

The work of the Cairngorms National Park Authority



Introduction



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This booklet has been published to give an overview of the Cairngorms National Park and the role of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA). Together with partners, the CNPA ensures that the unique aspects of the Cairngorms – the natural environment, the cultural heritage and the local communities – are cared for, sustained and enhanced for current and future generations to enjoy.



The Cairngorms National Park

Spectacular Arctic mountain landscape, ancient Caledonian Pine Forest and a rich and diverse cultural heritage makes the Cairngorms National Park – the largest in the UK – extra special.

The Park covers 1,467 square miles (3,800 sq km) across many different land forms, from Granttown-on-Spey to the heads of the Angus Glens, from Ballater to Dalwhinnie and Drumochter. Its boundaries also take in much of the Laggan area in the south west and a large part of the Glenlivet estate and the Strathdon/Glen Buchat area.

Over 16,000 people live and work in the Park and a wide range of recreational activities are enjoyed within its boundaries.



The aims of the Cairngorms National Park are to:

- conserve and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage;
- promote sustainable use of the area's natural resources;
- promote understanding and enjoyment of the Park's special qualities;
- promote sustainable economic and social development of local communities.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority

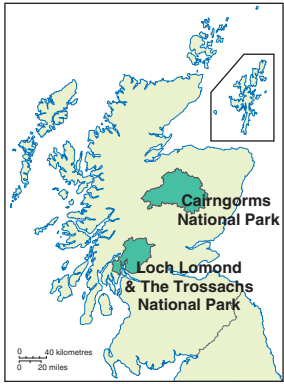


The Cairngorms National Park was established in September 2003 and the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) became fully operational – taking on all its statutory powers – on 1 September 2003.

The CNPA is designed to be an 'enabling' organisation promoting partnership and giving leadership to all those involved in the Cairngorms. The Park Authority does not duplicate the work of other organisations, such as the enterprise agencies or Scottish Natural Heritage, but is here to ensure there is a joined-up approach to projects and initiatives that help to meet the four aims of the Park.

With a staff of around 60, plus 25 board members, the Park Authority has several statutory functions including managing outdoor access in the Park, planning and development control, the production of a Local Plan – which will outline where land development can and cannot take place in the Park – and the publication of a National Park Plan.

In the same way that the four aims of the Park are for everyone to contribute towards, the National Park Plan – which will be consulted on in 2006 – will guide the work and policies of all organisations operating in the Park, not just the CNPA.

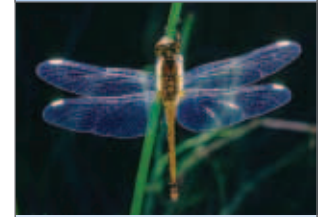


Park area



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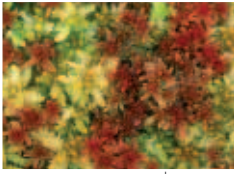
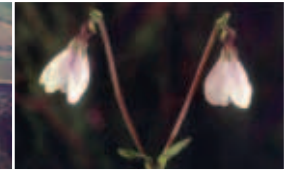
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Why is the Cairngorms National Park so special?



Scots Pine, Rothiemurchus
David Gowans

Climbing over the 1000m+ Cairngorm plateau, the highest and most extensive range of arctic mountain landscape anywhere in the British Isles, is an unforgettable experience.

Glaciers have gouged deep, high altitude valleys and corries on the plateau; and the altitude and exposure, plus poor soils, produce their own rich eco-system of vegetation, insects and animals.

At the foothills of the range is one of

the UK's biggest tracts of natural and largely untouched woodland. They contain fragments of the ancient Caledonian pine forest which is home to a variety of animals, including the rare and protected capercaillie.

Other rare animals include pine martens, wild cats, ospreys and ptarmigan. Also to be found is the world's smallest tree, the tiny least willow, and a variety of wild flowers including the delicate pink twinflower.

Heather moorland covers over 40 per cent of the Cairngorms and is a product of a particular form of land use. It is largely derived from woodland and scrub, and is the result of grazing and burning practiced over a long period. This has produced a patchwork of heather of different ages to provide food and nesting cover for red grouse and other ground nesting birds, and grazing for livestock and deer.

