing of the past. I do see that when it comes to making decisions some of the people on the councils do not reflect the thoughts of the people in the village. What then happens is people get disillusioned with these organisations and then get fed up and don't take part in further items or policy making.

Village communication. Which would look at all sorts of projects, communicate with all the village people and encourage everyone's participation no matter how much it is. Help would come from the park to fully set up a full village participation for all the villages and peoples of the Park.

At the moment I do not like the way items go ahead when there is controversy.

Let me give another communication example, the many fishing organisations and venues in the park. Now one of my fishing pals is 84 years and the difficulty we experience just finding a safe part of a river or loch bank that is easily accessible and not overgrown is amazingly problematic. So access for the elderly and disabled in all the Parks fishing areas needs to be looked at! and also toilets. The National Park might work with the Clubs and Associations as well as the tourism and Estate operators who make a living from the thousands of people who want to come to the CNP to fish.

New Builds and Renovations. I am still flabbergasted in this age of trying to save energy at some of the products and techniques that are used in local buildings. I have a small research business and have had quite a few people come to me to find out more or second opinions about particular products to looking at ways of doing things. I have come across builders who have taken architects instructions and have then just gone their own way and tried to bluff their way out. Some simple and small bits of legislation might be an idea for consideration. 1. Ban Harling altogether. 2. Suggest that let's say 20% of the outer of the building has natural stone. 3. Plumbing legislation on pipe lagging thickness with no gaps. 4. Total House design and Environmental attributes. I also would consider looking at or for a scheme that Building Companies might want to take part in a similar to the Visit Scotland Quality Assurance Scheme for local companies.

Several people I speak to who are wanting to build or get decisions made feel that everything now seems to take ages. Unlike a few years ago planning now seems to be a very protracted and time consuming process. If this is the case then this situation probably requires to be looked into as people in business will require decisions to be dealt with efficiently professionally and quickly.

Retiral facilities for Local people. When people retire in there home village it might be an idea to look at how people look at retiral and what they expect. Many are still fit and require interests to either take part in or to take up new skills which can be in sport, gardening, helping others, fishing etc. Recently I have been over in Sweden and rather than them staying on there own, there is the option to buy a retiral flat which might be in an old house or it might be a custom built building all with leisure rooms with wood working, weaving looms, candle making etc all productive activities. This wouldn't be a burden on the state as it should be fairly self sufficient. There would be a network of paths to the village through the gardens and green houses, this would facilitate people who are in motorised wheel chairs.

The CNP Authorities seem to have very worn teeth when it comes to making decisions about items that are of huge concern to many people in the park. It seems to me that the CNP dont stand up and either back these people more forcibly or make there views more widely known. Again while I was in Sweden I went to visit a wood burning power plant in a rural location that was supplying heat to over 250 houses and business. The statistics were fantastic with huge savings to the consumers. Although Sweden is self sustainable in timber this plant can burn any form of wood waste that need not be even fully dry. Why are we not looking at this form of district heating. I remember the old swimming pool in Inverness used to be heated by domestic waste. We have a river running through Carrbridge and Dulnain Bridge so why are we not looking at using power of the water to generate electricity.

I like many of the things that the CNP Authority are involved with. I find that the feedback after an event is poor or even non existent. I would like to see more joined up thinking and public feedback. I see and hear too much in the way of positive and going forwards terminology and not enough of more down to earth talking. When I ask for help I get some contacts from the person in the Park office who takes to do with what I am enquiring about and of course encouragement. Generally my enquiry leads nowhere, so what do these people actually do, it seems to me that the Authority needs to be more accountable.



## Response to the draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

### Question 1

What makes the National Park Special to you?

Above all else the unspoiled nature of the Park is important to me. The National Park Authority (and those currently living in the area) were given custodianship of an area which had, until recently, escaped the worst ravages of commercialism and development – with the exception of Aviemore and its immediate surroundings. It was a place apart. There was a unique feel to the area – a composite of the close physical and social links between the landscape and the communities within it, a slower pace of life, close knit communities and the number of people who still had close links with the land. A slow pace of population growth meant that communities had time to adapt to change and new arrivals could integrate into them without damaging the community itself. It retained its individuality because it wasn't rapidly growing or overly prosperous and wasn't forced to adapt to rapid in-migration.

