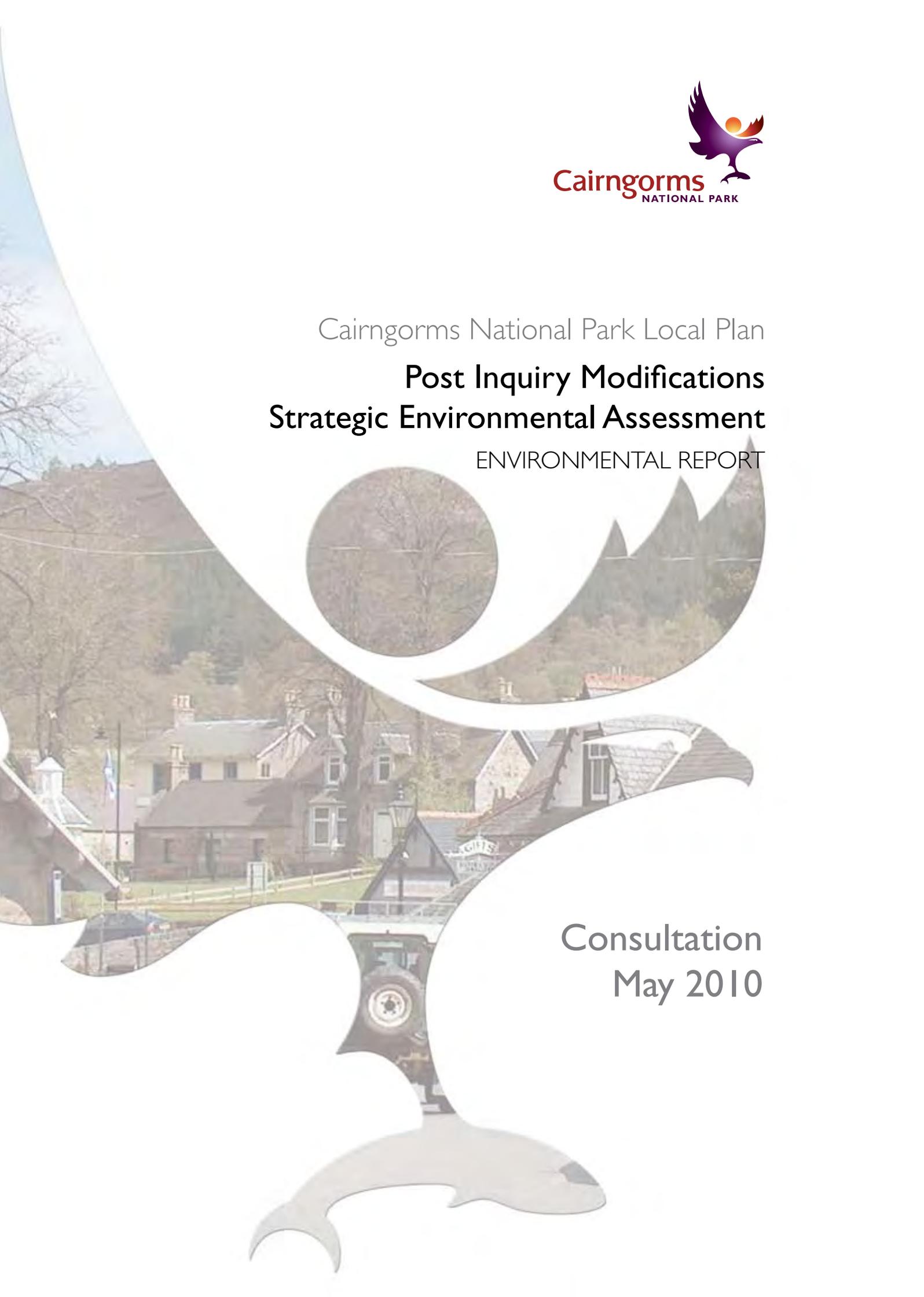


Cairngorms National Park Local Plan
Post Inquiry Modifications
Strategic Environmental Assessment
ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT



Consultation
May 2010

**Local Plan - Post Inquiry Modifications
Public Consultation
Monday 24 May to Friday 2 July 2010**

The Post Inquiry Modifications document sets out further changes to the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan, which have come about as a result of the CNPA analysis of the Reporters' conclusions and recommendations following the Local Plan Inquiry. The modifications are published for a six week period of public consultation - Monday 24 May to Friday 2 July.

This Environmental Report – which is also available for public consultation – is the result of a Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out on the Local Plan, its modifications and the post inquiry modifications

How to Comment

- A form is available on the following page. Comments, which must include your name and address, should be returned to the CNPA by **Friday 2 July**, to the following address:

**FREEPOST (RSHS-BHKL-KXHS)
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Albert Memorial Hall, Station Square
Ballater AB35 5QB**

- You can download, or complete this form online, at www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning/localplan

- To discuss any aspect of the Post Inquiry Modifications, or the associated SEA or to arrange a meeting, please contact the CNPA's Ballater office.
- All Post Inquiry Modifications documents, and supporting information relating to the Local Plan and the Local Plan Inquiry are available to view at the CNPA offices in Ballater and Grantown-on-Spey (see addresses below) and at a number of council offices within the Park. Comment forms will also be available at all these locations.

Albert Memorial Hall
Station Square
Ballater
Aberdeenshire AB35 5QB
Tel: 013397 53601
Fax: 013397 55334
Email: localplan@cairngorms.co.uk

14 The Square
Grantown-on-Spey
Moray PH26 3HG
Tel: 01479 873535
Fax: 01479 873527
Email: localplan@cairngorms.co.uk

Data protection: These details will only be used in the development of the Local Plan. You may request to see personal information held by the CNPA at any time.

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

Cairngorms National Park Local Plan

Consultation on Local Plan Post Inquiry Modifications Monday 24 May – Friday 2 July 2010

Comments form

How to make objections / comments

- Clearly state which part of the Post Inquiry Modifications your objection/comment relates to.
- Indicate clearly how you would like the adopted Local Plan to be changed – for example deletion of a proposal, deletion of a paragraph, amended wording, amendments to a map.
- Clearly state the reason for the objection/comment – this should relate only to the Post Inquiry Modifications. Objections to the content of the Plan which is not the subject of a Post Inquiry Modification are not valid at this stage.
- This form can be photocopied or further copies obtained from the CNPA offices.
- You can also download or complete the form online at www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning/localplan
- The deadline for submitting completed forms is **Friday 2 July 2010**.

1.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Existing objection reference number (if applicable) _____

2.

If you are appointing someone to act as your agent, please give their details.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

To which address should correspondence to be sent? Own

Agent

3.

Please identify the Post Inquiry Modification to which you object. You must include the policy number, paragraph number, settlement proposal or map reference.

4.

Please state clearly and fully the grounds for your objection/comment, using a continuation sheet if necessary.

5.

If objecting, please indicate what change(s), which could resolve your objection, you are seeking in future modifications to the Local Plan

6.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please return completed forms, by **Friday 2 July 2010**, to:

FREEPOST (RSHS-BHKL-KXHS)
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Albert Memorial Hall, Station Square
Ballater AB35 5QB

Tel: 013397 53601
Fax: 013397 55334
Email: localplan@cairngorms.co.uk

www.cairngorms.co.uk



Contents	Page ref
1. Non-Technical Summary	5
Summary of the SEA process	5
Summary of the likely significant effects of the Deposit Local Plan	6
The predicted effects of Local Plan policies	6
The predicted effect of Local Plan proposals	7
The differences SEA has made to the Local Plan modifications	7
Next Steps	7
2. Introduction and background	9
The Cairngorms National Park	9
The National Park designation	10
The Cairngorms National Park Authority	11
The Cairngorms National Park and the Planning System	11
The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan	11
3. The Purpose of the SEA and Local Plan Context	12
The purpose of the SEA	12
The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan	12
Objectives of the Local Plan	13
The Structure of the Local Plan	13
Links to other Plans and Programmes	13
The Cairngorms National Park Plan	13
National Planning Policy	15
National and International Legislation	15
Other Statutory Plans	15
Other Plans and Policies	16
4. Methodology	17
The Cairngorms National Park Authority's Approach to SEA	17
The SEA Process	17
SEA screening	18
Environmental baseline	18
SEA scoping	18
Developing environmental objectives and criteria	19
Assessing the Local Plan	19
The Environmental Report	21
Modifying the Local Plan and revising the Environmental Report	21
Consulting on the Local Plan post inquiry modifications and revised Environmental Report	21
Finalising monitoring proposals	21
Statement of compliance and environmental considerations	21
Monitoring significant environmental effects of Plan and consider need for review	21
Consultation in the SEA Process	22
Identification of effects on Natura interests	22
Difficulties encountered in the SEA Process	22
Information gathering and availability	22
Difficulties encountered in the Assessment	23
5. Predicted Environmental Baseline and Issues	24
Environmental Baseline of the Cairngorms National Park	24
Environmental Issues in the Cairngorms National Park	29

Limitations of Data	30
Evolution of the Environment without the Local Plan	30
6. SEA Objectives, Indicators and Targets	32
SEA Objectives	32
SEA Indicators and Targets	35
7. Local Plan Strategic Alternatives	37
Strategic Policy Alternatives	37
Strategic Proposal Alternatives	37
8. Assessment of Plan Policies	39
How Environmental Problems were Considered in Developing the Policies	39
The Significant Environmental Effects of Policies	39
Cumulative and synergistic effects of policies	42
Uncertainties and Risks	42
Proposed Mitigation	42
9. Assessment of Plan Proposals	43
How Environmental Problems were Considered in Developing the Proposals	43
The Significant Environmental Effects of Proposals	43
Judgements of the significance of proposal' environmental effects	44
An Camus Mor new settlement	45
Aviemore housing	46
Ballater housing	46
Boat of Garten housing and community	46
Braemar housing and community	47
Carr-Bridge housing	47
Dalwhinnie housing	47
Dulnain Bridge housing	48
Grantown-on-Spey housing	48
Kincaig housing	48
Kingussie housing	48
Nethy Bridge housing and economic development proposals	49
Newtonmore housing	49
Tomintoul housing	49
Cumulative effects of proposals	50
Uncertainties and risks	50
Proposed Mitigation	50
10. Future Development of the Local Plan and SEA	51

I. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- I.1. This is a non-technical summary of the Environmental Report of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (post inquiry modifications). It explains:
 - what the SEA is;
 - why it has been done;
 - what effects the Local Plan would be likely to have on the environment.
- I.2. This non-technical summary can be read on its own or as part of the full SEA Environmental Report.
- I.3. Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA for short, is a way of making sure that environmental problems are carefully considered when a plan is made. It is a formal part of the Local Plan making process and is required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. The Act implements a European Directive that requires SEA to be carried out on some kinds of plans and programmes.
- I.4. The idea behind SEA is that by making sure that environmental features such as plants and animals, air quality, human health or historic remains are considered as the plan is made, then it is less likely that the plan will harm them. SEA helps to make sure that environmental considerations are taken into account by the plan in two main ways.
- I.5. Firstly, the SEA predicts what effects the plan is likely to have on the environment and whether they are considered significant. Secondly, if the SEA does predict 'significant' effects, the plan must be changed to introduce measures that will make the effects less harmful or serious. The end result should be a plan that is less likely to lead to significant harm to the environment.
- I.6. The SEA process is also about giving the public the information used to predict the effects and explaining how they were predicted. The public have an opportunity to comment on the SEA process at this stage, when the 'Environmental Report' of the SEA process is published with the Local Plan post inquiry modifications.

Summary of the SEA process

- I.7. The SEA process can be broken down into a set of stages that happen as the Local Plan is being prepared.
 - 1) Describe the condition of the environment at the moment and how it is changing or has changed in the past. Predict what the environment would be like in the future without the Plan being made;
 - 2) Predict how different ways of making the Plan could have different environmental effects;
 - 3) Predict what the effects of the policies and proposals in the Local Plan would have on the environment;
 - 4) Decide on ways of reducing any harmful effects of the Local Plan on the environment;
 - 5) Publish the Local Plan and an SEA Environmental Report that explains what the SEA is and how it has been done and place them "on Deposit" so that people can comment on them.

