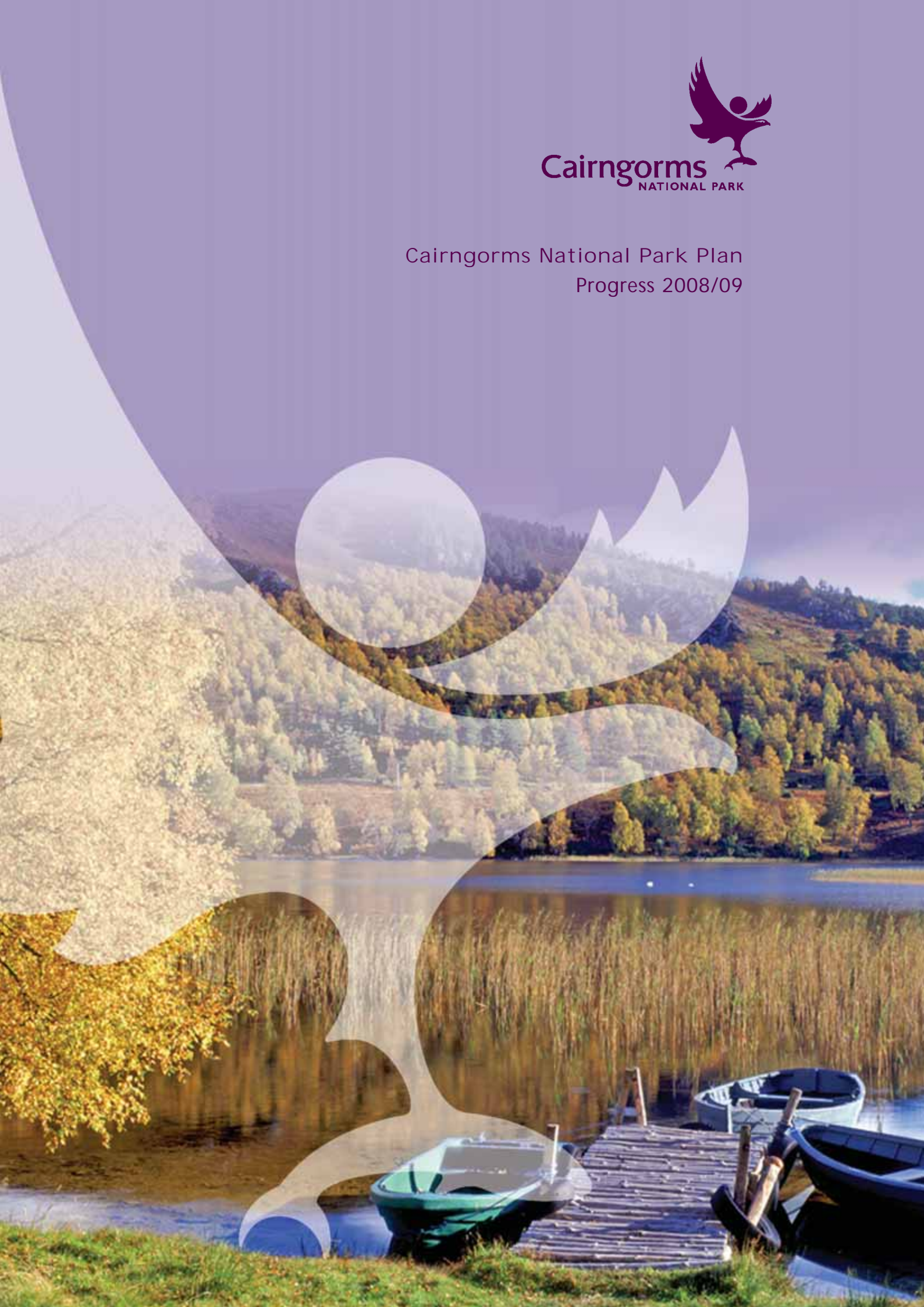




Cairngorms National Park Plan  
Progress 2008/09





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[www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)

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Front cover photo: Loch Pityoulish © David Gowans

## The range of partners who helped implement the Cairngorms National Park Plan during 2008-2009.

- Aberdeenshire Council
- Aberdeenshire Rural Housing Enabler
- Angus Council
- Association of Cairngorms Communities and all the Community Councils and Community Associations in the National Park
- Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisation
- British Geological Survey
- Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce
- Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group
- Cairngorms Farmers Market
- Cairngorms Hostels
- Cairngorms LEADER
- Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan Project
- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Cairngorms Water Vole Project
- Creative Cairngorms
- Crofters Commission
- Dee Catchment Management Partnership
- Deer Commission Scotland
- Deer Management Groups in the Cairngorms
- Forest Research Services
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Highland and Moray House Builders
- Highland Council
- Highland Foundation for Wildlife
- Highland Housing Alliance
- Highland Small Communities Housing Trust
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Historic Scotland
- Homes for Scotland
- John Muir Trust
- Lantra Scotland
- Macaulay Institute
- Moray Council
- National Farmers Union Scotland
- National Trust for Scotland
- North East Mountain Trust
- North East Scotland Biological Records Centre
- Royal Commission on Ancient & Historic Monuments Scotland
- Royal Deeside Destination Management Organisation
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
- Scottish Government Housing and Regeneration Directorate
- Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
- Scottish Water
- SportScotland
- The Cairngorms National Park Advisory Forums
- The estates, farmers and other land managers in the Cairngorms National Park - in particular, Alvie & Dalraddy, Balmoral, The Crown Estate Glenlivet, Glen Feshie, Kinveachy, Lynaberack, Mar Lodge and Rothiemurchus estates, and those estates who are part of the Caenlochan Glen Section 7 Control Agreement
- The Heather Trust
- UHI Millennium Institute
- VisitScotland
- Wild Scotland