The Authority's cavalier approach to promoting the area – without fully understanding the long term effects of its actions - have already degraded these qualities by allowing massive change around Aviemore and elsewhere. It has trumpeted the so called special qualities of the Park and created a major problem which it must now solve. People from across the UK want to live and work here but providing for them to do so will do severe damage to the all important 'special qualities'.

### Question 2

Do you agree with these descriptions of the special qualities?

- They describe aspects of the area in part, however the description of the National Park as "a place of 'Mountain folk' and 'Forest folk' " on page 14 is inaccurate and unsettlingly patronising. I can think of very few people in the area who would think of themselves in these terms which are strongly suggestive of an outsider's over romanticised view of the area and its people.

### Question 3

Are there other special qualities you think should be explicitly identified in the National Park Plan?

### Question 4

Do you think the long-term outcomes should be updated and condensed? If so, how?

- With the exceptions set out below, the long term outcomes should not be updated and condensed. I believe that it is critical that the members of the Park Authority and Board are forced to maintain a focus on protecting individual aspects of the Park and are held accountable for their success (or lack of it) in meeting each of these objectives, each of which is important. I am convinced that, if the objectives are condensed, reduced and made more general, it will allow important aspects of the protection of the park to drift out of focus and be conveniently ignored. Already objectives such as 6:

The built heritage of the Park will be safeguarded and new buildings will complement or enhance their setting, including the settlement pattern and character.

look laughable in the context of the high density residential developments the Authority has permitted in Aviemore. These cause great harm to their setting and make no concession to local vernacular architecture. They compare extremely unfavourably with developments in the English National Parks where developers are forced to produce buildings that truly do reflect the built heritage of their settings. Diluting the Objectives could prevent the Authority from being held accountable for this.

- The Park Authority's literature is littered with the phrase 'sustainable' (as in A Sustainable Economy) yet nowhere is the Authority's definition of this challenging and often misused term given. If the level of development the Park has permitted in Strathspey over the past five years were 'sustained' over the next five, the natural and cultural heritage which the Authority frequently applaud will continue to be significantly degraded. This cannot be 'sustainable' development as generally understood.

The repeated stress laid on economic development in the Park in the long term outcomes is presenting the Park's natural heritage as a hostage to fortune in the current economic climate. When, elsewhere in the country, people are out of work and struggling economically it is unrealistic to expect local businesses to continue to 'thrive' and local people to 'continue to have a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and employment options'. If this long term outcome is maintained, the Park's overarching responsibility of the natural heritage, will be jeopardised by ever strengthening pressure from the business community. Above all I think it ridiculous to place the burden of being 'an economic asset to the wider regional economy' on an area which should, above all else, be protected from over development. No matter how unpleasant, the Authority must face economic facts and adjust its targets accordingly if it is to avoid facing a thoroughly unpleasant reckoning in future.

#### SECTION 4 What should our focus be for 2012-2017 (pages 23-56)

##### Question 5

Do you agree the set of 10 outcomes provides the right focus for the next five years? If not, what else is more important?

- Objective 7 should be changed to: All built developments will be in keeping with the Park's environment and developers will be required to use local building materials and styles to ensure that the built environment of the park is not further diluted by high density, architecturally nondescript developments. All developments will be strictly linked to local demand within the Park and will not seek to expand the housing stock as a means to encourage inward migration.

- The Park will attempt to minimise holiday home ownership in order to maximise full time occupancy of housing within the Park area. This will include restricting housing developments to those absolutely necessary to provide low cost housing to local residents.

### **Question 6**

Which are the most important outcomes to you?

- The critical outcomes must be those that concern the protection of the Park's unique environment. This must be at the core of everything the Authority does. I am deeply proud of the culture and heritage of Strathspey and understand the need for a sustainable local economy. Communities all across Scotland, however, have histories and cultures in every way as interesting as those inside the Park. What really gives the Park meaning, and justifies its existence, is its landscape and environment. The Park Board's seeming inability to stand up to development interests seems to me to be the biggest threat the Park faces.

### **Question 17**

Do you agree with the key principle on page 58?

### **Question 18**

If not, why?

