

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

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Section 5 sets out strategic objectives that provide a long-term framework for managing the National Park and working towards the 25 year vision. The strategic objectives are set out under the three broad headings of the vision:

- 5.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Park;
- 5.2 Living and Working in the Park;
- 5.3 Enjoying and Understanding the Park.

These strategic objectives can be used by all sectors to guide ongoing management and decisions in working towards the vision. They provide a framework in which to plan activity and a context when reacting to new opportunities or issues. The strategic objectives take a long-term view, covering the 25 year timescale of the vision.

Following an introduction to each of the three sections, a series of sub-sections include the following details:

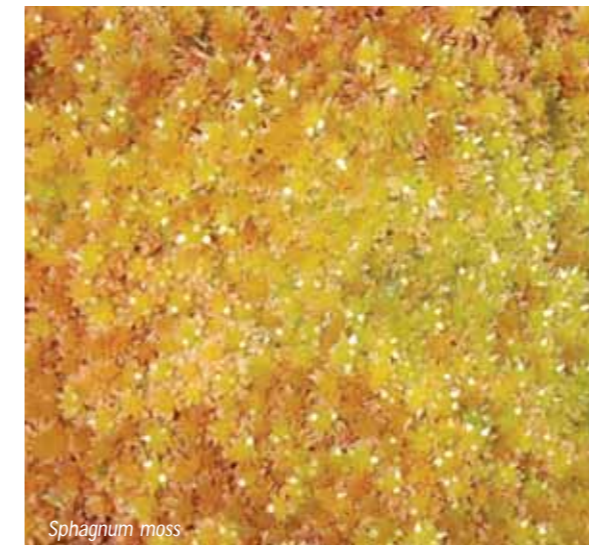
| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Introductory paragraph | To introduce the scope of the section and provide a brief context for the strategic objectives. |
| Strategic objectives | A series of strategic objectives with explanatory text. |
| National policy context | A list of national strategies and policies on which these strategic objectives build and to which they contribute. |
| Cross-references | Signposting to other sections of strategic objectives of particular relevance to this topic, which should be read together as an integrated approach. |

5.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Park

5.1.1 Introduction – Conserving and Enhancing the Special Qualities

This section identifies strategic objectives specifically targeted at conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the National Park and ensuring the sustainable use of its natural and cultural resources. This is a theme which runs through the other sections of this plan, whether considering the needs of communities, or recreation and enjoyment in the Park. Conserving and enhancing the qualities which underpin the National Park's importance and attraction, as well as much of its economy and communities, must form the basis of successful long-term management.

The strategic objectives set out an approach to managing the natural and cultural heritage of the Park that recognises the inter-dependence between the special qualities, management of the natural and cultural heritage and the important links to the socio-economic viability of land management, businesses and communities.



5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Landscape, Built and Historic Environment

Landscape, Built and Historic Environment

The distinctive and varied landscape character of the Park derives from the combination of mountain plateaux, extensive forests, open moorlands, straths, lochs and rivers, together with the settlements, farmland and designed landscapes. It is one of the most distinctive special qualities of the Park and its national importance is recognised by two National Scenic Areas and the subsequent designation of a wider area as a National Park.

The landscape is a product of both the natural environmental conditions and the history of land-use, expressing both the natural and cultural heritage of the Park. There is a rich built heritage and archaeology in the Park, including building traditions of estates, farms and country houses, military barracks, roads and bridges, designed landscapes, prehistoric remains and planned settlements. There are local traditions of design and materials across the Park that gives a distinctive local character to different areas.

All new development and management of the landscapes and settlements within the Park should be based on a sound understanding of this natural and cultural heritage. The conservation and enhancement of the landscape, historic and built environment will therefore be influenced by many different activities and processes, but should be guided by the following strategic objectives.

Strategic Objectives for Landscape, Built and Historic Environment:

a) Maintain and enhance the distinctive landscapes across the Park.

The distinctive landscape character is a result of the interaction of landforms, geophysical processes, habitats, species and land management. It is one of the prime reasons people enjoy the Park and is recognised as nationally important. The landscape character is also a product of the historic record of land-use and the communities that have shaped it. Within the landscape there is dynamic change and evolution but management and development of the Park should retain and enhance the distinctive character and restore areas of degraded landscape.

The designation of the National Park has highlighted the national importance and coherence of the landscape qualities throughout its area. The Park contains two previously identified National Scenic Areas and an equivalent level of consideration will be given to landscape throughout the whole Park.