## Contents

Cairngorms National Park map	
List of partners	1
Foreword	3
Introduction	4
The Cairngorms National Park Plan and the Progress Report 2008/09	5
Progress in 2008/09	6-7
Cairngorms National Park Plan 'Health Check' 2009	8-9
Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes	10-11
Integrating Public Support for Land Management	12-13
Supporting Sustainable Deer Management	14-15
Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access	16-17
Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable	18-19
Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable	20-21
Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park	22-23



## Foreword

We are now two years into the delivery of this National Park Plan and I think this progress report demonstrates the achievements that are being made across all its priorities for action. There are many good examples of progress in this report, but I am particularly pleased that young people continue to be closely involved in enjoying and finding out more about the Cairngorms National Park, both through practical activities and through links with the Curriculum for Excellence. I'm also delighted that so many diverse partners have helped to develop the Cairngorms Wildcat Project to safeguard one of Scotland's and the Cairngorm's most iconic species in what is the only project of its kind in the UK.

As we approach the mid-point of this National Park Plan's five-year term, it is a good time to take stock of progress so far, our expectations of future work, and the challenges that we are likely to face over the next two to three years.

The changing national and global economic conditions we have all experienced over 2008 and 2009 will have impacts on the National Park. This has already affected the construction and house building industry and is likely to affect future development of affordable housing. The public sector is entering a period of more constrained spending and this will influence how we continue to deliver the National Park Plan. There are also opportunities from new national priorities such as Scotland's recent statutory target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 42 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050.

These are some of the reasons why the Cairngorms National Park Authority is co-ordinating a National Park Plan 'Health-Check' over the summer of 2009. We want to make sure that we can collectively respond to these challenges, and ensure that we tailor our work over the next two years to ensure the continued delivery of this National Park Plan's priorities for action and their contribution to the Scottish Government's National Outcomes.



David Green/Daibhidh Green  
Convener/Neach-gairm

Cairngorms National Park Authority  
Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh

## Facal-toisich

Tha sinn air Plana a' Phàirc Nàiseanta a' libhrigeadh airson dà bhliadhna a-nis agus tha mi a' smaointinn gu bheil an aithisg adhartais seo a' sealltainn na chaidh a' dhèanamh. Tha gu leòr eisimpleirean air an adhartas a rinn sinn san aithisg seo ach tha mi gu sònraichte toilichte fhaicinn gu bheil daoine òga fhathast a' sàs ann a bhith a' faighinn a-mach mun Phàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh agus tlachd fhaighinn bho cur-seachadan prataigeach agus tro ceanglaichean leis an Curriculum for Excellence. Tha mi cuideachd toilichte gun robh mòran bhuidhnean eile air cuideachadh a thoirt dhuinn leis am Pròiseact Cat-Fiadhaich a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh a' leasachadh gus an gnè ainmeil seo a' dhìon.

Tha sinn air leth ar slighe gus am plana còig bliadhna a' Phàirc Nàiseanta a' choileanadh agus 'se deagh àm a th'ann sùil a thoirt air an adhartas a rinn sinn mu thràth, na tha sinn an dùil a dhèanamh agus na dùbhlain a tha romhainn thairis air na bliadhnaichean a tha ri tighinn.

Bheir na h-atharraichean anns an t-suidheachadh eaconomach nàiseanta agus eadar-nàiseanta a tha sinn air fhaireachdainn ann an 2008 agus 2009, buaidh air a' Phàirc Nàiseanta. Tha seo air gnìomhachasan togail a' bhualadh agus tha a h-uile coltas ann gum bi leasaichean togail eile air am bualadh cuideachd. Bi bacadh air cus airgead ga chosg leis an roinn phoblach agus bheir seo buaidh air mar is urrainn dhuinn am plana a' Phàirc Nàiseanta a' choileanadh. Agus, tha cothroman ùra a nochdadh gu nàiseanta mar an targaid reachdail gus gasan a' lughdachadh gu 42% ro 2020 agus 80% ro 2050.

Seo dìreach feadhainn de na h-adhbharan a tha Ùghdarras am Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh air an aithisg seo a chuir ri chèile thairis an t-Samhradh 2009. Tha sinn airson dèanamh cinnteach gun urrainn dhuinn freagairt fhaighinn air na dùbhlain seo agus gun urrainn dhuinn an obair a tha ri dhèanamh, a dhèanamh thairis air an ath dà bhliadhna agus Plana am Pàirc Nàiseanta a' choileanadh agus gun cuir e ri builean Nàiseanta Riaghaltas na h-Alba.



# Introduction



Castle Roy

The Cairngorms National Park Plan was developed to co-ordinate and prioritise the additional, different or special management needs of the Cairngorms National Park. It was approved by the Scottish Executive in March 2007 and is the blueprint for how the Cairngorms National Park will be managed over the next 25 years.

The Cairngorms National Park Plan was prepared by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) in partnership with all those groups, organisations and individuals already managing the Park. It sets out the long-term vision (25 years) for the Park and the priorities for action for the first five years of the Plan from 2007–2012.



Inshriach birch

## The Vision

**Imagine a world class National Park.**

An outstanding environment in which the natural and cultural resources are cared for by the people who live there and visit; a renowned international destination with fantastic opportunities for all to enjoy its special places; an exemplar of sustainable development showing how people and place thrive together. A National Park that makes a significant contribution to our local, regional and national identity.

This is our vision for the Cairngorms National Park in 2030.