- In general this would appear to be a sensible land use principle; however I would like to see the wording of the last sentence strengthened to reinforce the vital importance of the Park's first aim, e.g.: '...with the priority always being to protect and enhance the natural environment and cultural health of the area.' Referring only to the special qualities is too vague.

### **Question 20**

What are the particular opportunities and threats that you think the Plan should address between 2012-2017?

#### **Mountain, moor and heathland**

- Mountain, moor and heathland section should recognise the carbon emissions resulting from the practice of muirburn as a weakness and the opportunities presented by management techniques using minimum persecution of predators.
- Hill tracks in the hills must be specifically identified as both a weakness and new tracks as a threat to the wild qualities of the hills. The removal of hill tracks wherever possible should also be identified as an opportunity.
- Use of the mountains by increasing numbers of walkers must be identified as a key threat which must be monitored and managed. It must be recognised that even sensitively constructed manmade footpaths are still an intrusion into the wild qualities of the area and that the cycle of footpath erosion followed by remediation and artificial footpath construction is gradually leading to the 'Lake Districtisation' of the Cairngorms where artfully constructed paths lead to every peak and corrie.

### **Towns and villages**

- The towns and villages section must recognise both the weakness and the significant threat presented by second home ownership and its impact on the availability of properties for full time occupancy, on local services and on local culture and heritage. It is astonishing, and a matter of great concern, that the Park Authority does not once mention this key contributing factor to problems with the availability of affordable housing for local people and the pressure to create new and damaging housing developments.
- An unsustainable level of in-migration, in part triggered by the Authority's own activities, is itself a major threat given that those moving into the area frequently have the economic advantage over local people when it comes to purchasing properties. The impetus towards unsustainable settlement growth which this creates is potentially the single most important threat facing the Park, and one which has already had a significantly detrimental effect upon the natural, cultural and scenic heritage in the area.
- Given the necessity to reduce carbon which the plan recognises, the fact that many local people commute long distances into work should be recognised as both a weakness and a threat, and the potential for initiating and supporting lift / car sharing networks as an opportunity in addition to fostering public transport links.
- Innovative waste reduction schemes / social enterprises (Moray Waste Busters, Buckie Green Home, and Inverness Freecycle are successful and relatively local examples) have the potential to build community resilience during a potentially extremely difficult economic period.

### **Question 21**

- The policy direction stated as 'Promote new approaches to enhancing accessibility to the special landscape qualities for all,' has the potential to conflict with the Park's first aim and should be modified to include: ...'where these do not conflict with the Park's first aim.'

### **Question 25**

- Helping communities to adapt to a low carbon economy is at odds with the Park encouraging a dramatic expansion of communities in a relatively remote area and suggests a fundamental lack of joined up thinking. Encouraging such development in an area with few employment opportunities and a harsh winter climate will inevitably lead to a dramatic increase in carbon dependence as residents heat their homes and commute to work. This said, the following would be an important addition to this Policy direction:
- "Initiate and promote community initiatives to reduce carbon dependence and enhance community resilience to climate change. These could be in areas such as waste reduction, resource sharing, insulation, the development of renewable microgeneration etc., where these do not conflict with the Park's first aim.

[Ref the CNP Park Plan 2012 – 2017 Meeting on Monday the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011](#)

The Greek PM could not have timed his proposed Euro Referendum better to highlight to the EU and CNPA Board that the Eurozone crisis is going to have a profound impact on a global basis, including the 'economy of the CNP' over the period 2012 – 2017, and beyond.

The implication's of this crisis means that the CNPA Board must encapsulate a flexible economic plan within the CNP Park Plan 2012 – 2017, and advise the Park's local communities accordingly.

Since this meeting, several members of the community who attended this meeting have complimented me on the; economic issues I raised, and proposals for, a suitable way ahead.

It appears that the economy of the Park is on all of their minds.