The straths and glens and other low ground provide the home and workplace for most people in the area. The water in the Spey, the Dee and the Don is very pure and these rivers, together with freshwater lochs and marshes, are home to many forms of wildlife.

Many of the most beautiful parts of the Park are Sites of Special Scientific

Interest (SSSIs). These include the Northern Corries and parts of Rothiemurchus Estate on the west side of the Park; and in the east, places such as Craigendarroch.



The Park's natural heritage is very special indeed but a unique and diverse cultural heritage also adds to the area's charm. The cultural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park – from castles and

mountain bothies to cultural landscapes and the language and folklore – go back thousands of years.

Did You Know?

39 per cent of the National Park area is identified as designated protected sites.

Peacock butterfly
Jimmy Mitchell



Caring for the Park

Those who live and work in the Park, through their day to day management, look after and care for it. The Park is a special place fashioned over the centuries by a variety of people from farmers and estate managers to railway builders and town planners.

Today it is looked after by a mixture of private businesses, community and voluntary interests, and public sector bodies. The thrust of the CNPA's work is bringing all these interests together to agree a National Park Plan for the future management of the Park by helping

focus existing financial and legal tools to achieve this.

The Plan is already being developed and will be consulted on in 2006. However, some new initiatives have already been introduced to help care for the Park. These sit alongside the

existing work being promoted by other public bodies.

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), of which the CNPA is a key partner along with a wide range of other interests including local communities, is an important area of work and contributes significantly to the aims of the Park.

Activities include research into swift numbers and nesting sites, and helping Butterfly Conservation Scotland with a series of training and identification events on butterflies and moths. Research into non-native fish species in the rivers and ponds in the Park has also been a key project for the LBAP.



The CNPA is also working with land managers and other organisations to ensure that there is support for land managers who want to help deliver the aims of the National Park. The Park Authority's Land Management Group is looking at ways of offering incentives to land managers to deliver public benefits, such as improved paths and

biodiversity projects.

Another way the CNPA is working closely with land managers is through the Land Based Business Training Project. This European funded initiative helps organise and fund training courses for land based businesses covering a range of skills including the use and maintenance of vehicles and machinery, IT courses and business skills. Training

that helps to deliver public benefits – such as disability awareness training, wildfire fighting and countryside risk management – are free.

The John Muir Award – the educational initiative of the John Muir Trust –

which encourages groups or individuals of any age to discover, explore, conserve and share their experiences of wild places, whether they are on the doorstep or further afield, is managed locally by the CNPA.

The conservation element of the John Muir Award may include practical action such as a clean-up, nature survey, tree planting or path building.



Geography pupils at Kingussie High School took part in the award, focusing on the importance of heather moorland. The pupils have learnt about the best ways of preserving moorland and about the type of plants, birds and mammals that can be found there. As part of their John Muir Award activity the pupils created a mini moorland habitat at the Highland Wildlife Park, and produced interpretive boards for it.



habitat for wildlife.

Caring for the Park's cultural heritage is largely based around support for community based cultural heritage initiatives. These have ranged from projects concerned with promoting traditional dance and music, local festivals and investigating and surveying local archaeological remains. The interpretation of local heritage, the collection of local archival material and

small scale restoration projects have also been supported by the Park Authority.

The launch of the CNPA's Integrated Grants Programme in August 2005 means there is now more financial help available for community groups who want to develop cultural heritage projects which will be of value to locals and visitors alike.

Did You Know?

Human beings lived in the Cairngorms 7,000 years ago – flint hunting tools from the period have been found on the Mar Lodge Estate.

The Cairngorms Moorland Project was instrumental in helping the Kingussie High School pupils to achieve their John Muir Award. The Cairngorms Moorland Project is a partnership initiative, hosted by the CNPA, with funding from a variety of sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage. The Project began in 2003, and with two demonstration moors in the Park and three staff, it aims to promote best practice in moorland management and educate people about the importance of moorlands economically, socially and as



Reindeer feeding station
David Gowans



Enjoying the Park

The creation of a National Park which can truly be referred to as a 'Park for All' is a major focus for the CNPA – making sure people of all ages and abilities have easy access to the Park, and can get the most out of it.