Mountain hare

# The Cairngorms National Park Plan and the Progress Report 2008/09

The Cairngorms National Park was designated in 2003 because it was recognised that it was a special place that should be managed differently to make the most of its special qualities. The Cairngorms National Park Plan was prepared to co-ordinate and prioritise the additional, different or special management needs of the Park. The Park Plan is implemented by a wide range of partners from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

This second annual progress report for the Cairngorms National Park Plan has been prepared by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) on behalf of all the partners who implement it. It summarises what has been achieved for the Park Plan's seven priorities for action in its second year, where we think we are in delivering the Plan's five-year outcomes, and highlights future work and milestones.

This report is about the achievements that have been made by all the partners in delivering the Park Plan's seven priorities for action over the past year.

The day to day management of the Cairngorms National Park continues to be carried out by the organisations, land managers, businesses, communities and individuals who did so before the area became a National Park. Many of them also deliver services, manage and contribute to the Park's special qualities in ways that the Cairngorms National Park Plan does not need to prioritise or co-ordinate. Their work remains vital to the Cairngorms National Park's success.

This report is an update on progress with delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Plan across its seven priorities for action (see box below) and the report has a section

dedicated to each. We have reported the achievements in 2008/09 as well as highlighting the milestones we expect during 2009/10. Each priority also incorporates one or two case studies to illustrate the range of achievements and activities in more depth.

During the 2008/09 year the partners made significant progress in delivering the National Park Plan. We know this because we have been monitoring progress in delivering actions set out in the Park Plan and the five-year outcomes for each priority for action. This monitoring is reported to the Cairngorms National Park Authority Board every four months to provide regular updates. These progress reports can be viewed on the Cairngorms National Park Authority's website ([www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)).

## The seven Priorities for Action for 2007–2012 are:

- Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes
- Integrating Public Support for Land Management
- Supporting Sustainable Deer Management
- Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access
- Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable
- Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable
- Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park

# Progress in 2008/09



The National Park Plan's five-year outcomes are monitored to provide a simple guide to progress. We use a simple classification that explains the likelihood of each outcome being achieved by 2012. The assessment of progress is made by the CNPA through consultation with the main partners involved in each priority for action. It is based on a combination of the progress in delivering the Park Plan's actions; any information available on indicators or other data; and any other relevant information available to the programme manager. The classes are described below:

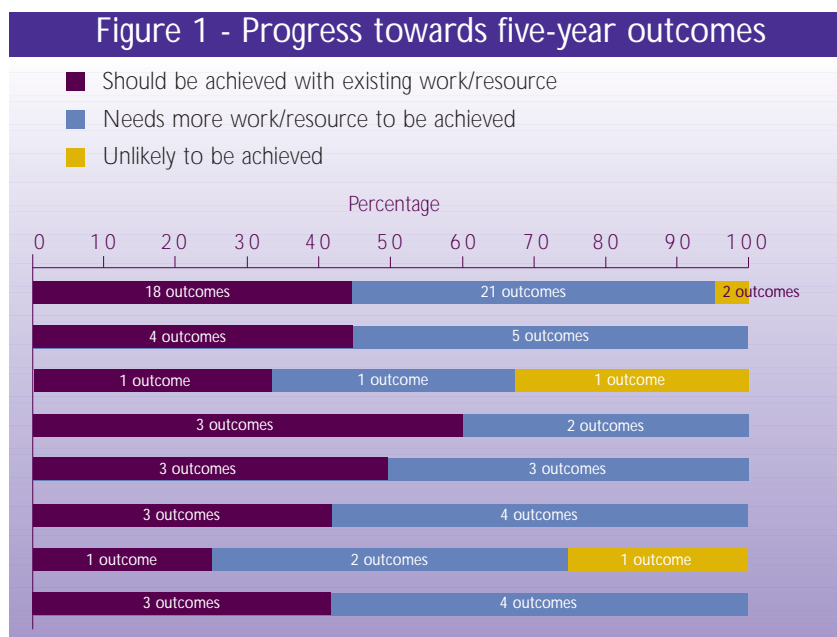
- 1 Outcome will not be achieved
- 2 Outcome unlikely to be achieved
- 3 Outcome needs more work/resource to be achieved
- 4 Outcome should be achieved with existing work/resource
- 5 Outcome has been achieved

Figure 1 shows the assessment of progress in delivering the National Park Plan's outcomes at May 2009. The CNPA estimates that nearly 45 per cent of the five-year outcomes will be achieved by 2012 with existing work and resources, but that around 55 per cent of outcomes will require more work and/or resources to be achieved by 2012. None of the outcomes have been fully achieved yet.

Two outcomes, linked to public support for land management delivering public benefits, and the gap between those in housing need and supply of affordable housing, are

considered unlikely to be achievable by 2012 given current economic conditions and delivery mechanisms. The first outcome relates to the targeting of land management support to deliver specific priorities within the National Park, which current mechanisms are only partially delivering. The second outcome (linked to the supply of housing for those in need), has been influenced by the economic downturn and particularly by the constraints on availability of credit to fund developments.