- 6) Take note of the comments on the Environmental Report and make any changes to the Local Plan or SEA because of them.
- 7) Continue to revise and modify the Local Plan so it can be adopted and do any extra assessment that is required. **(This is the stage the Local Plan and SEA are at just now)**
- 8) Adopt and publish the Local Plan with an up to date Environmental Report of the SEA and write a formal statement of how the SEA has been carried out with the Local Plan, how it has affected the Local Plan, and why the Local Plan has been adopted with certain proposals rather than others that were considered in the SEA process.
- 9) Keep measuring what effects the Local Plan actually has on the environment when it is used so that changes can be made in the future if they are needed and so that it is possible to predict effects more accurately in the future.

Summary of the likely significant effects of the Deposit Local Plan

- 1.8. The policies and proposals in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan as modified by the Post Inquiry modifications have been assessed and the Environmental Report of the SEA prepared.

The predicted effects of Local Plan policies

- 1.9. The policies in the Local Plan are mostly considered likely to have positive effects on the environment. This might be expected given that the Local Plan must help to deliver the aims of the Park:
- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage;
 - to promote sustainable use of the natural resources;
 - to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
 - to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.
- 1.10. The Local Plan is also intended to help to deliver the objectives of the Cairngorms National Park Plan. The Cairngorms National Park Plan is a strategic management plan for the Park. It sets out how the Park should be managed to achieve the aims of the Park, co-ordinates the work of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, and co-ordinates the work of other public bodies in the Park.
- 1.11. This means that many of the policies in the Local Plan are supposed to protect and improve the quality of the environment so that few harmful effects on the environment could be caused by development.
- 1.12. The Local Plan also has policies that support development that could have harmful effects on the environment. However, for a development to be given planning permission it needs to fit with all the policies in the Plan. This means that a development that could have harmful effects on the environment needs to find ways of avoiding or minimising the effects in order to be approved. The predicted effects are described in Section 8 and Appendix 2 of the Environmental Report.

The predicted effects of Local Plan proposals

- 1.13. A number of proposals in the Local Plan are considered likely to result in significant harmful environmental effects and a few proposals are considered likely to have significant positive effects.
- 1.14. The potential negative effects caused by proposals can be grouped into three categories:
 - Loss, damage or disturbance to important species or habitats and ecosystems (considered likely at An Camus More new settlement, Carr-Bridge and Nethy Bridge);
 - Damage to the water environment including streams, rivers, lochs, ground water, wetland habitats, flood plains (considered likely at Carr-Bridge);
 - Potential harmful effects on landscape character or settlement character and the setting of towns or villages in the landscape (considered likely at An Camus Mor new settlement, Aviemore, Carr-Bridge, KinCraig, Nethy Bridge and Newtonmore).
- 1.15. There is some uncertainty about the potential cumulative effects (what happens when many small effects are added together) of the proposals on the river systems of the Dee and Spey. These river systems are protected under European law and the Cairngorms National Park Authority is undertaking a separate assessment of the Local Plan's implications for them.
- 1.16. The Local Plan's proposals may also have some significant positive environmental effects. Many proposals for housing also make an important contribution to housing for a local community. Taken together, they provide an important resource for the population of the Park that is considered to be a positive effect of the Local Plan.
- 1.17. All the significant effects that have been predicted from the proposals are explained in Section 9 and Appendix 2 of the full Environmental Report. It is often difficult to predict exactly what effects a proposal will have on the environment as the Local Plan does not control how any future development is used. The uncertainties of the assessment are also explained in the Environmental Report.

The differences SEA has made to the Local Plan modifications

- 1.18. Because the Local Plan has been written with environmental considerations in mind, it has tried to avoid leading to harm to the environment from the start. This means that relatively few changes to the Local Plan have made due to the SEA alone. However, the SEA has helped to refine the Local Plan modifications from the previous deposit version. It has also provided a systematic method for assessing environmental factors that are important to the Local Plan and recording the predicted effects of the Plan.
- 1.19. It is hoped that the publication and consultation on the Environmental Report with the Local Plan will make it easier for people to comment on both the Local Plan and any environmental concerns they have about the Local Plan or SEA.

Next steps

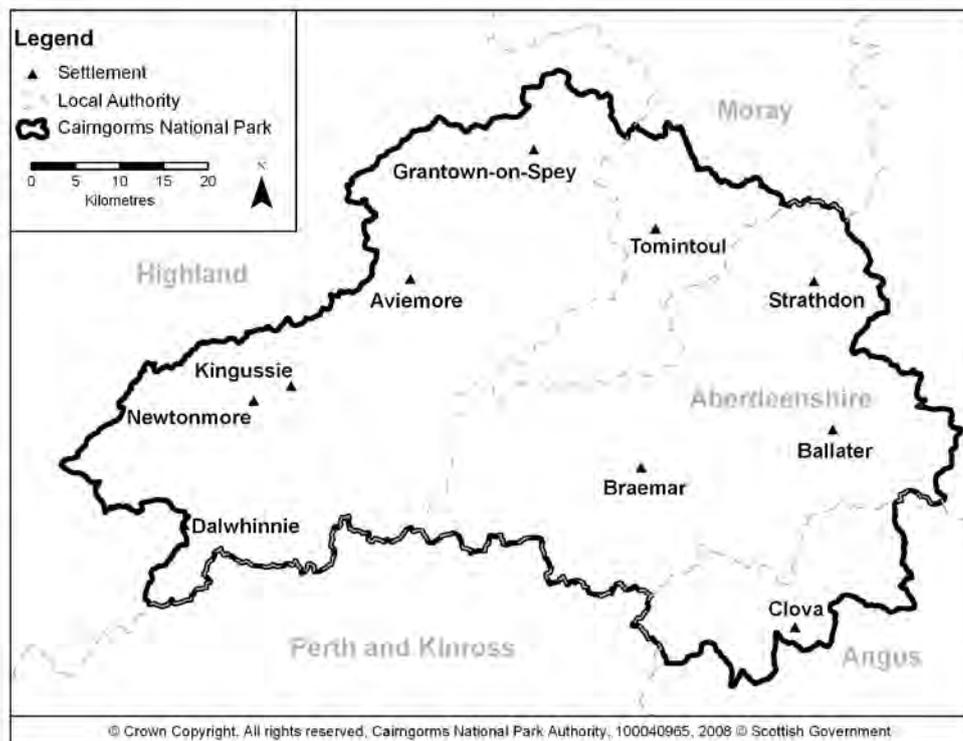
- 1.20. Once the consultation period has ended, the next steps and estimated timescale will be:
- **Consultation on Local Plan post inquiry modifications and revised Environmental Report** May – July 2010
 - **Consider representations made on post inquiry modifications** July – Sept 2010
 - **Prepare to adopt Local Plan** Sept – Nov 2010
 - **Update the Environmental Report** to accompany the completed Local Plan November 2010
 - **Prepare a Post Adoption Statement** setting out how the SEA process has informed the Local Plan, the reasons for the decisions made and framework for future assessments associated with the Local Plan November – December 2010
 - **Adopt and publish the statutory Local Plan** December 2010

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1. This report is an Environmental Report in terms of the European Directive 2001/42/EC and Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 for the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan.
- 2.2. The Cairngorms National Park Authority is carrying out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Local Plan, and this version of the Environmental Report accompanies the Local Plan post inquiry modifications.
- 2.3. The Environmental Report describes the SEA process that has accompanied the development of the Local Plan so far. It follows a determination by the National Park Authority on the 18 July 2005 that SEA of the Local Plan would be required, and a scoping exercise to identify a methodology for assessment and the likely significant effects of the Local Plan. A scoping report was sent to the Consultation Authorities on the 22 July 2005 and their comments, which have informed the assessment methodology and process, were received on the 26 August 2005.
- 2.4. A consultative draft Local Plan and Environmental Report were consulted on over the latter part of 2005 until the end of February 2006. Comments received on both documents helped refine the policies, proposals and strategy of the Deposit Local Plan, and informed the development of the SEA and revision to the Environmental Report. This process was repeated with the comments received on the deposit local plan which lead to first and second modifications. The finalised Local Plan including its various modifications was the subject of a Local Plan Inquiry between May and June 2009 and the recommendations made by the Scottish Government Reporters have now been received and considered. The analysis of these recommendations has resulted in the production of a series of Post Inquiry Modifications. It is a culmination of this process that has led to the production of this version of the Environmental Report, accompanying the post inquiry modifications to the Local Plan.

The Cairngorms National Park

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

Map 2.1 The Cairngorms National Park***The National Park designation***

- 2.6. The Cairngorms National Park was established in September 2003, the second National Park in Scotland following the earlier establishment of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. It was established under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, which also required a new National Park Authority to co-ordinate management of the Park.
- 2.7. The National Park was established on the basis of:
- the outstanding national importance of its natural and cultural heritage;
 - the area's distinctive character and coherent identity;
 - the special management needs of the area.
- 2.8. The aims of the National Park are:
- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage;
 - to promote sustainable use of the natural resources;
 - to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
 - to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority

- 2.9. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is a non-departmental public body and has a board of 25 members of which 20 are appointed by the Scottish Ministers, (10 of whom are nominated by the four local authorities) and five are elected by the residents of the Cairngorms National Park.
- 2.10. The general purpose of the CNPA, as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, is to ensure that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in a co-ordinated way. The Park Authority is therefore an enabling organisation that must work with and through other bodies to bring added value to the management of the Park, to achieve the four aims.
- 2.11. The Cairngorms National Park Authority must ensure that the four aims are achieved collectively. However, if there appears to be a conflict between the first aim and the other aims, greater weight must be given to the first aim (Section 9 (6) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000).

The Cairngorms National Park and the Planning System

- 2.12. Unlike a Local Authority, the CNPA is not a full Planning Authority, but shares planning powers in the Park with the four constituent Local Authorities. The Park Authority is responsible for preparing a Local Plan for the area, but only operates the development control function on applications that are considered to be of significance to the aims of the National Park.
- 2.13. Development control functions within the Cairngorms National Park are shared by the Park Authority and the four constituent local authorities. Planning applications are made to the local authorities in the first instance, and the CNPA has a power to 'call-in' applications, to be decided by the Park Authority where it considers they have some significance to the aims of the National Park. In practice, this has meant that, to date, the Park Authority has called in around 16 per cent of the planning applications within the Cairngorms National Park for determination.

The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan

- 2.14. Local plans set out detailed policies and proposals for the development and use of land that guide day to day planning decisions. Under the current planning system they operate with structure plans to form the statutory development plan for an area. Currently, each of the four component local authorities has a Local Plan which covers part of the Cairngorms National Park.
- 2.15. Once adopted (estimated December 2010), the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan will replace those four local plans as the Local Plan on which planning decisions are based.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE SEA AND LOCAL PLAN CONTEXT

The purpose of the SEA

- 3.1. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that is described in this Environmental Report is an ‘assessment of the effects of the plan on the environment’ under the terms of European Directive 2001/42/EC.
- 3.2. Article I of the directive states that its objective is:
‘to provide for a high level protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant environmental effects on the environment.’
- 3.3. For some plans or programmes, the integration of environmental considerations may be a new idea. For development plans in the UK such as Local Plans, environmental considerations and objectives have always been an important part of the planning process. The SEA should simply provide a more systematic and transparent method for considering issues that would normally be considered in the plan-making process. It should also support the delivery of the aims of the National Park.