There is a wide range of recreational activities to enjoy in the Park including high and low level walking, mountaineering, rock and ice climbing, skiing and snowboarding, golfing, cycling, horse riding, watersports, shooting and angling. For the not-so-

energetic there are sites and buildings of historical interest to visit; part of the whisky trail winds its way through the Park; and Deeside with its royal connections is also a major attraction.

The CNPA has a statutory duty to uphold the right of outdoor access in



the Park, and is charged with developing a network of core paths as well as setting up a Local Outdoor Access Forum.

The Local Outdoor Access Forum, which has 21 members and was established in March 2005, advises the CNPA on the new rights of outdoor access, rights of way and plans for the core paths in the Park. It comprises individuals from land management, recreation and community interests as well as representatives from three agencies – Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and VisitScotland.

The CNPA has been undertaking a range of work to raise awareness of the new Scottish Outdoor Access Code, which came into effect in February 2005. The Park Authority took on its new powers from that date, implementing the outdoor access legislation at local level. The Code provides guidance on the responsibilities of land managers and people using the countryside for recreational purposes.



In addition, the CNPA led a consultation on behalf of the Speyside Way Management Group about the possibility of extending the long distance route from Aviemore to Newtonmore. Although the results are still being analysed, it is fair to say there is widespread support for the extension. The details of the new route will be published in due course.

The CNPA has also helped establish new facilities for the enjoyment of the area such as the new specialist mountain bike centre near Laggan. The Forestry Commission and the local community

led the way in creating what has become a popular recreational attraction, providing new employment opportunities and lots of fun for people of all ages.

The Park Authority has also supported all abilities access developments, such as the project initiated by the Cairngorms Partnership to help fund all-terrain mobility scooters so that disabled people can 'off-road' at the Glenmore Forest Park.

From time to time the CNPA helps to resolve the competing demands that different recreational users have on the Park's natural resources. One event put anglers and canoeists of the River Spey together to help understand their respective needs. The day proved extremely valuable to both interest groups.



There are 13 ranger services in the Park who help look after the needs of visitors, land managers and local communities. The CNPA wants to ensure that the rangers are working well together in the interests of the whole Park and are providing an integrated service. These issues have been considered by the CNPA, the ranger service managers and the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association. Some basic principles about how the services should develop in the future have been agreed.

As well as producing a number of new publications about the attractions of the

area, the CNPA has been making sure that local Tourist Information Centres are in a position to give out as much

information as possible.

An Interpretation Framework for the Park, to tell people about the important stories within it, has also been developed.

In a bid to encourage greater use of public transport in the Park by

visitors and locals alike, the CNPA has produced an integrated timetable for public transport. The 'Cairngorms Explorer' makes it easier for people to navigate their way around the Park, reducing car use where practical and increasing the emphasis on public transport, walking and cycling.

Did You Know?

The Cairngorms National Park is home to a quarter of Scotland's native woodland.



Spring ploughing
David Gowans

Looking after the economy of the Park and its communities

As well as caring for the stunning surroundings of the Park, the CNPA works with others to help the local economy to grow in a way that is sympathetic to the natural environment.

With careful planning, local economic and social development can take place in a way that helps sustain and, in turn, is sustained by the special natural and cultural qualities of the Park.

Tourism is a key sector with an estimated 80 per cent of employment in the Park being linked, directly or indirectly, to it. The CNPA has worked with partners to develop a strategy and

action plan for supporting tourism development in a manner that does not undermine the special character of the area. This has been recognised at European level by the award of the Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

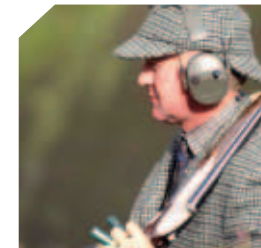
The new Cairngorms brand will also play a key role in promoting the area. Businesses that can demonstrate a

commitment to the environment and to high standards of quality may use the brand to promote their product or service.

Of course, it is important to encourage appropriate diversification of the local economy and the CNPA will work with key partners, including the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce (which it has helped fund), to explore the potential for new 'green' jobs.