Figure 1 - Progress towards five-year outcomes



Priorities for Action

- All National Park Plan Five-Year Outcomes
- Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes
- Integrating Public Support for Land Management
- Supporting Sustainable Deer Management
- Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access
- Making Tourism and Business more Sustainable
- Making Housing more Affordable and Sustainable
- Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park





Highland pony

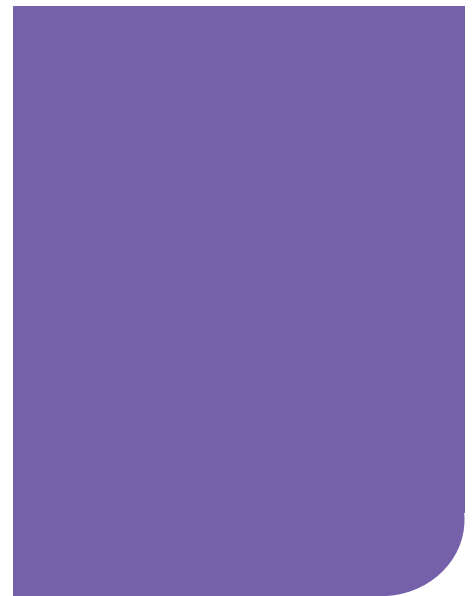


Figure 1 shows that the partners' work and effort over the first two years of the Plan is leading to progress. The outcomes set out in the National Park Plan are ambitious, and many are on track to be delivered by 2012. The more detailed lists of achievements and case studies for each priority for action show that the National Park and the people who live in, work in, visit, enjoy, and learn from it are benefitting from that work.

It also shows that we cannot be complacent about the effort required over the next three years. The two outcomes that we think are unlikely to be achieved by 2012 may still be achieved by then if additional or alternative approaches can be pursued, or on a longer timescale. We also think that more than 50 per cent of the remaining outcomes need more work and resources to be achieved by 2012. This presents us all with a challenge as wider economic conditions are likely to constrain private and public sector funding over this period.

Finally, given the challenges we know are facing us, it should help us to reflect on what outcomes are most important, whether we need to tackle some in different ways, and how we can continue to make better use of our resources up to and beyond 2012. This is the stimulus for the mid-term 'health check' of delivery that the CNPA will co-ordinate on behalf of the partners during 2009.



Glen Banchor

# Cairngorms National Park Plan 'Health Check' 2009



This annual progress report on the National Park Plan comes at the end of the second year of implementation. This is a significant point in the Park Plan's cycle for two reasons.

First, we will soon be half way through the five-year delivery period, and need to consider how to make the most of the second half. This means taking stock of delivery, looking at where we are doing well and where we are not doing so well, assessing our resources, and making sure we are doing as much as possible over 2010-12 to deliver the Park Plan's outcomes.

This may mean doing more work, or doing things differently in the future. It may also mean we need to re-prioritise some work, or accept that there will be areas we won't have the resources to tackle as well as we would like.

Second, by the time we produce another annual progress report in 2010, we will be starting work to prepare the next five-year National Park Plan. This means that we will need to have identified the information that is most relevant and useful to both assess the performance of this Plan and set the context for an even more effective one from 2012.

Much of this work has been ongoing since the production of the last State of the Park report in 2006. We already have access to more accurate and more comprehensive information about many of the resources in the Park as well as pressures on it. However, the next State of the Park report needs to focus on the information that is most useful and most helpful.





Climbing Coire an t-Sneachda

For those reasons, the CNPA will coordinate a National Park Plan delivery 'Health-Check' over the summer of 2009. It will not be a review of the Park Plan itself but will focus on delivery of the Park Plan, the work needed, and resources required or available over the remaining years to achieve its outcomes.

It will also look at the information currently available that can tell us how we are doing, whether it is good enough, or whether we can get better information to inform this Park Plan and the next one. The review of information will inform research priorities for the National Park leading

up to the next State of the Park Report and National Park Plan from 2012.

The 'Health-Check' will be carried out with partners through the existing priority for action delivery teams and established advice forums. Its findings and implications will be reported to the CNPA Board in the autumn of 2009. All partners should use the opportunity to review their own and our collective contributions to delivering the National Park Plan over the past two years, and the commitment needed for the next three.



Red squirrel



Starry saxifrage



# Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes



This priority for action is intended to ensure that the important geology, wildlife, habitats, diverse landscapes and human history of the Cairngorms National Park are at least maintained and wherever possible strengthened. It recognises that many of these features are important because of the way people have lived and managed the land in the past, and that current and future management holds the key to their continued health.

Surveys were established in 2007/08 or continued into 2008/09 for wildcat; twinflower; inbye semi-natural grasslands; wetlands; riparian woodlands; Arctostaphylos heath; and aspen woodland in Strathspey.

Projects to undertake active management were established in 2007/08 or continued in 2008/09 for: water vole; capercaillie; black grouse; red squirrel; wildcat; semi-natural grasslands; native woodlands; water bodies/water courses; non-native plants; pine hoverfly; freshwater pearl mussels; wetland restoration; goldeneye; mink; grey squirrel; and twinflower.

## Achievements during 2008/09

- A Cairngorms National Park Biological Recording System was being developed by the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre to collate and make available biological records
- Launch of the Cairngorms Wildcat Project – a flagship project to help conserve and raise awareness of this nationally important species
- Study undertaken into the feasibility for riparian woodland planting as part of the River Dee catchment management
- Conference hosted by RSPB and CNPA on the current status of capercaillie and work needed to assist population recovery
- Capercaillie conservation work including 2000m of deer fence marking, 1200m stock fence repair, 89Ha habitat creation and up to 140Ha habitat improvement was funded through the Species Action Framework
- Continuation of American mink control as part of a north-east water vole conservation project co-ordinated by the University of Aberdeen
- Farmland wader initiative introduced by RSPB and farm conservation advisors recruited to assist land managers making SRDP applications
- Pilot phase of National Wetland Inventory commenced by SEPA in the Cairngorms National Park to provide baseline information for wetland conservation and enhancement

## Milestones for 2009/10

- Update of the Landscape Character Assessment for the Cairngorms National Park to be completed including analysis of the landscape special qualities
- Rare plant conservation project to be established by University of Aberdeen, Plantlife, SNH and CNPA
- Implementation of prioritised actions in the Spey Catchment Management Plan
- Community Heritage Project to be launched to support communities in the Park to understand, conserve and enjoy their local cultural heritage



Lily Loch

Ensuring that the important geology, wildlife, habitats, diverse landscapes and human history are at least maintained and wherever possible strengthened.