[Feedback on the Meeting](#)

- In my opinion, the 'Your View' brochure and 'Local Plan Outcomes' and 'Local Development Plan (Main Issues) Options' leaflets which were handed out at this meeting, do not adequately focus on, or address:
  - The economic reality in the Park over the past 3 years and/or the Parks economy over the next 5 years (2012 – 2017), and beyond.
  - The Parks 4<sup>th</sup> Aim; the sustainable development of the Park's economy.
  - The 'essential' retention of existing jobs.
  - The 'much needed' creation of new jobs.
- There needs to be a CNPA economic reality check, plus:
  - Issue of a new CNPA Glossy CNPA Economic Plan Brochure for 2012 - 2017, which focuses on the Eurozone crisis, and its potential impact upon CNP, existing jobs and the creation of new jobs.
  - Prioritisation of Park key economic issues and initiatives.
  - As a top priority, economic initiatives and a new economic policy to maximise the Park's economic impact on the Park's 'local and wider' economy.
  - In the event that there is an economic downturn in the Park, as a top priority, the CNPA needs to be operationally ready and have an economic policy to facilitate the reduction of any emergence of poverty in the Park.
  - A fit for purpose economic financial & planning strategy.
  - In all things that the CNPA does, and throughout the CNPA delivery chain, an economic policy to maximise and deliver Value for Money.
- A 5 year CNP amnesty on planning issues, to assist members of local Park communities and builders to take advantage of all building opportunities.
- Cut red tape to eliminate 'Regulatory Fatigue' encountered by Park small businesses and local communities.
- Have a CNP initiative to encapsulate some of the SNP Government's Manifesto 2011 Rural Economy commitments into the Park Plan.
- Monitor the number of Planning Application's, to ensure that if there is any future reduction in Park Planning Applications, such a reduction does not result in a lack of work or loss of jobs.

[Lady Attending the Meeting Seeking Advice](#)

After the meeting I was approached by a lady ref advice on Section 75 Agreements (of which I have no experience) and how to get past them. If I understood correctly:

- She lived in a property on a 23 acre site which she owned.

- She wanted to build a house for an elderly aunt.
- I am under the impression that the CNPA has already advised her re the requirement for a Section 75 Agreement
- I advised she first speak to Ronnie Laing, the CNPA, Andrew McCracken.
- If necessary to attend one of Fergus Ewing's MSP constituency clinics.

Notes:

- This may well be an example of an opportunity for a local builder to keep his work-force employed during this recession.
- Under the present economic circumstances, a CNPA Park Plan 2012 – 2017 Planning Amnesty would be a sensible course of action.
- It is not in the Park's economic or long term interest, that members of Park communities have to resort to the tactic of attending their constituency MSP clinics, to gain planning permission.

Self Employed Provision for 16+ year olds and Long Term Unemployed

Please note the First attachment in which Fergus Ewing my constituency MSP has emailed the Minister for Environment in Scotland supporting vote for 16 year olds in the CNP.

A suggest that there is a need throughout the Highland's, and especially in the CNP, for the Government and Park to evolve new initiatives re Self Employment provision for 16+ year olds, and the long term unemployed:

- This Self Employed policy should be 'easy for individuals to administer' and not be in conflict with receipt of financial welfare benefits.
- I suggest that for innovative reasons which do not breach employment law, that there may well be advantages in having a separate 'male and female' desk.
- Possible Scottish Education Self Employed module's; NVQ, GCE 'O' & 'H' level, to introduce young people to self employed concept, at an early age.
- Seek Scottish Government assistance for young self employed + incentives.
- Be eligible for subsidised membership to professional bodies and organisations.
- Involve Scholarships, Apprenticeships & Internships.
- Encourage large and small businesses (who may need an extra pair of hands, but fear any incidences of employment tribunals) to take on Self Employed staff, even on a one or two day basis – the person concerned may get 5 x 1 day employment.
- Notes:
  - Unemployed young people are suffering throughout the Middle East, EU, Scotland and the CNP.
  - It is time to address this problem in the Park, and for the CNPA to do their bit.
  - If young people are unemployed and without hope, they will probably work on the black market, whilst still claiming benefits.
  - Become and ever increasing social and welfare problem, in conflict with the Park, all at great cost to the public purse.
  - Become disillusioned members of a wasted Park generation.

When I was in the Grantown-on-Spey Council Point building recently, comment was made that the Highland Council was desperate for some 4 bed roomed affordable houses.

Having spoken with a local builder recently on the subject of affordable houses, I understand that the total cost of building an affordable 2 or 3 bed roomed house is in the region of £140K to £150K providing that:

- The plot of the land only costs £40K.
- The cost of actual building is somewhere between £100K to £110K.