The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan

- 3.4. The Local Plan for the Cairngorms National Park will replace the four existing local plans within the Cairngorms National Park that were prepared by the constituent local authorities (Figure 3.1). The Local Plan will form one part of the Development Plan for the National Park, with the local authorities’ Structure Plans (Figure 3.1) providing the other part of the Development Plan.
- 3.5. In spite of the clear legal relationship to the Structure Plans, the Local Plan takes its strategic context from the Cairngorms National Park Plan, and any departures or changes in structure plan policy need to be justified by the Cairngorms National Park Plan.

Figure 3.1. current development plan coverage in the CNP

Local Authority	Local Plan	Structure Plan
Aberdeenshire	Aberdeenshire Local Plan 2006	North East Scotland Together – Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Structure Plan 2001-2016
Angus	Angus Local Plan 2000	Dundee & Angus Structure Plan 2001-2016
Highland	Badenoch & Strathspey Local Plan 1997	Highland Structure Plan 2001
Moray	Moray Local Plan 2000	Moray Structure Plan 2007

Objectives of the Local Plan

- 3.6. The Local Plan is intended to help deliver the aims of the National Park through the planning system. It is also an important delivery tool of the National Park Plan.

The Structure of the Local Plan

- 3.7. The Local Plan comprises policies and proposals to guide development in the Cairngorms National Park. These are based on the strategy for development outlined through the Cairngorms National Park Plan.
- 3.8. The contents of the Local Plan first modifications are shown in figure 3.2 on the following page.

Links to other Plans and Programmes

- 3.9. There are a wide range of plans and programmes that are relevant to the Local Plan and help to influence the content and direction of the Local Plan's policies and proposals. The range of plans and programmes are summarised in the following paragraphs of the Environmental Report. The plans and programmes are listed in greater detail in Appendix I of the Environmental Report. Appendix I also identifies the main environmental objectives of these plans that are relevant to the Local Plan as well as how the Local Plan is going to contribute to those objectives.

The Cairngorms National Park Plan

- 3.10. The Cairngorms National Park Plan is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 3.11. The Cairngorms National Park Plan was approved by the Minister on 15 March 2007. The Park Plan was also subject to SEA. The purpose of the Park Plan is to ensure that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in a coordinated way. The Park Plan covers all sectors relevant to the aims of the Park and provides the strategic context for the work of all public bodies in the Park.
- 3.12. The Cairngorms National Park Plan provides the strategic context for the Local Plan. It is a long term plan with a vision for 25 years and has strategic objectives for the Park to work towards. It also has a suite of priorities for action for the first five years of the Plan.

Figure 3.2 Cairngorms National Park Local Plan post inquiry modifications Contents

- 1. STATUTORY CONTEXT**
 - The Statutory National Park Context
 - The Cairngorms National Park and the Cairngorms national park Local Plan
 - Relationship with existing Structure Plans and the new Development Plan system
 - Context for planning decisions within the Cairngorms National Park
- 2. THE VISION OF THE LOCAL PLAN, ITS PREPARATION AND ITS USES**
 - The Vision and guiding principles of the Local Plan
 - Purpose of the Local Plan
 - Relationship of the Local Plan and others Plans and Strategies
 - The structure of the Local Plan
 - Implementation of the Local Plan
 - Monitoring of the Local Plan
 - How to use the Local Plan
- 3. CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE PARK**
 - Natura 2000 sites
 - National natural heritage designations
 - Other important natural and earth heritage sites and features
 - Protected species
 - Biodiversity
 - Landscape
 - Gardens and Designed Landscapes
 - Cultural Heritage and the historic environment
 - Archaeology
 - Listed buildings
 - Conservation areas
 - Local and wider cultural heritage of the Park
 - Sustainable use of resources
 - Water resources
 - Geodiversity
 - Contaminated land
 - Renewable Energy generation
- 5. LIVING AND WORKING IN THE PARK**
 - Design standards for Development
 - Reducing carbon emissions in development
 - Developer contributions
 - Housing
 - Contributions to Affordable Housing
 - Housing Development within settlement boundaries
 - Housing Development in Rural Building Groups
 - Housing Developments outside settlements
 - Replacement Houses
 - House extensions and alterations
 - Economic Development
 - Business development
 - Retail development
 - Conversions of existing traditional and vernacular buildings
 - Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
 - Integrated and sustainable transport network
 - Telecommunications
 - Waste Management

Figure 3.2 Cairngorms National Park Local Plan post inquiry modifications Contents

6. ENJOYING AND UNDERSTANDING THE PARK

- Sustainable tourism
- Tourism development
- Outdoor Access
- Sport and Recreation Facilities
- Other Open Space provision

7. SETTLEMENT PROPOSALS

- An Camas Mor
- Aviemore
- Ballater
- Grantown on Spey
- Kingussie
- Newtonmore
- Boat of Garten
- Braemar
- Carr-Bridge
- Cromdale
- Dalwhinnie
- Dulnain Bridge
- Kincaig
- Nethy Bridge
- Tomintoul
- Rural Settlements

National Planning Policy

- 3.13. The Scottish Government SPPs (Scottish Planning Policy) and NPPGs (National Planning Policy Guidance) set out national planning policy and guidance on how it is interpreted in Local Plans. The National Planning Framework sets out the Scotland-wide planning context.

National and International Legislation

- 3.14. The national planning policy guidance may also set out how the planning system should interpret national and international law. For example, the EU Air Quality, Water Framework, Birds and Habitats Directives all have an impact on the Local Plan. Relevant national legislation includes the Wildlife and Countryside (Scotland) Act 1981, the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, and the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003.

Other Statutory Plans

- 3.15. In addition to the Cairngorms National Park Plan and Local Plan, the Cairngorms National Park Authority also has a statutory obligation to prepare:
- 3.16. The Core Paths Plan - as the Access Authority under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the Park Authority has prepared the plan through the Local Outdoor Access Forum.

Other Plans and Policies

- 3.17. The Local Plan is also influenced by a range of other plans and strategies such as:
- Forestry and Woodland Strategy
 - Sustainable Tourism Strategy
 - Housing Strategy
 - River Catchment management plans;
 - Waste management plans;
 - Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan and UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

4. METHODOLOGY

The Cairngorms National Park Authority's Approach to SEA

- 4.1. The Park Authority's approach to carrying out the SEA is based on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Scottish Government Guidance and the desire to integrate the SEA process closely with the development of the Plan itself. The aims and objectives of the Park include explicit reference to a wide range of environmental topics. The procedure which is formalised through the SEA is therefore central to the process of developing the Local Plan.
- 4.2. The Cairngorms National Park Authority chose to carry out SEA of both the Cairngorms National Park Plan and Local Plan internally rather than employ consultants to carry out the work as a contract. It was felt that by doing the SEA 'in-house', it could be more easily integrated with the plan-making process and would lead to better plans. It was also felt that the Cairngorms National Park Authority contained much of the necessary expertise and knowledge of the Cairngorms National Park and could use the SEA process to develop skills that would be employed in SEA of other plans and programmes produced by the CNPA.
- 4.3. This revised Environmental Report accompanies the Local Plan post inquiry modifications. The SEA has developed with the development of the Local Plan since the deposit Local Plan and previous Environmental Report were prepared. Our understanding of the likely significant environmental effects of the Plan has been informed by the comments on the Plan and the previous Environmental Report.

The SEA Process

- 4.4. The SEA process mirrors a number of stages of Local Plan preparation and can be broken into a number of different, but often overlapping tasks:
 1. Screening whether plan requires assessment
 2. Collating and forecasting baseline information
 3. Scoping the likely significant environmental effects
 4. Developing environmental objectives and criteria
 5. Assessing the Plan and alternatives, including aims, policies and proposals
 6. Publishing the Environmental Report with the consultation draft Local Plan
 7. Modifying the Local Plan for deposit and revising the Environmental Report
 8. Depositing the Local Plan with the revised Environmental Report
 9. Modifying the Deposit Local Plan in response to comments and objections and reviewing SEA for modifications
 10. Consideration of SEA results and finalising of monitoring proposals prior to Local Plan adoption
 11. Statement of: how environmental considerations have been integrated in the plan; how the environmental report, consultation responses and public opinions have been taken into account; and the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted in light of other reasonable options considered.
 12. Monitoring significant environmental effects of plan and consider need for review

SEA screening

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

Environmental baseline

- 4.6. The collation of information to form the environmental baseline for the SEA was aided by the production of The State of the Park Report as part of the process of preparing the Cairngorms National Park Plan. This report draws together existing information on the Park's resources as a baseline to inform development and assessment of the National Park Plan and future plans and policies in the Cairngorms National Park. The report covers:
- natural resources
 - cultural resources
 - visitor resources
 - economic and social resources
- 4.7. In each section the report identifies as far as possible:
- current extent of the resource
 - relative importance of the resource
 - current state of the resource
 - key trends affecting the resource
 - limitations on existing data and future research needs
- 4.8. The report provided much of the environmental baseline data against which the potential effects of the Local Plan can be assessed, and against which implementation of the Local Plan can be monitored.
- 4.9. The Cairngorms National Park Authority commissioned 'The Cairngorms Landscape Capacity for Housing Study' during the preparation of the consultative draft Local Plan. The Capacity Study characterised settlements around the Cairngorms National Park and identified areas that had capacity to absorb new housing without significant changes in landscape and settlement character, as well as areas where housing would be likely to lead to significant changes.
- 4.10. The CNPA also conducted walkover surveys of the Local Plan proposals sites in order to verify the ground conditions and species/habitats present and surrounding the sites. These walkover surveys were conducted by an ecologist or planner during spring and summer 2005. Additional site visits were made during 2006, 2007 and 2008.

SEA scoping

- 4.11. Following the determination on SEA, the Cairngorms National Park Authority sent an SEA scoping report to the consultation Authorities on 22 July 2005 that set out what it considered the potential effects of the Local Plan could be, and how they would be assessed. The scoping report also set out the SEA objectives that would be used to assess the Local Plan Policies and proposals and the assessment methodology. The Consultation Authorities provided the Cairngorms National Park Authority with their responses on 26 August 2005.

Developing environmental objectives and criteria

- 4.12. The SEA scoping report set out an environmental baseline and SEA objectives and criteria for the Local Plan SEA. These were modified following receipt of the consultation authorities' comments on the SEA Scoping Report and are described in section 6 of this Environmental Report. The objectives were further refined during the assessment of the consultative draft Local Plan and also in response to comments on the Plan and Environmental Report.

Assessing the Local Plan

- 4.13. The strategic context for the Local Plan is provided by the Cairngorms National Park Plan. The Park Plan has also been subject to SEA.
- 4.14. The main task of the assessment of the Local Plan is the evaluation of each policy and proposal against the SEA objectives in order to predict the environmental effects and evaluate their significance. The nature and scale of those effects are recorded in detail in assessment sheets similar to that shown in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 SEA Assessment Sheet		
Policy/Proposal		The policy/proposal reference
Purpose of policy/proposals:		What the policies/proposals are supposed to achieve and how.
Identify policy/proposal options including consideration of alternatives where relevant:		Detail of what policy options or spatial options were considered in developing the policy/proposals, what alternatives (if any were possible) were considered and decisions taken so far.
Prediction of individual policy /settlement proposal direct and indirect effects: Detailed assessment of individual policies and settlement policies against each SEA objective and justification/ reasoning behind predictions and evaluations. This stage will draw direct, indirect, cumulative and synergistic effects.		
Draft SEA Objectives	Summary score	Reasoning for score
1		
2		
3		
etc		
Summary of policy/proposal effects:		A critique of the policy/proposals based on the detailed assessment.
Options for mitigation or modification:		If the policy/proposal is likely to have significant negative environmental impacts, possible amendments to avoid or mitigate the impacts will be outlined here.