Encouraging young people to stay, return or move to the area is essential to sustaining local economic and social development. With this in mind, the CNPA, with partners, is developing a Youth Apprenticeship Scheme which is intended to equip young people with a range of skills that are tailored to local business needs.

Other key issues to address include the high cost of housing in the area, which makes it difficult for people on low wages to find a home, and the availability of appropriate public transport, both to and within the Park.



The main focus of the CNPA's work to date on housing has been upon gathering evidence on the scale and nature of the problem. This is now feeding into the affordable housing policies being developed within the Cairngorms Local Plan. As for the issue of public transport, the CNPA's integrated transport leaflet, 'Cairngorms Explorer' has been warmly welcomed and the Park Authority is

working with partners to address issues such as the poor east-west bus link.

Vibrant local communities are central to achieving sustainable economic and social development. Thus the Authority is supporting the Association of

Cairngorms Community Councils and, via the Integrated Grants Programme, is supporting activities that enable local groups to address the needs and opportunities that they identify.

Did You Know?

The biggest continuous stretches of near-natural vegetation in Britain, along glens and over mountains, are in the National Park.

The Integrated Grants Programme



The Integrated Grants Programme has been touched on in previous chapters. This is because the funding scheme cuts across all aspects of the Park Authority's work from biodiversity and outdoor access to events and interpretation.

Following on from the successful 'Communities in the National Park Grants Scheme' – which was set up to help communities celebrate their inclusion in



the Park in its first year – the new grants programme is supported financially by the Cairngorms LEADER+ programme.

A wide range of activities are eligible for support including the maintenance of existing footpaths and footbridges; the installation of interpretation facilities close to the centre of communities; short term development worker costs; projects that will protect and enhance the natural environment, the local

heritage and culture and some events.

Awards start from £500, with up to £18,000 available for larger projects.

Ninety per cent funding will be available

in some cases and projects that reflect the aims of the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan can attract 100 per cent funding.

There are six separate schemes that community groups can apply to.

These are:

- Investing in Communities
- Marketing and Events
- Biodiversity
- Interpretation
- Outdoor Access
- Cultural Heritage

The Integrated Grants Programme has a budget of £315,000 and runs from 2005 to 2007.

Cottage, Nethy Bridge

David Gowans



The CNPA's planning role explained

Those who know the Cairngorms understand that it is a very special place. It has some of the most beautiful and varied landscapes in Scotland, with a unique natural and cultural heritage.

It is also home to over 16,000 people who have all of the usual aspirations for local employment, housing and supporting social, commercial and recreational services. Protecting this important environment while responding responsibly to development

pressures is a difficult task, which is given to the CNPA together with the four local authorities.

All planning applications for development within the Cairngorms National Park are made in the usual way to the relevant local council. If any of





these applications raise issues of 'general significance' for the Park, then the CNPA's Planning Committee may decide to 'call-in' the application – this means the CNPA takes over the processing of the case, and makes the decision on the granting or refusal of planning permission.

This decision to 'call-in' an application must be made within 21 days of the application being registered with the local council. In practice, it is the more complex cases that are 'called-in' by the Planning Committee.

Of the 500 or so planning applications made annually in the Park area, around 15 per cent are determined by the Park Authority. The CNPA will determine a planning application which it has 'called-in' on the basis of:

- the four Park aims;
- existing structure and local plans (the CNPA's Local Plan and National Park Plan once they are in place);
- national planning guidance;

- other non statutory planning policy guidance prepared by councils or the CNPA.

But the role of the planning team is not simply about development control. The CNPA also has to create a Local Plan – setting out a strategy for built development within the Park, land use policies and site-specific proposals for development, enhancement or protection.



This process began in 2004 with the public being widely consulted on how they would like to see their communities develop. The CNPA took the unusual step of consulting the public and other agencies before a

word of the Local Plan had been written. This process continues to be taken forward with consultation on the draft local plan during 2005-2006.

Did You Know?

In the Cairngorms National Park there are 49 summits over 3,000ft (914m). These are known as Munro's and include four of Scotland's five highest mountains.