This indicates that if there is a requirement for 4 bed roomed houses:

- A larger and more expensive plot of land is required.
- The costs of building a larger property will also increase.
- Possibly raising the basic cost for a 4 bed roomed affordable house in the CNP to somewhere between £180K to £200K.
- There may be a need for the CNPA to ascertain if there is a requirement for 4 bed roomed affordable houses throughout the Park.
- **Under the terms of Human Rights Act and 'Proportionality' there may well be a requirement for the CNPA to ensure that there is a commensurate number of 4 bed roomed affordable houses built in all new affordable housing developments.**

I suspect that there may be a variety of reasons that some people require a 4 bed roomed affordable house. For example; the ongoing costs of care of the elderly may well result in families looking after their parents (and children who are unemployed or who can not afford a house) for longer periods of time, thus requiring 4 bed roomed houses.

I suggest that if the CNPA can ascertain if there is an ongoing requirement for 4 bed roomed affordable houses in the Park, that the CNPA should possibly look at the viability of a family long home, which:

- Has an adjoining door between a 3 bed roomed affordable house connecting to a single end flat with its own cooking facilities.
- As required, a property of this nature could be more versatile for the Park's future affordable housing requirements.

Eurozone Financial Stability - First Ministers Referendum Plans

Over this past week it has become clear that the financial crisis throughout the Eurozone means that there are many years of painful austerity ahead.

In addition, the First Ministers has plans for a referendum; indicate that Scotland may well experience profound changes over the next decade.

It is important that the Draft CNP Plan 2012 – 2017 takes these two issues into serious consideration, for the CNP Draft Plans will involve ‘public finance’ and have considerable socio-economic implications, at a time when many members of local communities in the Park are financially struggling.

I also suggest that there is an urgent need for the CNP to ensure that future Park initiatives (like developer contributions); do not have any adverse financial impact upon Park communities for the period 2012 – 2017.

Background Feedback Information

When the Park was first created, most people living in the Cairngorms National Park felt that they were in a privileged position to live and work in the Park, and did not anticipate the red tape and other restrictions that would be imposed upon them.

As a result, I am aware of colleagues who are now suffering from regulatory fatigue, and/or who have becoming increasingly disenchanted with the CNPA.

I feel this situation highlights that some members of the Park’s communities in ‘Human Rights terms’ have become ‘Marginalized people in Scotland’ (Please see the First attachment Para Phase One line 11).

For this reason, it would be ideal if the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) Mapping Project team were to be invited by the CNPA Board to scrutinize the CNPA planning and impact assessment procedures in conjunction with the ‘Consultation on the Draft CNP Plan for 2012 – 2017. Note:

- Phase Two of the SHRC Mapping Project ends in December 2011 – which does not leave a lot of time for the CNPA to make a contribution to this important project.
- Please see the Third attachment, in which the SHRC Policy Officer Diego Quiroz outlines that:

*This research project will run until 2012 and will provide the evidence base for the development of the National Action Plan for Human Rights; inform the Commission’s future strategic priorities; and contribute to UN treaty review of human rights instruments.*

Note: It is possible that my proposed scrutiny by the SHRC of the ‘Consultation on the Draft CNP Plan for 2012 – 2017, could be to the long term benefit of National Parks throughout the EU and UK.

Whilst I have previously provided feedback to the CNPA (to Claire Ross & Alison Lax) on human rights and planning issues. I remain concerned that the democratically elected Scottish Governments SNP Manifesto 2011 Rural Agenda commitments will not be adequately absorbed into the CNPA Rural Agenda.

This means that whilst others in the Highlands and Islands will gain the benefit of the SNP Government’s Rural Agenda, the same democratic entitlements for those living in the Park may not be available. This effectively means that communities in the Park in human rights terms will/may be marginalized.

In addition, and as Fergus Ewing my constituency MSP outlined in the following extract from his Strathspey & Badenoch Herald article titled ‘Time for Park to listen to the people’ dated 28/09/2011 reference unelected CNPA Board Members being involved in the CNPA Planning process. Once again communities in the Park are arguably being marginalized.