- 4.15. A matrix of 'scores' that help to describe the effects is also created to summarise the effects. It can be used to help identify trends in the effects of policies or proposals, and also to help identify cumulative effects. An example of the assessment matrix is shown in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2. Example of SEA Assessment Matrix

Local Plan Policies and Proposals	Cairngorms National Park draft SEA Objectives			
	1	2	3	SEA Objectives, 4, 5 etc
Policy 1				
Policy 2				
etc				
Settlement A Proposals				
Settlement B Proposals				
etc				

- 4.16. The evaluation of predicted effects allows a judgement to be made about whether the effects are significant or not. The significance of effects is related to the scale and nature of the effect and to the importance or sensitivity of the environment that the effect acts on. For example, the loss of a small area of a common habitat may not be considered a significant effect whereas the loss of a large area or the common habitat may be considered significant. Equally, a small loss of a rare, infrequent or sensitive habitat is likely to be considered significant.
- 4.17. In order to make the scoring simple to understand and to analyse, a system of five categories of effect was chosen for the assessment of the consultative draft Local Plan. These ran from strongly positive effects through to strongly negative effects.
- 4.18. For the assessment of the deposit Local Plan, the scoring framework was extended to 7 categories in order to provide additional clarity about the significance of the predicted effects. The categories and symbol codes are shown in figure 4.3. This system of scoring also allowed for more detailed identification of potential cumulative effects.

Figure 4.3 Environmental Effect Scoring

Symbol	Description of Effect
+++	<i>strongly positive effect (significant)</i>
++	<i>positive effect (significant)</i>
+	<i>small positive effect (not significant)</i>
=	<i>neutral or no effect</i>
-	<i>small negative effect (not significant)</i>
--	<i>negative effect (significant)</i>
---	<i>strongly negative effect (significant)</i>
?	<i>Uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted</i>
\	<i>Not applicable</i>

- 4.19. All policies and proposals in the Local Plan were assessed against the SEA objectives. Proposals for sites that already have outline planning permission were assessed in detail through the SEA. While the principle of development is accepted on sites with outline consent, the determination of reserved matters and detailed permission may allow the planning authority to minimise or insist in mitigation for any negative environmental effects of the development.

- 4.20. All assessment decisions were made by CNPA planners, informed by the assessment of the deposit Local Plan and its modifications and the comments received on the Environmental Report. Assessments of policies are based on the same principle as the Local Plan – that all policies apply to development proposals. This means that the potential negative effects of policies that promote development will be avoided or minimised through the application of the protective policies in the Local Plan.

The Environmental Report

- 4.21. This Environmental Report provides a summary of the SEA process to accompany the Local Plan first modifications, and provides the information required of an Environmental Report as set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations.

Modifying the Local Plan and revising the Environmental Report

- 4.22. The deposit Local Plan and Environmental Report were subject to consultation between July and September 2007. The response to the deposit Local Plan led to a number of modifications being proposed to the local plan policies and proposals. The finalised Plan was then the subject of a Local Plan Inquiry. The recommendations made by the Scottish Government Reporters, as a result of this Inquiry and the CNPA assessment of them have resulted in a number of further modifications. This modified policies and proposals have now been reassessed, taking into account comments on the Environmental Report where relevant.
- 4.23. Any further modifications to the Local Plan as a result of consultation on the Post Inquiry Modifications will be accompanied by a revised Environmental Report that takes into account comments on this Report and any changes to the Local Plan, as part of the ongoing, iterative SEA process.

Consulting on the Local Plan post inquiry modifications and revised Environmental Report

- 4.24. The Local Plan post inquiry modifications and revised SEA Environmental Report will be out for consultation between 24 May and 2 July 2010
- 4.25. Both the Local Plan modifications and the Environmental Report are subject to consultation. At this stage in the process, the comments received will hopefully let us know we have addressed some of the concerns already raised, and if not, will feed into any further modifications to the Plan.

Finalising monitoring proposals

- 4.26. Proposals for monitoring the significant environmental effects will be finalised, informed by responses to the Local Plan and the Environmental Report.

Statement of compliance and environmental considerations

- 4.27. A formal stage of the SEA process that is required by the Directive is a statement of how environmental considerations have been integrated in the plan; how the environmental report, consultation responses and public opinions have been taken into account; and the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted in light of other reasonable options considered. This statement is prepared at the time of adoption of the Local Plan.

Monitoring significant environmental effects of the Plan and consider need for review

- 4.28. This stage of the SEA process will be carried out as part of the ongoing review of the Local Plan. It is anticipated that monitoring of the significant environmental

effects of the Plan will be supplemented by more strategic monitoring of the state of the Park against health indicators (many linked to the state of the environment) that are identified through the Cairngorms National Park Plan process.

Consultation in the SEA Process

- 4.29. This Environmental Report is being consulted on with the Local Plan post inquiry modifications. It is hoped that the consultation authorities and public will provide comments on the revisions that have been made to the predicted significant environmental effects of the Local Plan as well as on the content of the Local Plan itself.
- 4.30. The SEA process has involved a number of formal stages of consultation so far. The consultation authorities (Scottish Government, Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) were asked firstly for screening opinions and secondly for scoping opinions on the need for and scope of an SEA of the Local Plan. The consultation authorities, other partners and the public were invited to comment on the consultative draft Local Plan and SEA Environmental Report over late 2005 and early 2006, and then on the deposit local plan and revised Environmental Report in 2007. The Environmental Report was then updated and revised to account for both first and second modifications to the Local Plan.
- 4.31. The Local Plan process itself was started with a consultation across the Cairngorms National Park on what issues the public considered should be dealt with by the Local Plan.

Identification of effects on Natura interests

- 4.32. The Local Plan is subject to the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This means that the Local Plan cannot be adopted unless the planning authority has determined that the provisions of the plan are not likely to have a significant effect on any European site; or an appropriate assessment has been carried out in respect of the provisions of the plan in line with article 6.3 and 6.4 of the Habitats Directive.
- 4.33. The SEA process clearly provides a mechanism for identifying potential effects of policies and proposals on Natura interests. However, the SEA process does not provide the strict tests for identifying significant effects that are required by the Habitats Regulations.
- 4.34. The CNPA has undertaken appropriate assessments of the implications of the Local Plan for Natura interests. The assessments have informed the Local Plan as modified and will also inform the implementation of the plan.

Difficulties encountered in the SEA Process

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

Information gathering and availability

- 4.36. Both the Local Plan and SEA require information that is as accurate and up to date as possible. The State of the Park Report has gathered together a wide range of current information on the environmental resources of the Park, but it also identifies limitations to this information.

- 4.37. The new geography of the Park boundary means that many data sets cannot be interrogated or analysed at the Park level, because they have been collated for different boundaries. For example, a significant amount of data is collated at local authority level, which therefore requires extraction from four different sources, which do not match the Park boundary. This can be compounded by the fact that data is often held in different formats. This is an issue that will be addressed over time as the Park Authority identifies research priorities and carries out monitoring that will give an increasing knowledge base.

Difficulties encountered in the Assessment

- 4.38. In identifying relevant SEA objectives and criteria, it was difficult to identify the appropriate aspects of human health and population to consider in assessment. Schedule 2 of the Regulations identifies both of these topics as suitable for inclusion. However, it has proved difficult to separate the environmental effects on these two topics from socio-economic effects.
- 4.39. The Local Plan SEA has combined these topics into one SEA objective (11) 'to maintain a sustainable and healthy population'. The criteria used for assessment relate to effects on human health and wellbeing, which are considered to include access to key services. The criteria used are:
- Provide for housing and service needs of local communities;
 - Ensure access to services for communities;
 - Encourage healthy lifestyles.
- 4.40. The assessment of proposal sites also encountered problems where a site is proposed for development but without detailed proposals for how it should be laid out, constructed, operated etc. The issue will be common to many SEAs as the assessment of proposal sites moves closer to project level Environmental Impact Assessment, which that is not appropriate for a Local Plan.

5. PREDICTED ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND ISSUES

Environmental Baseline of the Cairngorms National Park

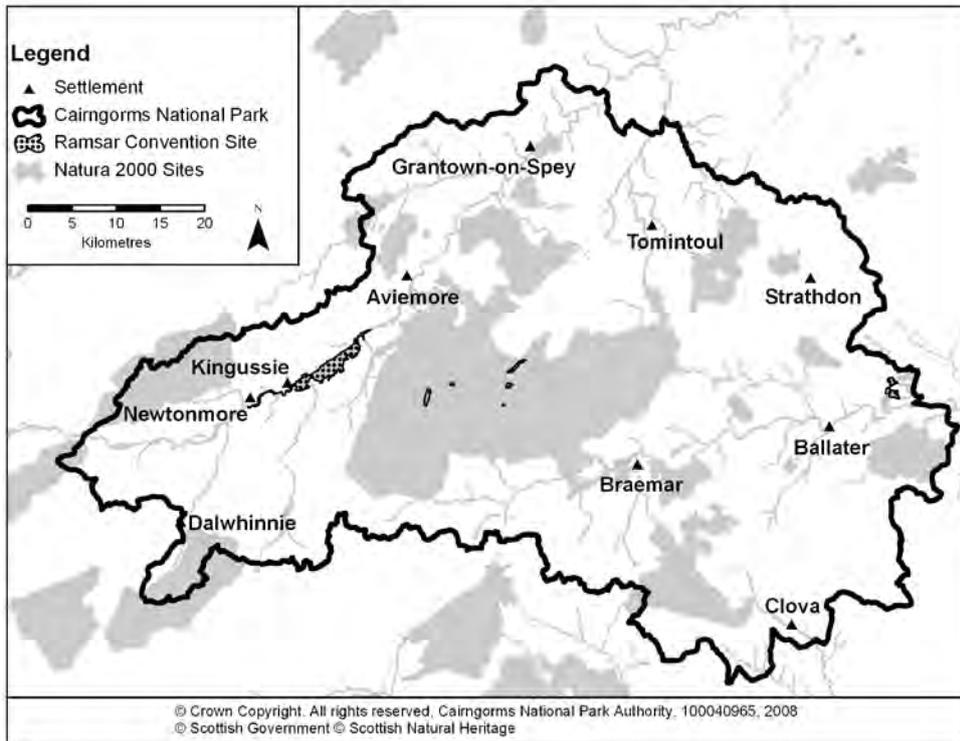
- 5.1. The predicted environmental baseline for the Local Plan is likely to be very similar to the current environmental baseline in the Cairngorms National Park. This section of the Environmental Report describes the current environmental baseline and trends that are considered relevant to the National Park and Local Plan.
- 5.2. Figure 5.1 summarises the key environmental baseline facts. Maps 5.1 to 5.6 provide an overview of the distribution of a range of environmental features in the National Park. Detailed data is available in the State of the Park Report (CNPA).