### Cairngorms Biological Recording System

The North East Scotland Biological Records Centre is developing a new system that will help collate records and information on the presence and distribution of species and habitats in the National Park. These can be stored in a range of places and formats and include anything from casual observations by members of the public to surveys commissioned by public agencies.

When complete in 2011, the Cairngorms Biological Recording System will provide a focal point that will help realise greater value from the data; promote the identity and inform management of the Park; increase awareness and understanding of the Park's natural heritage; and make the information publicly available. A series of events were held around the Park to encourage people to collate and submit their records.

The system should also help to manage, update and verify biological records for the Park; promote interest and encourage both the recording and submission of new data; and transfer all Cairngorms National Park records to the National Biodiversity Network that can then be widely accessed via the internet.

### Cairngorms Wildcat Project

A project to help safeguard the Scottish wildcat – one of Scotland's most iconic mammals – has been launched in the Cairngorms National Park which is a stronghold for this declining species and is now the focus of effort funded through Scotland's Species Action Framework. A partnership including the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Scottish Gamekeepers Association, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Wild Media Foundation and the CNPA has joined forces to raise awareness and take practical conservation action in the National Park.

The project builds on a conference held in 2008 in Aviemore which drew a wide range of people and

organisations together who agreed to act now to help save the Scottish wildcat. Major threats to the species are thought to include hybridisation and disease transmission with domestic cats and being mistakenly killed during feral cat control.

As well as raising awareness of the plight of the wildcat, the project aims to safeguard wildcat populations for the future by working with veterinarians, cat welfare charities and cat owners to increase levels of neutering and vaccination of domestic cats. In addition, this project will work with gamekeepers and other land managers to ensure that predator control activities do not put wildcats at risk.

For more information visit [www.highlandtiger.com](http://www.highlandtiger.com).



Scottish wildcat



# Integrating Public Support for Land Management



This priority for action is intended to support a diverse, viable and productive land management sector that continues to provide high quality primary produce such as food and timber, while delivering public benefits that are compatible with the Park's special qualities and make a growing contribution to employment and the local economy.

The priority seeks to move to a simpler system of support that is more integrated across sectors, more clearly linked to the tangible delivery of public benefits, and is more closely linked to the needs and priorities of the Park.



## Achievements during 2008/09

- Provision of advice and guidance to support implementation of Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) in the National Park through two land management support officers and SRDP case officers
- Series of seminars delivered on the opportunities of the SRDP
- Farm visits arranged to advise on potential options to deliver public benefits and identify potential support
- 57 Rural Development Contracts awarded to land-based businesses in the National Park
- Two seminars delivered and publication of a guide to help farmers estimate and reduce greenhouse gases following the completion of a carbon footprint pilot on 16 farms
- Ongoing development of a Woodfuel Action Plan to stimulate the woodfuel market

- A 'Low Carbon Estates' project was started to help identify carbon reduction opportunities at estate scale and examine the feasibility for low carbon infrastructure such as woodfuel heating
- Approximately 550 people in around 140 different land-based businesses received training on a wide range of subjects to help deliver public benefits to the Park more effectively

## Milestones for 2009/10

- Research into carbon storage capability of land management
- Woodfuel Fair to bring together producers, processors and customers
- Action to support local food and drink production and marketing
- Action to support renewable energy opportunities





Wood chipping

Supporting a diverse, viable and productive land management sector that continues to produce high quality primary produce while delivering public benefits.

## Scotland Rural Development Programme

The Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) has supported a range of land-based businesses deliver public benefits from biodiversity and forest management to outdoor access. Case officers from the Scottish Government's Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission have worked alongside CNPA's land management support officers to assist land managers in the Park.

To date, approximately £4.86million over a ten year period has been committed within the Park area, across 57 successful Rural Development Contracts awarded. The majority of that investment is in biodiversity and forest management, alongside other business development measures. At the start of 2008/09, CNPA employed two land management support officers to provide advice and guidance to land managers to help realise the full potential of Rural Development Contracts.

## Low Carbon Estates

Six estates in the National Park have been working to identify opportunities to reduce their carbon emissions, supported by specialist advice.

The project includes a carbon footprint of the estate business, an options appraisal to identify areas that bring economic benefit, and a more detailed feasibility study on one of these for implementation.

The project builds on a farm scale pilot carried out in 2008 and is helping to identify how estate businesses can adapt to contribute

to national climate change targets in ways that identify economic opportunities or savings, and considers the practical barriers to making change within the business.

In 2009, the project will track the implementation of options arising from this study, and link with other climate change and land management work initiated in 2008 including research on land capability for carbon capture.



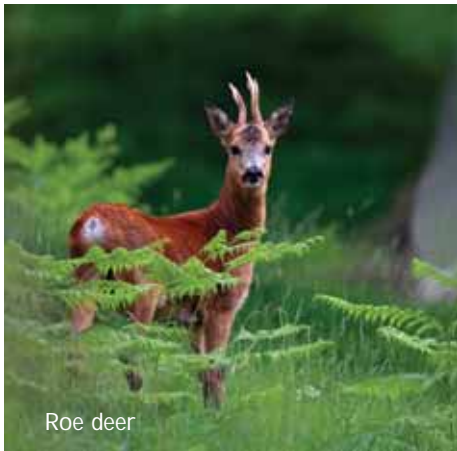
Woodland grazing

# Supporting Sustainable Deer Management



Deer stalking party

This priority for action is intended to help balance the social, economic and recreational benefits that deer bring to the Park with the ecological processes in which deer are a natural part. The Cairngorms National Park Plan includes the objective of increasing the value of the deer resource.