- *More and more constituents advise me that every other planning authority is elected - but the national parks authorities are mostly unelected. That is a democratic deficit which is being felt ever more keenly.*

It is democratically unacceptable under human rights legislation, and for marginalisation reasons, that the 14 unelected CNPA Board Members of the 19 CNPA Member Board:

- Can make decisions which take precedence over the democratically elected SNP Scottish Government policy, without independent scrutiny by agencies like the SHRC.
- Via the Cairngorms National Park Authority Standing Orders Adopted 15/10/2010, that un-elected CNPA Board Members can direct that democratically elected CNPA Board Members; must therefore either accept (and support) the collective decision of the Board or resign.

*(Note: I have also submitted a Respondents information form dated 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011 ref this issue).*

#### The Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006

The Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006 document outlines under General Functions Para 2 General duty to promote human rights Sub Para (1), quote:

- *The Commission's general duty is, through the exercise of its functions under this Act, to promote human rights and, in particular, to encourage best practice in relation to human rights.*
- This indicates that people in the Park should not be marginalized, in any way.

#### Human Rights & Democratic Accountability in the Cairngorm National Park

The international relationship between Human Rights and Democracy is an important one, be it that it is far easier to implement Human Rights in a democratic environment and country like Scotland, than in some countries that practice alternative forms of Government.

Fortunately, the electorate and everyone else in Scotland are able to effectively enjoy the rights and protections provided by the ECHR (and monitored by the SHRC), all of which should be fairly and evenly embedded into the culture and fabric of the CNP (and LLTNP).

- No one in the Park should be marginalized, without adequate public examination, explanation and possibly alternative options, especially when it involves planning.

#### Scottish Elections 2011 – Park SNP Constituency & Regional MSP's – Economic Downturn & Delivery of Electorates Expectations

The resounding Scottish General Parliamentary Elections 2011 electoral success of the SNP in the CNP, which touches on 7 Constituency and 3 Regions, means that all 7 constituency and 5 of the 21 Regional List MSP's are all members of the SNP.

The "Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park" (LLTNP) also returned 3 SNP MSP's out of its 4 Constituency MSP's.

I suggest that this indicates that there is a democratic requirement for the CNPA (and LLTNPA) Board to deliver the democratic economic and social expectations of the Park's SNP electorate, whilst also balancing the aspirations of both of the Park's wildlife and natural history organisations.

- I suggest that the format of the Scottish Human Rights Commission Human Rights Impact Assessment: Review of Practice and Guidance for Future Assessments (see Fourth attachment) HRIA's, would help to deliver the electorate's expectations.

*(Note: I have already submitted a Respondents Information Form on SHRC HIRA's).*

## Cairngorms National Park Authority Election 2011 Results & Scottish Elections Results 2011 – National Balance of Democracy

Whilst the CNPA place great emphasis on the CNPA election results securing local democratic accountability, which in the 2011 CNPA elections involved a total of 4,313 voters from 4 of the 5 CNP Wards (CNP Ward 2 elected unopposed), where does the ‘fair’ balance lie between “local and national democratic accountability and the delivery” of:

- The SNP Government’s manifesto commitments and rural agenda?
- Human Rights in the CNP (and LLTNP)?

## Balancing the Cairngorms National Park Culture Democracy & Human Rights

Since its creation, I am not alone in thinking that the CNPA has been in a partial state of denial over some aspects of the Park and Scotland’s wider electorates Human Rights ‘entitlements’, and has evolved an inadequate regulatory temporary fix type of culture, which does not ‘equally balance or deliver’ the disparate needs of:

- Those agencies, groups and individuals who have a passion for the environment and conservation of the Park’s wildlife and natural heritage.
- Who run small businesses and/or work and live in the Park but feel that their Human Rights are not being sufficiently promoted.

In my submission to the Scottish “National Parks Strategic Review in 2008”, and in subsequent correspondence to the CNPA, I have highlighted that to my knowledge there is no mention of Human Rights on the CNPA web site, or in Park Plan challenges and subsequent Reporters inquiries and objectors documents.

Since 2006 I have also experienced and/or understand that:

- Possibly due to a lack of ‘in house’ awareness and understanding and specialist knowledge, what I consider to be a lack of corporate willingness by the CNPA to; seek Human Rights legal advice, or even to have any form of legal representation at planning meetings.