Figure 5.1: KEY BASELINE FACTS

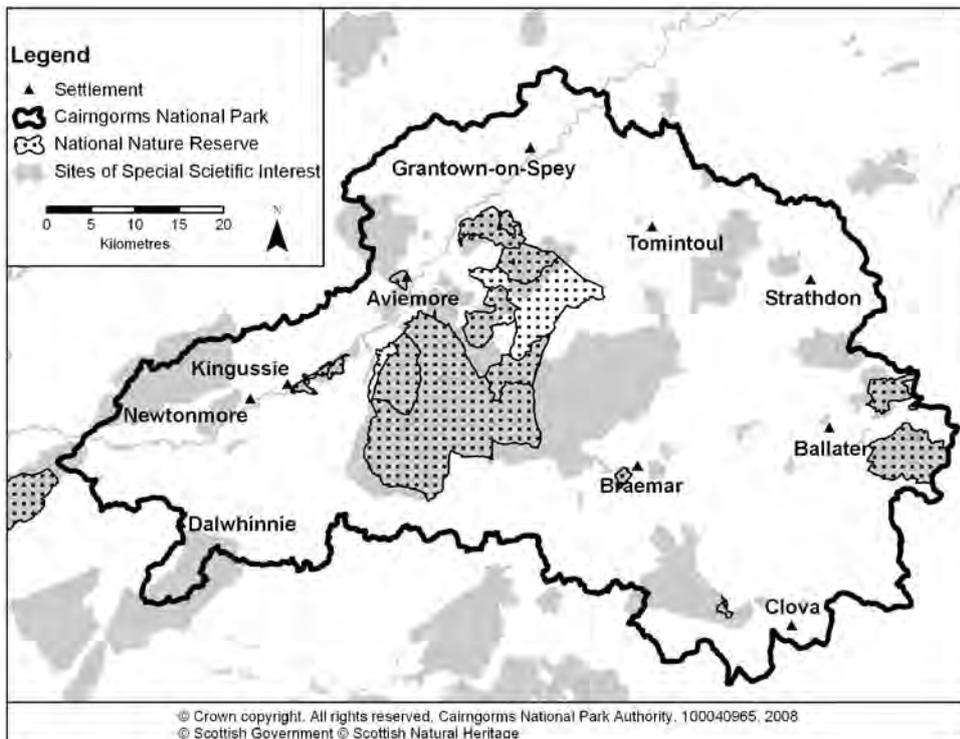
Resource	Key Facts
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% of UK's threatened species present • 12.5% of Scotland's semi-natural woodland cover • Habitat types present include: montane; dwarf shrub heath; conifer woodland; broadleaved and mixed woodland; acid grassland; fen, marsh and swamp; standing water; rivers and streams. • UK Biodiversity Action Plan Species include: upland oak and birch woodland; bog woodland (largest extent in Scotland); juniper; capercaillie; black grouse; Scottish crossbill. • Habitats listed under Annex I of EU Habitats Directive include: dry heaths; alpine and boreal heaths; sub-arctic willow scrub; siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands, Nardus grasslands; calcareous flushes • Close proximity of lowground, woodland, water, upland and montane habitats
Designated Nature Conservation Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39% of Park designated for natural heritage • 21 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – as of May 2007 • 14 Special Protection Areas (SPA) – as of May 2007 • 46 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – some of which are of geological importance • 3 Ramsar Sites • 6 National Nature Reserves
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 SSSIs with soils of international importance • 12 SSSIs with soils of national importance • High proportion of undisturbed soils (only 2% cultivated) • Podzols form 50% of soil cover including internationally significant alpine podzols on the plateau • Peat forms 13% of soil cover
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001 Census: 16,024 people • Population density 0.04 people/Ha (lower than Scottish average) • 25.8% of population over 60 (higher than Scottish average) • Average health index in top 25% of Scotland (based on deprivation indices)
Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 designated Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes • 60 Scheduled Ancient Monuments • 424 listed buildings

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

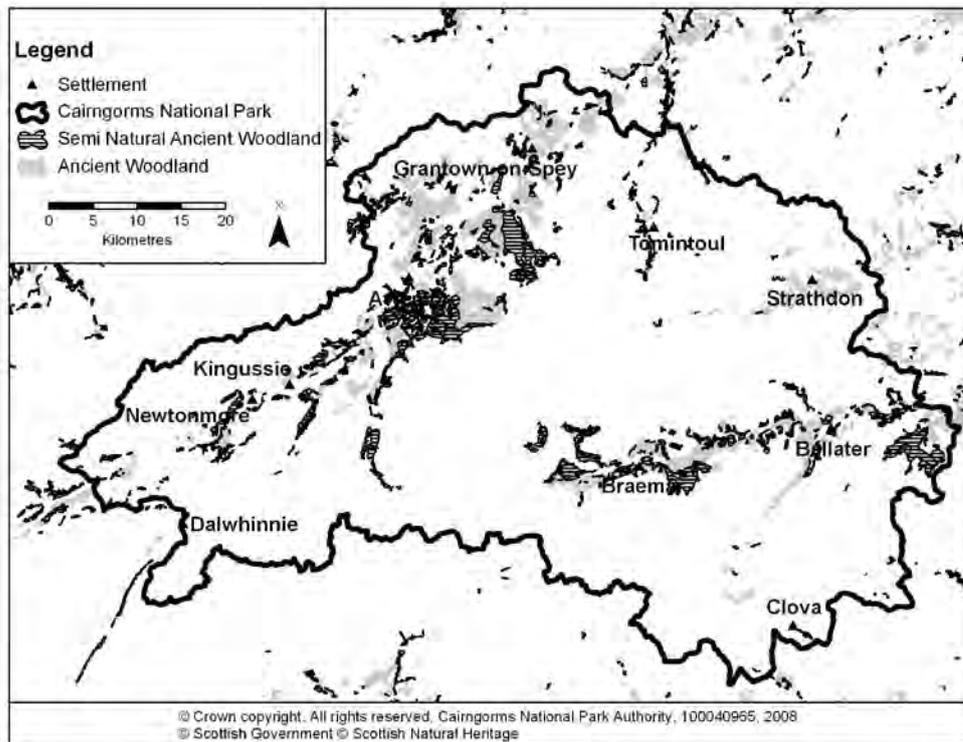
Map 5.1 International Nature Conservation designations



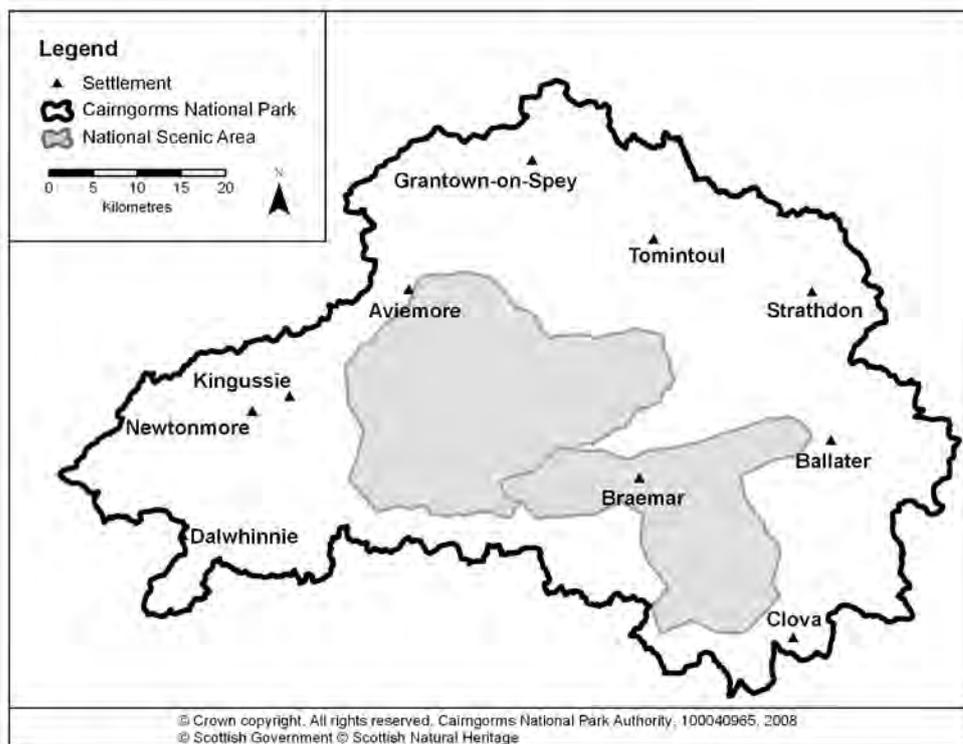
Map 5.2 National Nature Conservation Designations



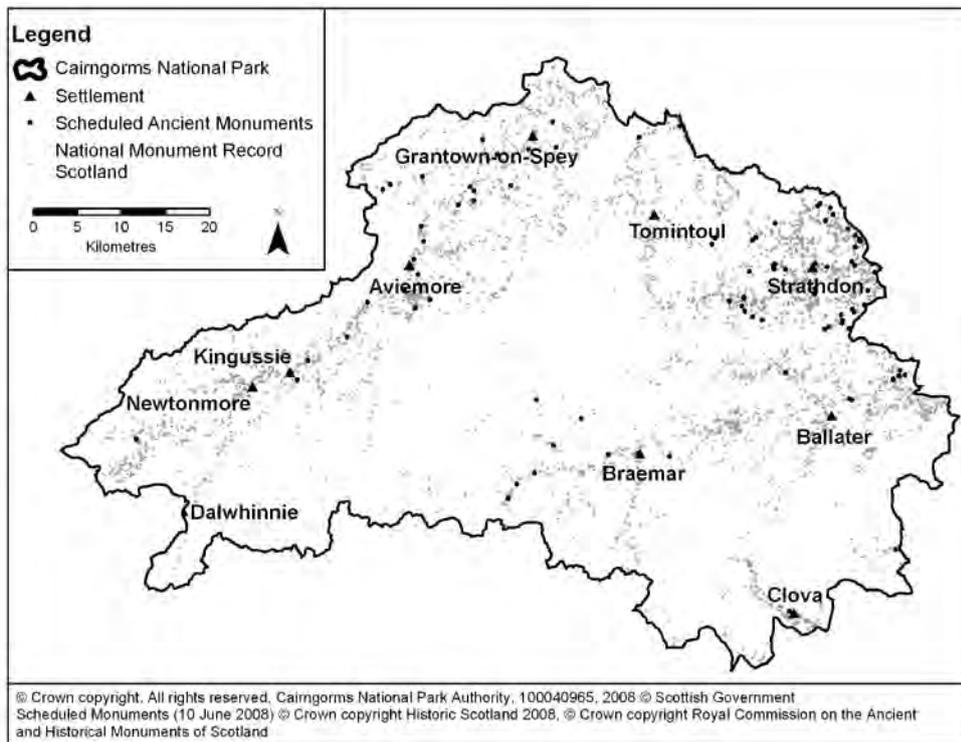
Map 5.3 Ancient woodland sites



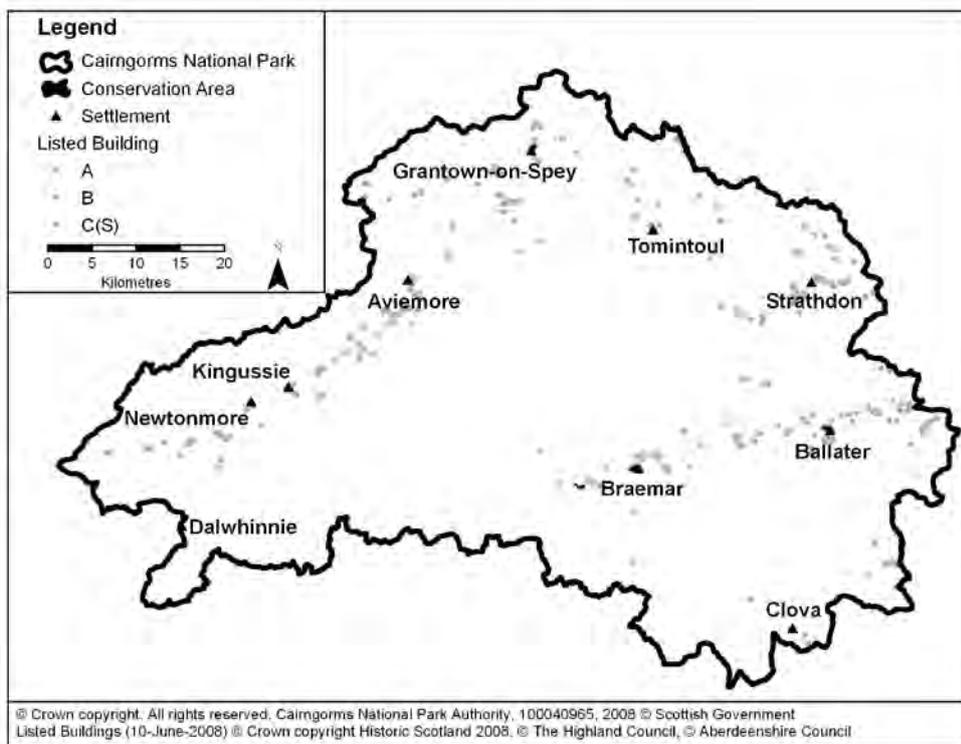
Map 5.4 National Scenic Areas



Map 5.5 Scheduled Monuments and other monument records



Map 5.6 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas



Environmental Issues in the Cairngorms National Park

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

Figure 5.2: KEY TRENDS and ISSUES in the CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