Roe deer

## Achievements during 2008/09

- Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group (CDAG) continues to bring land managers, public agencies and communities together for information sharing and advice on deer management
- A number of events have been held to improve public awareness and understanding of deer management, including: deer viewing, venison cookery, deer ecology/management, and work with primary schools and the Scottish Parliament
- Joint agency work on the Cairngorms Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) is making significant progress addressing the effects of deer on designated sites
- Genetic testing carried out on deer carcasses to check for sika/red deer hybridisation
- Analysis of social, economic and environmental effects of deer reductions commenced

## Milestones for 2009/10

- Draft framework for the management of wild deer in the Cairngorms National Park
- Deer management plans will be complete or in development over the whole Park
- Cairngorms National Park venison products promoted in schools, restaurants and the catering industry
- Best practice methods of habitat monitoring broadly adopted across the Park
- The tourism opportunities of wild deer will be further developed
- Combined impacts of sheep and deer will be considered in deer management plans on both designated and non-designated sites
- Joint agency work will continue to bring designated sites into favourable condition





Deer picture by Georgina from Ballater Primary School

Balancing the social, economic and recreational benefits that deer bring with the ecological processes in which deer are a natural part.



Stag in pine wood

### Primary schools enjoy deer days

Primary school children from the Cairngorms took part in one of two, 2-day events that taught them more about deer in the Cairngorms National Park.

The first day of one of these events was held outside at Balmoral Estate and run by the estate, the Deer Commission for Scotland and the Cairngorms National Park Authority. It was then back to the kitchen for the second day!

Red deer and roe deer are our largest indigenous mammals and are a symbol of natural grace and wildness in the National Park. To see deer behaving naturally in the wild is an unforgettable experience. In light of this, the need to control them can be a difficult concept to grasp.

The children learnt that deer are an important part of our natural and cultural heritage, and that they are an important economic resource which needs to be managed. They took part in games which explained the need for deer management and were shown the equipment used for culling and extracting deer from the hill.

The children also got to put on white coats and examine the preparation of carcasses in the deer larder before attending a cookery demonstration back at school hosted by Fi Bird of 'Stirrin' Stuff'.

Louise Duckworth, head teacher of Ballater Primary School summed it all up by saying: "This was one of the most relevant experiences pupils from Ballater have had the privilege to participate in as deer management has such a crucial role in our local economy."



# Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access



Outdoor access event, Braemar

This priority for action is intended to help more people enjoy even higher quality outdoor access to benefit their health, wellbeing and understanding of the Park.

## Achievements during 2008/09

- Draft Core Paths Plan, containing proposals for some 879km of path submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval
- Funding has been secured for upgrading the core paths network for the next two years
- A new bridge was constructed across the Gynack River in Kingussie replacing one that has been closed for the last four years



Woodland walkers

- A new path has been built to provide a safe route to school for children in Stathdon
- The Old Logging Way, linking Aviemore to Glenmore was completed and opened by Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety
- The Scottish Outdoor Access Code was promoted throughout the National Park and a course was delivered for dog owners about responsible behaviour
- The Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum was used by CNPA and others for advice and held an annual open event in Braemar
- Guidance for organisers of outdoor access events and land managers has been published and is available in both hard copy and at [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)
- The Cairngorms Explorer travel timetable was produced
- The Heather Hopper bus service operated throughout the summer months linking the east and west of the Park
- Further health walk schemes have been developed in Tomintoul and Strathdon

## Milestones for 2009/10

- The Local Inquiry on the Draft Core Paths Plan will take place before autumn 2009
- A programme of upgrading 20 paths around the Park will commence in spring 2009
- Upland path works will be prioritised through a public workshop and funding secured to deliver repairs over the next five years
- A review of funding for the Speyside Way will be completed
- Guidance for good practice in path signs will be published and promoted
- Design guidelines for path leaflets in the Park will be produced
- Guidance will be developed to assist those who wish to promote routes within the Park
- Health walk schemes will be expanded to cover more communities in Badenoch and Strathspey



Northern corries footpath

Helping more people enjoy even higher quality outdoor access to benefit their health, wellbeing and understanding of the Park.

### Old Logging Way

A landmark path in one of Scotland's most popular areas for recreation was the latest addition to the Park's extensive paths network. The new 5.5km path linking the communities of Aviemore and Glenmore was completed in the summer of 2008.

The path – named the Old Logging Way – stretches through Rothiemurchus Estate and benefitted from the co-operation and support of landowners Johnnie and Philippa Grant, the CNPA, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Highland Council, Sustrans and Forestry Commission Scotland.

Scotland's Minister for Community Safety Fergus Ewing opened the new path which provides a safe route for off-road users such as walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders. The path will also provide other benefits including a better, more even surface for runners.

### Gynack Bridge

In 2005, the Gynack Bridge in Kingussie was found to be structurally unsound and was condemned. The bridge was an important part of the path network around Kingussie and there was strong community support for it to be replaced. The Kingussie Community Development Company (KCDC) and partner organisations worked with the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) to secure a replacement.

KCDC worked hard to secure a funding package and COAT was able to complete the budget, secure all the

necessary permissions, and manage the design and construction contracts. The bridge and works were completed in March 2009 and it has already proved popular with the community.