There has been a general inability and reluctance by the CNPA to adequately deal with a variety of questions which I and others have raised (at CNPA meetings and in feedback documents) on Human Rights issues

In an attempt to help friends and make a contribution to the Park, I have attended several CNPA public meetings, during which I felt that the CNPA did not adequately deal with questions from the floor ref a variety of planning and affordable housing issues, some of which I believe had human rights implications (i.e. private property).

I am also aware that some local businesses and members of communities are becoming increasingly aware that public authorities should bear human rights principles in mind when making decision's, and over the past year have pressed the CNPA to provide the public with guidance on human rights issues in the Park

### SHRC Mapping Human Rights in Scotland Major Research Project

As the CNPA have responsibilities for over 17,000 people in the Cairngorms National Park, it is in the interests of all concerned that the CNPA make a positive contribution to the SHRC ref 'Mapping Human Rights in Scotland Phase 2 (February 2011 to December 2011 – please see First Attachment), especially as the CNPA did not made any contribution to Phase 1 (March 2010 to March 2011 – I understand that 185 agencies provided feedback to Phase 1) of this important SHRC major research project.

For further information of the SHRC Mapping Project please also see the Fourth and Fifth attachments (titled Enclosure 2 and Enclosure 3), and the Sixth attachment – please note the Para on "Access to Justice (Article 9)" and the following extract from it, which in light of environmental challenges (An Camus Mor) against the CNPA, which makes interesting reading, and which in the future may increasingly become important ref issues like windfarms:

- Unfortunately advocates of environmental **justice** believe that these provisions on **access** to **justice** are insufficient and as a result community groups and individual campaigners will still find it hard to initiate and win environmental cases in the courts. On the other hand, environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) use their expertise and financial resources to play the odds and win environmental cases; however, this has often been done through the use of the Human Rights Act rather than the **Aarhus Convention**.
- I noted at the time when the Reporters gave their initial presentation to Park Plan objectors in the Coylumbridge Hotel ref the previous Park Plan, that there was no mention in any of the documentation provided to objectors or referred to, ref Human Rights in the objection process. This indicates to me that the present CNPA planning process may be seriously flawed.

Bearing in mind that the Park's 4<sup>th</sup> Aim is: *To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities*. I feel that it is essential that the CNPA should be compelled to make a contribution to this SHRC major research project. For as the SHRC Scientific Officer Dr Alison Hosie has outlined in her email (please see Second Attachment), this project will research 'in-depth' the following issues, all of which have a direct impact upon the Park:

- Wider socio-economic situation in Scotland.
- Impact of an aging population.

- Environment & climate justice.
- CPO's (Compulsory Purchase Orders).
- Planning Decisions & Evictions.
- Accessibility and adequacy of services for those living in rural areas.

[SHRC Human Rights Impact Assessments - Review of Practice and Guidance for Future Assessments](#)

I also feel that it is highly desirable that the CNPA evaluate the SHRC recommendations on the use of 'integrated' Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIA's), as outlined in the SHRC Human Rights Impact Assessments document titled 'Review of Practice and Guidance for Future Assessments' dated 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010 (see Third Attachment).

The EU commission has also adopted a model Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), which may be appropriate for use in the Park.

This may help to ensure that future CNPA planning, methodologies and HRIA's are more user friendly, appropriate and/or cost effective, and comply with the SHRC guidance and best practice recommendations for future EU and UK Impact Assessments, whilst also encompassing the 'reasonable' aspirations of Scotland's wildlife and natural history organisation's.

Please note that in this SHRC HRIA's document (see Third Attachment):

- The 'Forward' highlights that:

*Although HRIA's can be an important tool for improving policy making processes, a poor HRIA may become little more than a tick box exercise with limited impact on the human rights of the most vulnerable or disadvantaged.*

- Under 'Recommendations on Specific Forms of Human Rights Impact Assessment' (on Page 9 shown as Screen 18 of 226 on my desktop) HRIA's involve:
  - Equality and human rights.
  - Health and human rights.
  - Business and human rights.
  - [Environment and Human Rights:](#)

*Organisations planning integrated environmental and human rights impact assessments should ensure that there is sufficient human rights expertise in the assessment team and that human rights are not marginalised in the assessment process.*