Resource	Key Trends	Key Issues
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some continued habitat loss, fragmentation & deterioration • Vegetation limited by grazing pressure • Continued introductions of non-native species • Increase in native woodland cover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem integrity and connectivity • Impact of non-native species • Impact of climate change • Impact of recreation • Impact of development • Incomplete data
Designated Nature Conservation Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing account of external impacts to sites (Nature Conservation Act 2004) • Recent expansion of Natura 2000 designations • Review of NNR designations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management practices • Long-term security of management objectives • Integration with wider land-use
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing population • Loss of young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications for community dynamics • Implications for development patterns • Implications for human resources
Historic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land-use change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of new development • Extension of forest cover • Agricultural changes from CAP reform • Impact of visitors
Landforms and Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in woodland cover • Decline in heather moorland cover • Increase in research on landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of development • Recreation pressure • Connectivity of land cover • Impacts of tracks and footpaths • Renewable energy developments • Perceptions of wildness and identification qualities of wildness
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil erosion on higher slopes and plateaux 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of grazing • Impacts of recreation • Lack of information on soil use and development
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acidification (atmospheric) • Decline in native fish stocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diffuse pollution from agricultural ground • River modification • Catchment processes and flood management • Availability for consumption • Impact of recreation

Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change- increasing temperature and precipitation expected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmospheric pollution
Access and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing range of outdoor recreation activities • New public right of responsible access • More managed path networks • Increased level of upland path provision and repair • Diversification of ski centres into summer activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development increasing or reducing access opportunities • Impact of access on habitats and species • Landscape impact of access infrastructure • Accessibility of environment for all
Energy and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing demand for renewable (particularly windfarm) sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impact of transmission pylons and windfarm developments • Use of non-renewable energy sources
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abandonment or conversion of farm steadings • Significant demand for new housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decay of listed buildings • Impact of development on settlement character

Limitations of Data

- 5.4. The Cairngorms National Park is one of the most closely studied geographical areas in the UK and so has a wealth of information that can be used to provide a baseline. However, a number of factors limit the value or usability of data:
- **Information is fragmented across the Cairngorms National Park, with some sites or areas having been more closely studied than others.** Of particular relevance to the Local Plan is that the wealth of information on the uplands and mountains of the Cairngorms is not reflected in as comprehensive a manner for the straths and lowlands.
 - **The formal geography of the Cairngorms National Park is a new boundary, to which data has not been collected in the past.** The Park boundary cuts across four different local authority areas, and different sections of other agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage which means that data has often been collected for different areas using different standards and methodologies in the past.
 - **Data is held in different forms.** Some data is well suited to straightforward assessment and query. For example, data that can be accessed or queried through GIS can be used to assess proposals and sites more easily than information held in reports or books.

Evolution of the Environment without the Local Plan

- 5.5. The Directive requires the likely evolution of the environment without the Plan to be considered. The trends identified above are expected to continue in the absence of new policy or actions to address them. In particular, many of the trends that are related to the development of land are considered likely to continue in the absence of up to date planning policy.
- 5.6. The underlying purpose of the National Park designation is to integrate the management of different sectors and areas within the Park in order to take a co-ordinated approach to addressing these issues and delivering the Park aims.

- 5.7. The Local Plan is the main tool for influencing development planning in the Park. It will affect some environmental trends in the Park but many other trends require action through other mechanisms. The Cairngorms National Park Plan co-ordinates a more holistic overview of the environment in the Park and a broader range of policy responses and actions than the Local Plan can do.

6. SEA OBJECTIVES, INDICATORS AND TARGETS

SEA Objectives

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

Figure 6.1
Cairngorms National Park SEA Objectives

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

- 6.3. The 14 SEA objectives are a broad set of objectives that can be applied to the policies and proposals within the Local Plan. To assess the Plan’s potential effect on these objectives, a set of more detailed and targeted criteria reflecting the key issues are required for each one.
- 6.4. These criteria are used to determine the potential effects in relation to the SEA objectives in the context of the environmental resources and issues relevant to the Cairngorms National Park. The criteria are shown in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2

SEA Objectives	Local Plan SEA Criteria
<p>1. To conserve and enhance the diversity of species</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss of priority species* • Increase creation and improve condition of priority species’ habitats • Minimise disturbance to and avoid deterioration of priority species and their habitats <p>* priority species are species that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ qualifying criteria of SPAs or SCAs; ▪ notified features on SSSIs; ▪ listed in Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive; ▪ listed as of community interest in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats directive; ▪ species listed in schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended; or ▪ listed in the UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) or Cairngorms LBAP
<p>2. To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss of priority habitats* • Increase creation and improve condition of priority habitats • Minimise disturbance to and avoid deterioration of priority habitats • Ensure designated sites are in favourable condition • Consider impacts of new species <p>* priority habitats are habitats that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ qualifying criteria of SPAs or SCAs; ▪ notified features on SSSIs; ▪ listed in Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive; ▪ listed as of community interest in Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats directive; ▪ of naturally occurring wild birds, particularly those in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive and migratory species; ▪ listed in the UK BAP or Cairngorms LBAP; or ▪ native woodlands, including ancient woodland sites in the Ancient Woodland Inventory
<p>3. To maintain and enhance the integrity of ecosystems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent fragmentation of habitats • Ensure development does not create new barriers to native species movement. • Promote habitat networks in accordance with strategic priorities outlined in the National Park Plan
<p>4. To protect and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve water quality • Identify and avoid significant adverse downstream impacts • Ensure new development has appropriate SUDS
<p>5. To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage flood risks • Minimise pollution risks • Identify sphere of influence and downstream impacts • Avoid interference with natural fluvial processes

Figure 6.2

SEA Objectives

Local Plan SEA Criteria

<p>6. To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and enhance existing landscape character • Identify impacts on landscape character and experience • Avoid significant adverse impacts on landscape character • Ensure development is sited and designed to make a positive contribution to landscape character • Minimise effects of development on qualities of wildness in the Park • Allocate sites for development in areas with the greatest capacity to absorb it • Conserve geodiversity (geological and geomorphological features)
<p>7. To ensure responsible access for all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss/fragmentation of access networks and open greenspace • Create appropriate new access opportunities • Promote safe access provision and use
<p>8. To maintain and improve air quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise need for travel by private car • Minimise emissions from domestic and commercial premises
<p>9. To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce consumption of fossil fuels • Encourage use of local timber products in development • Conserve mineral resources • Conserve soil resources • Minimise loss of productive agricultural land • Optimise recycling and reusing • Sustainable use of water
<p>10. To conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect archaeological sites of interest • Protect designed landscapes
<p>11. To maintain a sustainable and healthy population</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for housing needs of local communities • Ensure access to services for communities • Encourage healthy lifestyles
<p>12. To improve sustainable energy efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise energy efficiency of new development through sustainable materials and construction • Minimise need for use of private cars • Increase sustainable energy production
<p>13. To reduce waste and pollution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase reuse and recycling of materials • Reduce production of waste • Adopt sustainable waste management practices
<p>14. To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality in new building design • Maintain the character of settlements • Prevent loss of locally distinctive architecture

SEA Indicators and Targets

- 6.5. The SEA criteria have been developed into indicators and targets that can be used to monitor the environmental performance of the Local Plan against SEA objectives. The SEA indicators and targets are shown in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3

Draft SEA Objectives		Indicators	Targets
1	To conserve and enhance the diversity of species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> loss of priority species or associated habitats to development creation of habitats for priority species through development management of habitats for priority species through development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No loss of priority species to development No loss of priority species' habitats to development. Increase areas of habitat managed for priority species.
2	To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> loss of priority habitats to development creation of priority habitats through development management of priority habitats through development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No loss of priority habitats to development Increase creation of priority habitats through development Increase management for priority habitats through development
3	To maintain and enhance the integrity of ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuity of priority habitats Maintenance or creation of priority habitats to create networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure development does not lead fragmentation of priority habitats Increase maintenance or creation of priority habitats to create habitat networks in accordance with strategic priorities outlined in the National Park Plan
4	To protect and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecological status of water bodies Developments consented with appropriate SUDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new development consented with conditions to ensure no decline in ecological status of water bodies, and where reasonable to improve the ecological status of water bodies All developments consented with SUDS
5	To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development permitted on the functional floodplain or other wetland Developments consented with appropriate SUDS Management of wetland areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No development permitted on functional floodplain or wetland areas All developments consented with SUDS No loss of areas managed as wetlands
6	To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to landscape character from development Developments that complement landscape character Sites for development having greatest capacity to absorb it Loss/ disturbance to geological/geomorphological features. Sense of wildness Reflection of historic landuse elements in development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers/styles/types of development that lead to changes in landscape character All developments that are consented and are considered to make a positive contribution to landscape character. All development sites chosen to reflect capacity Increase or decrease in development in remote areas. All developments where historic landscape elements are preserved.

Figure 6.3

Draft SEA Objectives		Indicators	Targets
7	To ensure responsible access for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase or decrease in provision of access routes through development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance of loss/ gain of access routes or open greenspace Type of access or open greenspace loss or gain.
8	To maintain and improve air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollution emissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce pollutant emissions
9	To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developments heated without fossil fuels Developments using local timber products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All development heated without fossil fuels. All developments using local timber products
10	To conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developments that affect the site or setting of an archaeological site of interest (of national, regional or local importance) Developments that affect the site or setting of a designed landscape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No developments having significant adverse effects on site of setting of archaeological site of importance to the National Park. No developments having significant adverse effects on site of setting of designed landscape of importance to the Cairngorms National Park.
11	To maintain a sustainable and healthy population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective housing land for local housing need provision of effective housing land close to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local housing need demand met by supply of land and consents for development over plan period All housing land provided within easy reach of service or with additional services.
12	To improve sustainable energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developments heated without fossil fuels Carbon footprints of new developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All development heated without fossil fuels All new development being carbon neutral in construction and operation
13	To reduce waste and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total waste arisings Percentage of waste recycled and reused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce waste arising from new development Ensure capacity for recycling in new developments
14	To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in settlement character through development Loss of locally distinctive architecture to development Developments that affect listed buildings and their setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance & enhancement of settlement character Ensure retention of locally distinctive architecture in development No development having a significant negative effect on listed buildings or their setting

7. LOCAL PLAN STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVES

7.1. The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan is intended to replace four Local Authority Local Plans of varying ages that overlap the National Park. The Local Plan is intended to reflect the importance of the National Park’s special qualities, including its natural and cultural heritage, and the strategic context provided by a National Park Plan and the aims of the National Park. It has also been developed in the context of national and international policy, particularly in relation to the natural environment. Much of the strategic direction of the Local Plan is therefore set by other plans, policies or legislation.

7.2. The Local Plan does have capacity to promote development in different ways, and the most significant development proposals in terms of land area and potential environmental effects within the Local Plan are those for housing land. The National Park Authority considered a number of alternative scenarios before choosing the approach outlined in the Local Plan. The approach outlined in the Local Plan has been chosen because of its potential to tackle problems in the housing market.

Strategic Policy Alternatives

7.3. It is important to recognise that few significant strategic alternatives were considered in the development of the Local Plan. Clearly, the policy framework is intended to protect the special qualities of the National Park while encouraging appropriate development.