As well as replacing the bridge, the project created a viewing platform and new interpretation panel upstream of the new bridge. The nearby paths were also improved to make them accessible to a wider range of people. The bridge and viewing platform now provide a unique view of the river and underline its historical importance to the community. Together they form a critical part of a much larger interpretive trail for the town.

Donnie Grant of KCDC said: "It has been really useful to be able to call on an organisation like the Trust to help us in replacing the bridge and tackling major construction projects. The whole community is delighted to see the river crossing restored as it has always been a vital link in the town. We look forward to working with the Trust in the future on other projects."



Gynack Bridge



# Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable



This priority for action is intended to increase the diversity, vibrancy and sustainability of the economy of the Cairngorms National Park.

## Achievements during 2008/09

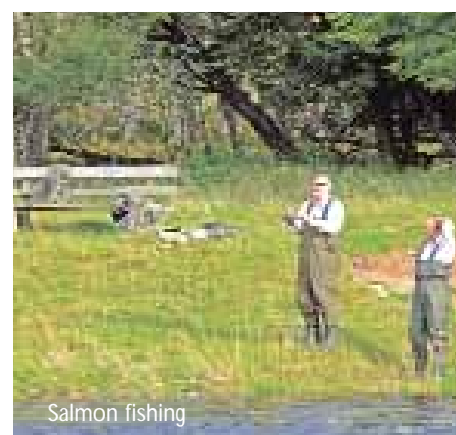
- A tourism industry conference was held on 'Green Places, Green Profit'
- Cairngorms Local Action Group was re-established with new LEADER programme, securing £2.17million European funding for the Park and approval of funding for 78 projects
- The range of Cairngorms National Park family brands was extended to include Creative Cairngorms
- Research study to assess visitor payback schemes was commissioned and completed
- Pilot community engagement project was rolled out across the National Park
- Aviemore and the Cairngorms DMO 'business barometer' continued to obtain feedback on business confidence and future intentions
- Detailed study was completed to explore options for greater collaboration and efficiency across the business community

- Marketing support and assistance for Cairngorms Farmers' Market Association
- Aviemore and the Cairngorms DMO led event on 'Leading Service Excellence'
- Pilot project initiated using hand-held technology to capture feedback from visitors.
- Royal Deeside and the Cairngorms DMO 'product knowledge learning journey' pilot project initiated

## Milestones for 2009/10

- Tourism conference planned for November 2009
- Comprehensive visitor survey across the Park due for completion by April 2010
- Economic survey to compare economic data with previous study and highlight areas for potential future action due for completion by October 2009
- Launch of first stage of Park web portal, focussing visitors on the Park
- Launch of 'Brand Pack' to support businesses using the Park brand

- Ballater (Deeside) and four communities in Badenoch and Strathspey to complete community action plans
- Further development and expansion of the 'business barometer' across the Park
- Marketing support and business development provided for Cairngorms Hostels and Creative Cairngorms to increase membership and provide a sustainable future
- Food and drink related projects developed to raise the value of local produce, especially with visitors
- Cairngorms Business Partnership developed, providing a focus and lead for the business sector







Increasing the diversity, vibrancy and sustainability of the economy of the Cairngorms National Park.

### A Collaborative Business Model – The Cairngorms Business Partnership

The Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce (CCC) and the Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) are enthusiastic partners in the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Plan. Over the last year, the CCC has been working with the DMOs and other business groupings in different parts of the Park to develop a more coherent model for business collaboration and a stronger overall voice for businesses.

The proposals involve a pooling of the staff resources of the DMOs and the CCC to allow everyone to benefit from their combined expertise and critical mass. Their work would be overseen by a board of directors made up of representatives of the various groups, individuals and organisations to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of all areas and organisations.

Bodies representing different areas or business sectors would be able to join the board of directors and pool their funding resources in return for combined activities, or simply buy services directly from the organisation. For some organisations, membership of the wider business partnership

should provide a stronger voice and better value for money for their members than they can provide on their own. However, other organisations may find joining more difficult to achieve in the short term and for these reasons, the model for the business partnership has been designed to make progress with a flexible membership.

Although the partnership is still in its early development and has challenges to overcome, significant effort has so far been made by the various groups involved, and there is real enthusiasm for taking the proposals further forward. The partnership offers exciting options for future private-public sector engagement and the potential for more efficient and effective support to the business community across the Park.

Former chairman of the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce Duncan Mackellar said: “The proposed Cairngorms Business Partnership will enable organisations to work in a complementary way to provide one cohesive and powerful voice for business. It will help increase efficiency through pooling resources and expertise, and prove a powerful mechanism for leveraging in funding from public agencies.

“The current economic situation makes it more important than ever that the private sector works in partnership with the public agencies to achieve the common aims of all who live and work in the Cairngorms National Park.”



# Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable



This priority for action is intended to improve access to good quality, sustainably designed and affordable housing to help maintain sustainable communities in the long-term.