Young people building a hide
Stewart Grant/CNPA

The future

The mountains of the Cairngorms National Park have been here for millions of years; the landscapes for thousands of years. The Cairngorms National Park Authority has been in existence since 2003 – the blink of an eye in comparison.

Managing the Park area will always involve meeting short term needs as well as planning a long way ahead so that the special qualities of the Park are nurtured for future generations to enjoy, despite the pressures of an ever changing world.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority produces an Annual Report on its work each year. Every three years it produces a Corporate Plan, to coincide with the decision by the Scottish Executive on the CNPA's budget,

explaining its priorities and actions for the coming three years ahead.

It also prepares, along with other partners operating in the area, a National Park Plan which plans 25 years ahead but which is reviewed and updated every five years.

The early projects and policies implemented by the CNPA and partners are already starting to make an impact but for all those involved in the Cairngorms National Park the vision needs to be long-term.

CNPA staffing groups

Visitor Services and Recreation

Deals with outdoor access including the CNPA's duties as the outdoor access authority under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act; visitor management issues; signage; John Muir Award project.

Land Management

Deals with the CNPA's interests in integrated management of land through incentives and policies on forestry, agriculture, moorlands and deer management; Land Based Business Training project.

Natural Heritage

Deals with the Park Authority's interests in biodiversity; landscape policy; international nature conservation designations; Local Biodiversity Action Plan project.

Economic and Social Development

Deals with the CNPA's role in tourism; business; transport; social inclusion; cultural heritage; community engagement; youth and education; housing.

Strategic Policy and Programme Management

Deals with strategic policy issues across the organisation; production and oversight of the National Park Plan; State of the Park report; strategic environmental assessment; strategic research programmes; external funding strategy; management of projects including Integrated Grants Programme, LEADER+ and the Cairngorms Moorland Project.

Planning and Development Control

Deals with the CNPA's role as a planning authority; production and oversight of the Local Plan; development control (planning applications); Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

Communications

Deals with strategy and delivery of internal and external communications; liaison with press and other media; publications; website; general awareness raising.

Corporate Services

Deals with the responsibility for the efficient running of the organisation including administration services; finance; audit; Information Technology Systems; board secretariat; human resources.

Staff are located in two offices:

The Albert Halls, Ballater, Aberdeenshire, houses all the planning staff, the GIS officer, an outdoor access officer, and the Cultural Heritage policy officer. All other staff are located in the Granttown Office. Contact details on inside front cover.

Website: www.cairngorms.co.uk

Did You Know?

The highest point in the Park is Ben Macdui at 1,309m (4,295ft) above sea level, lowest point at the River Dee, just west of Aboyne at 134m (440ft) above sea level.

CNPA budgets



The CNPA's operating budget is provided by the Scottish Executive (approved by the Scottish Parliament), and is referred to as 'grant in aid'.

The annual 'grant in aid' has grown since the CNPA was set up in March 2003.

The budget covers the Park Authority's operational overheads, projects, initiatives and grant schemes. Additional funding is levered in for individual projects and initiatives from other sources such as European programmes and Heritage Lottery funding.

The CNPA also operates many of its projects in partnership with other public sector bodies, with funding contributions from all the partners.

These include:

- LEADER+: The CNPA is the lead body for the project and helps to fund it along with the four local authorities covering the Park, two local enterprise companies, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the European LEADER+ grant programme.
- Land Based Business Training Project: funding from the European Social Fund and the CNPA.

In 2004/05, in addition to grant aid of £3.55million, the CNPA secured an additional £600,000 through partnerships and other funding sources.

2003/04	£2.00million
2004/05	£3.55million
2005/06	£4.30million
2006/07	£4.30million
2007/08	£4.50million

Loch an Eilein in winter
David Gowans



Andrew Thin
Convener



Eric Baird
Deputy Convener

Board members

The Park Authority board has a total of 25 members – five elected directly by the 12,560 voters in the Park, ten appointed on the nomination of Highland, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Angus Councils, and ten directly appointed by Scottish Ministers.

Andrew Thin (Convener) is also a Board member of the Crofters Commission and holds senior non-executive positions in a number of other organisations.

Eric Baird (Deputy Convener) is the immediate past Convener of the Cairngorms Community Councils Group and Head Ranger on the Glen Tanar Estate.