7.4. The policy alternatives that were considered as alternatives are listed in figure 7.1 below.

Figure 7.1 Strategic Policy Alternatives

Policy ref	Summary of approach proposed	Alternatives considered	Potential environmental effects of alternatives	Reasons for not choosing alternatives
The general approach to providing housing and housing land in the Park.	The approach aims to accommodate potential growth in households as well as continued demand for second homes. The approach identifies sufficient land and places some conditions on the housing market to ensure that a high proportion of housing is accessible to those who need it in the Park.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A highly restrictive approach to the housing market that limited the occupants of new housing. 2. The continued application of conventional housing planning policy that requires a smaller proportion of housing to be affordable. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potentially similar effects to those predicted for the approach chosen. However, development of land would be expected to be at a slower rate. 2. Potentially similar effects to those predicted for the approach chosen. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The approach would be unlikely to deliver the strategic housing objectives of the Cairngorms National Park Plan and could have negative social and economic effects on the Park’s communities. 2. The approach would be unlikely to deliver the strategic housing objectives of the Park Plan.

Strategic Proposal Alternatives

- 7.5. The proposed allocations of land for development within the Local Plan are intended to minimise potential adverse effects on the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park whilst still providing enough land for development. The Plan focuses housing development on existing settlements to make best use of existing services, and tries to balance the opportunities for growth with the size of the existing settlement.
- 7.6. The Local Plan must also identify effective land for development (land that can be developed in the lifetime of the Plan). This often means that sites that have been identified for development in the past will be more likely to be effective than new sites. Most of the sites proposed for development within the Local Plan are currently allocated in existing Local Plans.

8. ASSESSMENT OF PLAN POLICIES

How Environmental Problems were Considered in Developing the Policies

- 8.1. The policies of the Local Plan are a direct response to a number of the environmental issues facing the Cairngorms National Park and to the need to reflect the aims of the National Park in planning policy. They are also intended to support development at suitable sites to provide homes, services and employment for the population of the Cairngorms National Park without damaging the special qualities of the Park.
- 8.2. Clearly, the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park are closely linked to the natural and cultural heritage of the area and so policies are specifically intended to provide robust protection to a wide range of environmental interests that are also reflected in the SEA objectives.

The Significant Environmental Effects of Policies

- 8.3. The following section describes the predicted significant environmental effects of policies in the Local Plan. Figure 8.1 summarises the predicted effects of all the Local Plan policies and highlights those policies that are considered likely to have significant environmental effects. The predicted significant effects of policies are summarised in more detail after Figure 8.1.
- 8.4. A large number of policies are considered unlikely to result in any significant environmental effects. In some cases, policy could have potential to significant adverse effects but is already mitigated by other policies that would prevent such effects from being permitted through development.
- 8.5. Assessment sheets for each policy outline and describe the predicted effects in more detail. They are contained in Appendix 2 of the Environmental Report and can be downloaded from Local Plan SEA pages on the CNPA website (www.cairngorms.co.uk).

Figure 8.1 SEA Policy Assessment Matrix

POLICY	SEA OBJECTIVES													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Natura 2000 sites	++	++	++	++	++	+	=	=	=	=	=	\	\	=
2. National natural heritage designations	++	++	+	+	+	+	=	=	=	=	=	\	\	=
3. Other important natural and earth heritage sites and interests	++	++	++	+	+	++	=	=	=	=	=	\	\	=
4. Protected species	++	++	+	+	=	=	=	=	\	=	=	\	\	=
5. Biodiversity	++	++	++	++	++	+	=	=	=	=	=	\	\	=
6. Landscape	=	=	=	\	\	++	+	\	\	++	\	\	\	++
7. Gardens and Designed Landscapes	\	\	\	\	\	++	\	\	\	++	\	\	\	=
8. Archaeology	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	\
9. Listed buildings	\	\	\	\	\	+	\	\	\	=	\	\	\	+
10. Conservation Areas	\	=	\	\	\	\	\	\	\	=	\	\	\	+
11. The local and wider cultural heritage of the Park	=	=	=	=	=	+	+	\	\	+	=	\	\	+
12. Water resources	+	++	++	++	++	=	=	\	++	\	+	+	=	\
13. Geodiversity	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	++	=	=	=	=	\

Figure 8.1 SEA Policy Assessment Matrix

POLICY	SEA OBJECTIVES													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
14. Contaminated land	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	+	+	=	+	\	+	=
15. Energy generation	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	+	=	=	++	\	=
16. Design standards for new development	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++
17. Reducing carbon emissions in development	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	+	=	=	+	=	=
18. Developer contributions	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	+	+	+
19. Contributions to affordable housing	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	++	=	=	=
20. Housing development within settlement boundaries	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
21. Housing development in rural building groups	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	+
22. Housing development outside settlements	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
23. Replacement houses	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
24. House extensions and alterations	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
25. Business development	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
26. Retail development	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
27. Conversion and reuse of traditional and vernacular buildings	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+
28. Gypsies and travelling show people	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
29. Integrated and sustainable transport network	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=
30. Telecommunications	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
31. Waste management	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	+	+	=
32. Tourism development	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
33. Outdoor access	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	+	=	=	+	+	=	=
34. Sport and recreation facilities	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
35. Other open space provision	=	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=	+	=	=	+
Possible Cumulative Effects	+	+	+	+	+	+	=	=	+	+	+	=	=	+
Scoring Codes														
+++	strongly positive effect (significant)													
++	positive effect (significant)													
+	small positive effect (not significant)													
=	neutral or no effect													
-	small negative effect (not significant)													
--	negative effect (significant)													
---	strongly negative effect (significant)													
?	uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted													
\	not applicable													

Policy 1 Natura 2000 sites

- 8.6. The policy provides strong protection for Natura 2000 sites in line with the Habitats Directive.

Policy 2 National Natural Heritage Designations

- 8.7. The policy provides national natural heritage designation with protection. This means it will have a range of positive environmental effects.

Policy 3 Other important natural and earth heritage sites and interests

- 8.8. The policy provides explicit protection for a range of identified natural heritage and earth heritage sites and interests. This means the policy has some positive environmental effects relating to habitats, geological sites, and sites identified by local authorities.

Policy 4 Protected Species

- 8.9. The policy reinforces the protection afforded to some species by law. This means that it may have some positive environmental effects linked to those species and their habitats.

Policy 5 Biodiversity

- 8.10. The policy provides a strong level of support for priority habitats and species that should have a range of positive environmental effects for species and habitats.

Policy 6 Landscape

- 8.11. The policy should have a positive effect on landscape character within the Park through by ensuring developments are sited and designed to make a positive contribution to the special landscape qualities or any adverse effects are minimised and mitigated.

Policy 7 Gardens and designed landscapes

- 8.12. The policy should have positive effects on objectives for the historic environment and landscape character.

Policy 12 Water resources

- 8.13. The policy provides strong protection for the water environment. This means that it should have a range of positive environmental effects on SEA objectives linked to the water environment.

Policy 13 Geodiversity

- 8.14. The policy has potential to have a range of negative effects that will be prevented by other policies in the Local Plan. It should have a positive effect on objective 9, 'use natural resources in a sustainable way' by promoting the conservation of mineral and soil resources where reasonable.

Policy 15 Energy generation

- 8.15. The policy has potential to have significant positive effects on sustainable energy production.

Policy 16 Design standards for development

- 8.16. The policy explicitly aims to ensure high quality in design of new development.

Policy 19 Contributions to affordable housing

- 8.17. The policy should help to ensure a range of housing options targeted at those who live and work in the Cairngorms National Park, who are in housing need, and who can't afford to purchase or rent homes on the open market.

Policy 33 Outdoor access

- 8.18. The policy should help to ensure a range of housing options targeted at those who live and work in the Cairngorms National Park, who are in housing need, and who can't afford to purchase or rent homes on the open market.

Cumulative and synergistic effects of policies

- 8.19. No significant cumulative or synergistic effects of policies are considered likely. While policies that promote development may have potential to have negative environmental effects, the protective policies in the Local Plan would also apply and would avoid, minimise or mitigate the negative effects. The protective policies and supporting text also state that the cumulative effects of proposals will be taken into account when determining planning applications.

Uncertainties and Risks

- 8.20. There is always likely to be uncertainty in the assessment of the Local Plan policies due to the lack of knowledge of future planning applications that will cause the implementation of the policies to have effects.

Proposed Mitigation

- 8.21. No mitigation is considered necessary.

9. ASSESSMENT OF PLAN PROPOSALS

How Environmental Problems were Considered in Developing the Proposals

- 9.1. The proposed development opportunities in the Local Plan reflect a number of the environmental issues facing the Cairngorms National Park. Firstly, pressure for housing development across the National Park has eroded the areas of semi-natural habitat within the Park. The proposals have as far as possible tried to avoid areas of semi-natural habitat. In particular, sites have been selected to minimise loss of sites of ancient woodland, whether of plantation or semi-natural origin. Clearly, sites have also been selected to avoid potential conflict with sites or interests that are designated for their natural or cultural heritage importance.
- 9.2. The effects of new housing development on landscape and settlement character can be significant and a study to identify sites around existing settlements with the greatest capacity to absorb new housing development was commissioned. This allowed the Local Plan to both select the most appropriate sites for housing from a landscape perspective, and, where this was not possible, to help identify the landscape and settlement character issues that would arise from proposing housing in more prominent or sensitive locations.
- 9.3. As far as possible, proposals have taken into account the policies that are set out in the Local Plan. Similarly, the assessment of proposals assumes that the detailed proposals for a site that would be brought forward by a developer would conform to the policies of the Local Plan. So for example, for each new proposal site, it was assumed that any development that could occur on the site would include SUDS that would be tailored to both the site and development.
- 9.4. Where sites already have outline planning permission and would not otherwise fulfil the selection criteria of the Local Plan, the environmental issues that should be considered when determining full planning permission or reserved matters consent have been highlighted.

The Significant Environmental Effects of Proposals

- 9.5. The following section describes the predicted significant environmental effects, uncertain and cumulative effects of proposed sites for development in the Local Plan. Figure 9.1 summarises the predicted effects of all the deposit Local Plan settlement proposals and highlights the proposals where significant environmental effects are predicted.
- 9.6. It is important to note that the Environmental Report only considers in detail the possible significant environmental effects. However, it is likely that any proposal for a future development will have some environmental effects through loss of habitats or other land uses, disturbance to species, use of cars, or changes in character of landscape or settlement. The level of significance depends on both the scale and nature of the proposals and the sensitivity of the interest that may be affected.
- 9.7. Although the Environmental Report deals with the significant effects at a strategic level, and therefore focuses on the most sensitive or rare or fragile environmental interests, the Local Plan proposals attempt to minimise adverse environmental effects that while not significant at the strategic level, may be important on a particular site or locality. The assessment sheets for each settlement and proposal site summarise effects that are not considered to be significant in the SEA. They are contained in Appendix 2 of the Environmental Report and can be downloaded from Local Plan SEA pages on the CNPA website (www.cairngorms.co.uk).

Judgements of the significance of proposals environmental effects

- 9.8. The judgements of significance of effects resulting from proposals can be easier to determine than those of policies as long as full information about the baseline conditions of the proposal site and the exact nature of proposals are known. In practice, it is rare that a comprehensive baseline for all sites would be available, and while the Local Plan allocates sites for particular types of development, it does not make comprehensive development proposals. In addition, small positive or negative environmental effects may not be significant in their own right, and may only contribute to a cumulative or synergistic effect of significance.
- 9.9. Because most proposals in the Local Plan involve a change of use of land, it can be argued that most proposals will have environmental effects simply through loss of plants or habitats on the site. However, some concept of the relative value of the environmental factors that are affected should be used to identify whether the effects are significant or not. For example, species-poor sown grassland is likely to be less important than species-rich semi-natural grassland. While loss of a hectare of the latter might be considered a significant effect, the loss of a hectare of the former is less likely to be considered significant.
- 9.10. For the purposes of the SEA, it was decided that all effects would be noted, but that only those effects that were closely linked to the assessment criteria and indicators should be considered significant. It was felt that this allowed for a more transparent presentation of the effects of the proposals and would acknowledge that any proposals could result in environmental effects but that not all effects would be significant.