Several key activities were progressed and completed under this priority during 2008/09 but others will continue to be relevant and ongoing though 2009/10 and possibly beyond. These include:

- Development of the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan and the Cairngorms National Park Sustainable Design Guide;
- Co-ordination of housing work and sharing of housing information between partners; and
- Ensuring the Cairngorms National Park Plan's priorities are incorporated in Local Authorities' Strategic Housing Investment Plans

## Achievements during 2008/09

- Community needs project established in Ballater
- A programme of community needs projects was established in Badenoch and Strathpsey with Voluntary Action in Badenoch and Strathspey
- Quick win projects for each of the communities in Grantown-on Spey, Cromdale and Advie and Dulnain Bridge including improvements to Dulaig Park and speed indicator devices in Cromdale and Dulnain Bridge
- Provision of housing information links through the Park-based website
- Two training courses on housing management practice and good practice were delivered in partnership with the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association
- A sustainable drainage design guide was developed in partnership with the Highland Housing Alliance and the Highland Council
- The completion of four low cost home ownership sustainable homes at a former Forestry Commission site at Milehouse, Kincaig with the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust

## Milestones for 2009/10

- Further community needs assessment projects, incorporating housing needs surveys to be established across the National Park
- Implementation of the action plans agreed with communities to take projects forward
- Undertake research to identify the impact of Park housing supply on businesses
- Identify projects which can access Scottish Government funding or to increase the supply of affordable private rented housing whether for renovation or new build
- Further activities to promote awareness and understanding of sustainable energy efficient housing design will be identified





Housing in the Cairngorms National Park

Improving access to good quality, sustainably designed, and affordable housing to help maintain sustainable communities in the long-term.

### Milehouse affordable housing

The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust has led efforts to develop four innovative, affordable homes for sale at Milehouse near Kincaig. The Trust has continued its work of providing new affordable homes on sites across the Park, but its most significant project of the year has been the provision of the Milehouse homes using the Scottish Government's Rural Home Ownership Grants.

The homes combine design features and technical specifications that will make them pleasant to live in and efficient to run, as well as minimising impacts on the environment by using locally sourced timber, maximising solar gain and installing wood burning stoves.

The new homes are built on land bought by the Trust from the Forestry Commission under the National Forest Land Scheme with the active support of the Kincaig and Vicinity Community Council, Highland Council, CNPA and the Scottish Government.

The Trust's new CEO, Tom Hainey, is confident that it will be able to play an even more positive and innovative role in the Cairngorms National Park and Highland's rural communities in 2009. "I know that a shortage of affordable and sustainable housing in rural areas is a particular problem across the Cairngorms National Park and that is why it is so important that we work with public agencies and our other key community and business partners to help understand and respond to those needs," he said.



Affordable housing, near Kincaig



## Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park



This priority for action is intended to increase awareness of the Cairngorms National Park and its special qualities throughout the Park and Scotland. It will help people to understand and appreciate why it is special and why it is managed in particular ways.

### Achievements during 2008/09

- 24 Cairngorms Awareness and Pride courses attracted around 400 people to learn about the special qualities of the Park
- Interpretation guidance 'Sharing the Stories of the Cairngorms National Park' was published
- Inspirational Europarc Junior Ranger camp held at Glen Tanar Estate
- 1,886 people completed a John Muir Award in the Cairngorms including the 5,000th award since the project started in 2004
- The BBC 'Springwatch' programme featured much of the special wildlife of the National Park with support and assistance from many land managers
- Destination Management Organisations in the Park launched new websites promoting the area

- Learning and Teaching Scotland Conference 'National Parks as a Delivery Tool for the Curriculum for Excellence' was held with participants from five local authorities
- Angus Glens Ranger Base opened to the public
- The widest range of information about the National Park for visitors was published including a revamped 'What's On' monthly event guide under the new management of Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisation
- National Park pages to be developed on 'Glow' – the national school's intranet – which will provide an educational resource for teachers, pupils and parents
- Launch of the Cairngorms National Park web portal providing comprehensive information about the Park for visitors
- Young people from schools in and around the National Park will produce video films looking at the possible impacts and adaptations to climate change on communities in the National Park in 2050
- Further use of the panoramic paintings of the National Park to raise awareness of the area including the sale of the paintings as posters

### Milestones for 2009/10

- Ranger services work programmes clearly linked to delivering the National Park Plan
- The family of National Nature Reserves in the National Park will be better promoted in print and on websites to encourage more people to enjoy these special places
- Education action plans encouraging young people to learn about and experience the National Park will be developed by five local authorities
- Production of a DVD about the special qualities of the National Park for use in visitor centres, exhibitions and conferences



Avielochan, Aviemore

Increasing awareness of the Cairngorms National Park and its special qualities throughout the Park and Scotland.

### National Parks and the Curriculum for Excellence

In September 2008 Learning and Teaching Scotland held a conference for teachers and other education professionals to look at new ways they could use the National Park to enthuse, engage and educate pupils.

As a result of the conference, the five local education authorities have developed action plans to encourage greater use of the opportunities available to pupils living in or close to the National Park. These plans will start to be delivered in 2009, with Aberdeenshire Council's already underway.

In the Highland Council area, Grantown Grammar School has adopted a flexible timetable for S1 and S2 pupils that allows them to explore some of the special places in the local area by participating in the John Muir Award.

### Europarc Junior Ranger Camp

In July 2008, Scottish Countryside Rangers Association, Glen Tanar Estate and the Cairngorms National Park Authority jointly hosted the annual Europarc Junior Ranger Camp. Twenty young people from across Europe came to Glen Tanar in Deeside along with 11 young people from Scotland.

The Junior Rangers took part in a wide range of activities including hill walking, mountain biking, canoeing, practical conservation work, and had time to experience a ceilidh and a Highland Games. During the busy week of activities, the young people were able to make new friends and learn about each others varied cultures.

Responding to a question about what they learned during the week, one Scottish participant wrote, "I realise and understand deeply the need for young people to be involved with nature and the environment."

The camp launched the Junior Ranger programme in the Cairngorms which will develop further in 2009. It connected the Cairngorms programme to the European network so that in future years there will be opportunities for young people from the Cairngorms National Park to visit other protected areas.



Europarc Junior Ranger Camp





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