Stuart Black is a Liberal Democrat Highland Councillor and board member of the North Area Board of Scottish Natural Heritage. A Strathspey hill farmer for over 40 years, he is also Chairman of Explore Abernethy, a community project involving the creation of a local footpath network.

Duncan Bryden is a self-employed Rural Development Consultant and has a professional ecological background.

Sally Dowden owns Speyside Wildlife International, one of Scotland's largest wildlife tour operating companies, and is a Director of the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce.

Basil Dunlop is an Independent Highland Councillor and Chairman of planning for the Badenoch and Strathspey area. He is a Director of the Grantown Museum and Heritage Trust and Highland Opportunity Ltd. He is also a board member of Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise.

Douglas Glass was elected for ward five. He is a full time GP at Ballater Clinic, a board member of Crathie Opportunity Holidays and partner on Dee Castle Farm.

Angus Gordon, an Independent Highland Councillor, is Chairman of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee of the Licensing Board and also a local tenant farmer.

Lucy Grant is a partner in the family livestock business, has been involved in the Laggan Forestry Initiative (now the Laggan Forest Trust) and is on two local community committees. She is also the Laggan representative of the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils.

David Green is a former Highland Council Convener and current Chairman of the Crofters Commission. He is also a self-employed crofter and runs a small self catering holiday business from his croft.

Marcus Humphrey, a Scottish Conservative Councillor for Aberdeenshire, is Chairman of the Marr Area Committee and has been involved in farming, forestry, tourism and land management in the Cairngorms area for many years.

Bruce Luffman, a Scottish Conservative Councillor for Aberdeenshire, sits on the North Area Board of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. He and his wife run a guesthouse at Strathdon.

Eleanor Mackintosh was elected for ward four. A former financial adviser with the Clydesdale Bank, she lives in Glenlivet, and has served in the past on various community groups.

Anne MacLean sits on the boards of several organisations including the Highland Society for Blind People and the Albyn Housing Society. She is also an independent assessor for Government appointments.

Alastair MacLennan is a farmer who has diversified into tourism and other business ventures and formerly served on the board of the Cairngorms Partnership.

William McKenna was elected for ward two. He worked locally in the skiing business for over 20 years and is now a countryside manager, looking after everyone who enjoys Rothiemurchus Estate.

Sandy Park, an Independent Highland Councillor, is the Provost of Nairn and Chairman of Planning, Development, Europe and Tourism for Highland Council.

Andrew Rafferty was elected for ward three. He is the principal vet in the Strathspey Veterinary Centre, which covers four out of the five wards in the National Park. He is a Director of Anagach Woods Trust.

Gregor Rimell was elected for ward one. An Independent Highland Councillor, he has been sub-postmaster in Kingussie for over 13 years.

David Selfridge JP, a Scottish National Party Councillor for Angus and Convener of the Council's Infrastructure Services Committee. He also serves on the boards of a number of bodies including Scottish Enterprise (Tayside).

Joyce Simpson is a retired solicitor who has been involved for many years with outdoor activities for youth organisations and is an ex-Convener of the Cairngorms Community Councils Group.

Sheena Slimon, an Independent Highland Councillor, was involved in setting up the Laggan Rural Partnership and the Community Information Resource Centre as well as the Laggan Forest Trust.

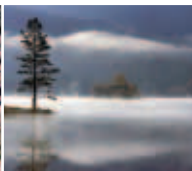
Richard Stroud, a Liberal Democrat Aberdeenshire Councillor, is Convener of Aberdeenshire Council's Education and Recreation Committee and an active mountaineer and ski mountaineer.

Susan Walker has over 25 years experience in environmental management. She sits on the boards of many environmental bodies and is a specialist on integrated land and water management.

Bob Wilson, an Independent Moray Councillor, is Chairman of the Grampian Joint Valuation Board and is Chairman of the Speyside Way Management Committee.

Did You Know?

The Park is a refuge for a host of rare plants and creatures, including a quarter of the UK's threatened species.



CAIRNGORMS
NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

ÙGH DARRAS PAIRC NÀISEANTA A' MHONAI DH RUAI DH