Figure 9.1 SEA Proposal Assessment Matrix

POLICY	SEA OBJECTIVES													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
An Camas Mor New Settlement	--?	--?	--?	?	?	--?	=	?	++	=	++	+	+	+
Aviemore Community	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	?	=	=	=
Aviemore Economic Development	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	?	?	=
Aviemore Housing	=?	=?	=?	=?	=?	--	-	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Aviemore Open Space	+	+	+	=	=	+	+	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Boat of Garten Community	?	-?	-?	=?	=?	--	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Carr-Bridge Housing & Open Space	--	--	--	--	--	--	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Cromdale Open Space	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Dalwhinnie Housing & Open Space	=?	=?	=?	=?	=?	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Dalnain Bridge Housing	=?	=?	=?	=?	=?	=	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Grantown on Spey Housing	-	-	-	=?	=?	+	=	=	=	=	+	+	=	+
Grantown on Spey Open Space	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	=	+	=	=	=
Kincraig Housing	=?	=?	=?	=?	=?	--	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Kingussie Housing	=?	=?	=?	=?	=?	+	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Kingussie Open Space	=	=	=	=	=	+	+	=	=	=	+	=	=	=

Figure 9.1 SEA Proposal Assessment Matrix

SEA OBJECTIVES														
POLICY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Nethy Bridge Housing, Community & Open Space	-	--	--	=?	=?	--	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Newtonmore Housing	=?	=?	=?	=?	=?	--	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	-
Newtonmore Open Space	=	=	=	=	=	+	+	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Ballater Economic Development & Community	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Ballater Housing	=?	=?	=?	=?	?	-	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Braemar Housing, Community & Open Space	=?	=?	=?	=?	=?	-	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Tomintoul Housing, Community and Open Space	=?	=?	=?	=?	=?	-	=	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Possible Cumulative Effects	--?	--?	--?	-?	-?	-	=	=	=	=	++	=	=	=
Scoring Codes														
+++	strongly positive effect (significant)													
++	positive effect (significant)													
+	small positive effect (not significant)													
=	neutral or no effect													
-	small negative effect (not significant)													
--	negative effect (significant)													
---	strongly negative effect (significant)													
?	Uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted													
\	Not applicable													

An Camus Mor new settlement

- 9.11. The An Camus Mor new settlement proposal has potential to have a range of positive and negative environmental effects. They cannot be assessed in detail at this stage but it is likely that the development of the site has potential to have significant negative environmental effects on priority species and habitats, and the landscape character of the area (though the area has been identified as having some capacity to absorb new housing development). The development of the site also has potential to have indirect negative effects on the river Spey SAC via the disposal of waste waters.
- 9.12. It should be possible for proposals to take account of the findings of an EIA and to avoid, minimise and mitigate potential adverse effects on the environment. However, the Local Plan identifies the site as an allocation with a capacity for around 100 houses in the lifetime of the Local Plan but with a long term capacity for as many as 1500 houses.
- 9.13. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy 1 Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Aviemore housing

- 9.14. The development of the sites AV/H2 and AV/H3 has potential to result in significant negative effects on the landscape character of the eastern edge of Aviemore that will need to be minimised and mitigated in detailed proposals.
- 9.15. The development of AV/H1, AV/H2 and AV/H3 is considered unlikely to affect the integrity of the river Spey SAC. The waste waters from each site would be treated by the Aviemore waste water treatment works at Granish (which has been upgraded to improve the standards of discharge and increase capacity for these sites). Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licenced by SEPA for the Granish waste water treatment facility. Detailed proposals would be expected to incorporate measures to avoid impacts on the river Spey SAC from construction and operation.
- 9.16. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the River Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Ballater housing

- 9.17. The development of the proposal site could lead to negative effects on the landscape and settlement character of Ballater. However a detailed masterplan and design brief for the site will be prepared to ensure development is of the highest quality and minimises negative effects.
- 9.18. More information on the actual flood risks linked to the proposal site is needed to predict whether the site is likely to have significant effects on the function of the flood plain.
- 9.19. The development of the proposal site is considered unlikely to affect the integrity of the river Dee SAC. The waste waters from the site would be treated at the Ballater waste water treatment works north east of the site. The waste water treatment works do not have capacity to absorb such a development at present and no growth in capacity is planned for the period 2007-2010. However, the inclusion of the proposal site in the Local Plan will trigger review of the planned capacity by Scottish Water. Consent for any phase of development would only be permitted when the sewage works could treat waste waters to a standard that would have no significant adverse effects on the River Dee SAC. Detailed proposals would be expected to incorporate measures to avoid impacts on the river Dee SAC from construction and operation.
- 9.20. The fresh water supply for Ballater is abstracted from the river Gairn which is a tributary of the river Dee SAC. Although Scottish Water consider it likely that the source could provide capacity for future development, there, there is uncertainty about the cumulative effects of water abstraction on the river Dee SAC.
- 9.21. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the River Dee SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Boat of Garten community

- 9.22. The development of the proposed site will have negative environmental effects on the woodland habitat of the proposed sites, the species that use that woodland, and on the landscape character of the western approach to Boat of Garten. The effects may be minimised through the retention of as much woodland as possible in any detailed development proposals to screen the development and retain the backdrop of wooded

hillside. The previous site allocated for housing has also been removed to ensure new development is focused beside the existing settlement.

- 9.23. The CNPA has prepared an appropriate assessment for the proposed site in the Local Plan and the potential effects on the integrity of the population of capercaillie that use the nearby network of Natura sites and parts of the woodland south of the proposed development site. Any effects on capercaillie are likely to be indirect and from disturbance of birds by human recreation displaced from the proposal sites. There are no records of capercaillie using the proposal sites themselves but they are known to use the wider woodland habitat of the area.
- 9.24. The development of the proposal site is considered unlikely to affect the integrity of the river Spey SAC. The waste waters from each site would be treated by the Boat of Garten waste water treatment works which has improvements programmed to increase quality of discharge and increase the capacity of the works. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licenced by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.
- 9.25. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Dee SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Braemar housing and community

- 9.26. The proposals are considered unlikely to have any significant environmental effects. The proposal sites would be connected to the Braemar waste water treatment works which was recently upgraded for additional capacity. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licensed by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.
- 9.27. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Dee SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Carr-Bridge housing

- 9.28. Only proposal site H1 is considered likely to have significant environmental effects. The potential effects are being assessed in more detail and options to avoid, minimise and mitigate the effects are being explored in the determination of reserved matters for the site.
- 9.29. The waste waters from the site will be treated at the Carr-Bridge waste water treatment works. The treatment facility currently has capacity for more connection than the consented site. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licenced by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility. However, there is some uncertainty about the possible cumulative effects of development and the disposal of waste water on the river Spey SAC that cannot be satisfactorily resolved through the SEA. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Dalwhinnie housing

- 9.30. The proposals are considered unlikely to have any significant environmental effects. The housing proposal sites would be connected to the Dalwhinnie waste water treatment works. The Dalwhinnie treatment facility is a septic tank that currently has spare capacity

and can be modified to increase capacity. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licensed by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.

- 9.31. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Dulnain Bridge housing

- 9.32. The proposals are considered unlikely to have any significant environmental effects. The housing proposal sites would be connected to the Dulnain Bridge waste water treatment works. The Dulnain Bridge treatment facility currently has spare capacity for approximately 25 connections. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licensed by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.
- 9.33. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Grantown-on-Spey housing

- 9.34. The proposal is considered unlikely to have any significant negative environmental effects.
- 9.35. The housing proposal site would be connected to the Grantown-on-Spey waste water treatment works. The treatment facility currently has capacity for 68 more connections but also has growth programmed for the period 2007-2010, allowing the houses proposed during the lifetime of the Local Plan to be connected. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licenced by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.
- 9.36. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the River Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Kincraig housing

- 9.37. Proposal site H1 is considered likely to have significant negative effects on the landscape character and setting of Kincraig. No other significant environmental effects are predicted.
- 9.38. The housing proposal sites would be connected to the Kincraig waste water treatment works. The treatment facility currently has capacity for far more connections than would be developed on the proposal sites. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licenced by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.
- 9.39. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Kingussie housing

- 9.40. The proposals are considered unlikely to have any significant environmental effects. The housing proposal site would be connected to the Kingussie waste water treatment works.

Although the Kingussie treatment facility currently has no spare capacity, Scottish Water are programming works to improve the quality of discharge and to increase capacity of the works that would allow development in the lifetime of the Local Plan. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licenced by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.

- 9.41. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Nethy Bridge housing and economic development proposals

- 9.42. The housing and economic development proposal sites H2 and ED I in Nethy Bridge are considered likely to have significant negative effects on the woodland habitat, species which use it, and on the landscape setting and character of Nethy Bridge. The sites have outline planning permission but the potential effects will be assessed in more detail and options to avoid, minimise and mitigate the effects will be explored in the determination of reserved matters for the sites.
- 9.43. The housing proposal sites would be connected to the Nethy Bridge waste water treatment works. The Nethy Bridge treatment facility was recently upgraded to improve standards of discharge and to increase capacity in part to connect these consented sites. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licensed by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.
- 9.44. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Newtonmore housing

- 9.45. The housing proposal sites H1 and H2 in Newtonmore are considered likely to have significant negative effects on the landscape setting and character of the western edge of Newtonmore.
- 9.46. The housing proposal sites would be connected to the Newtonmore waste water treatment works. Although the Newtonmore treatment facility currently has no spare capacity, Scottish Water are programming works to improve the quality of discharge and to increase capacity of the works that would allow development in the lifetime of the Local Plan. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licenced by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.
- 9.47. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the river Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Tomintoul housing

- 9.48. The proposals are considered unlikely to have any significant environmental effects. The housing proposal sites would be connected to the Tomintoul waste water treatment works. The Tomintoul treatment facility has spare capacity and can be modified to increase capacity. Waste water discharge would therefore comply with the discharge standards licenced by SEPA for the waste water treatment facility.

- 9.49. An appropriate assessment has also been completed of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the River Spey SAC. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Cumulative effects of proposals

- 9.50. The potential for significant cumulative effects of development on the major river catchments of the Dee and Spey has been identified in the SEA. Both these river systems are SACs and an appropriate assessment of the implications of the Local Plan's proposals for the SACs has been undertaken which has shown that there are no cumulative effects predicted.
- 9.51. The development of housing on the proposed sites in compliance with the policies in the Local Plan is considered likely to have a significant positive effect on the housing for the population of the Park. No other significant cumulative effects are predicted.

Uncertainties and Risks

- 9.52. The potential significant cumulative effects of proposals on the river Dee and river Spey SACs have been assessed through appropriate assessments of the effects of the Local Plan on the rivers Dee and Spey. This has shown that since all development must comply with Policy I Natura 2000 Sites, which protects Natura sites in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Heritage &c) Regulations 1994 as amended the impacts are not considered to be significant.

Proposed Mitigation

- 9.53. No additional mitigation is proposed at this stage. Compliance with the policies set out in the plan are however key to the success of the Plan.

10. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL PLAN AND SEA

- 10.1. The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan post inquiry modifications, together with this Environmental Report, is out for public consultation between 24 May and 2 July 2010. Comments and objections on the Local Plan and the Environmental Report should be made, in writing, by Friday 2 July 2010.
- 10.2. Once the consultation period has ended, the next steps and estimated timescale will be:
- Consideration of representations made to post inquiry modifications and revised Environmental Report July – September 2010
 - Prepare for adoption of Local Plan September – November 2010
 - Update Environmental Report to accompany adopted Local Plan October – November 2010
 - Prepare post adoption statement setting out how the SEA process has informed the Local Plan, the reasons for the decisions made and the framework for future assessments associated with the Local Plan November – December 2010
 - Adopt and publish the statutory Local Plan December 2010.