Ruins of Castle Roy, Nethybridge

b) Conserve and enhance the sense of wildness in the montane area and other parts of the Park.

Large areas of the Park, not restricted to the montane area, are valued for their innate qualities and the experience of wildness that many people come to the area to enjoy. This sense of wildness and quiet enjoyment should be safeguarded from encroachment by human infrastructure, inappropriate activities or insensitive management and use. New tracks, paths, roads, structures, motorised access, aircraft and organised outdoor access events should seek to minimise effects on the experience of wildness. The removal of inappropriate vehicle tracks and the repair of badly eroded footpaths should be pursued where possible.

c) Ensure development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park.

All new development and infrastructure, necessary to meet the needs of those living and working in the Park, should be designed to complement and enhance the landscape character of its setting. The potential impacts of public and private roads, masts, utilities, renewable energy developments (in and where relevant beyond the Park), road signs and all other man made artefacts will be assessed to ensure that designs and locations do not detract from the landscape character.

d) New development in settlements and surrounding areas and the management of public spaces should complement and enhance the character, pattern and local identity of the built and historic environment.

The existing settlements and their surroundings each have distinctive local character and identity. New development should demonstrate an understanding of this heritage and complement it. It should enhance the local identity, quality of public space and surrounding environment. High quality design should be a feature of all new developments.

e) Understand and conserve the archaeological record, historic landscapes and historic built environment.

The archaeological remains and historic landscapes of the Park are the best source of information about the development of the intimate relationship between the people and places of the area and the shaping of the modern landscape. A full understanding of this record and its value to the character of the area is vital to conserve the qualities that make the Park such a special place.

The rich built heritage of the Park includes fine examples of planned settlements, iconic Victorian estate architecture, military barracks, castles, roads, railways and bridges. Many of the buildings show local traditions in both workmanship and materials.

This cultural record is one of the most valued qualities of the Park. The physical heritage needs greater repair and maintenance to secure its long-term conservation and enhancement of both sites and their settings. Caring for these resources also requires the maintenance of traditional skills, many of which have declined.

f) Raise awareness and understanding of the influences of natural processes, land management and culture on the landscape character.

The relationships between the natural and cultural processes that shape the landscape should be explained and understood, to inform management and enhance enjoyment of the landscape. This will in part be encouraged by engagement with communities, visitors and national interests to identify how and why landscapes are valued.

The greater awareness of the range and value of the built and historic environment is important to underpin long-term conservation and enhancement and future development. An increased understanding will enhance the sense of community and belonging for residents and the sense of place for visitors.

National policy context

- European Landscape Convention
- Scotland's Scenic Heritage
- Historic Land-use Assessment
- Wildness in Scotland's Countryside, Policy Statement 02/03, Scottish Natural Heritage
- Landscape Character Assessments
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-13
- Inventory of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- 'Passed to the Future', Historic Scotland Policy for Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2002)
- World Heritage Convention
- Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (1998)
- Planning (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) (Scotland) Act 1997
- Draft Scottish Historic Environment Policies 1/2/3
- Designing Places – a Policy Statement for Scotland

- Scottish Forestry Strategy
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy
- Choosing our Future – Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy
- NPPG5 Archaeology and Planning
- NPPG14 Natural Heritage
- SPP15 Planning for Rural Development
- NPPG18 Planning and the Historic Environment
- PAN42 Archaeology
- PAN60 Planning for Natural Heritage
- PAN71 Conservation Area Management

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources
- 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management
- 5.2.4 Housing
- 5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism
- 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation

Biodiversity

The Park's biodiversity is of national and international importance. The extent and scale of habitats including the native pine woodlands, mountain plateaux, rivers, moorlands, heathlands, farmlands and wetlands hold a rich biodiversity that includes many rare and threatened species. Approximately 39 per cent of the Park is designated for a particular nature conservation interest. Its future condition should be enhanced through a landscape-scale approach that brings all habitats in the wider countryside of the Park into good condition and increases the connectivity between them.

There are 31 areas of the Park (including the rivers Spey and Dee) that are currently designated as being of European importance for nature conservation through the Natura 2000 designations of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation. A total of 46 sites are designated as part of a national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and a further six areas are designated as National Nature Reserves where management for nature conservation is given primacy.

These designations carry special responsibilities for public authorities, land managers and users. While these sites represent examples of the best of the natural heritage in the Park, they cannot be managed in isolation from the surrounding land and habitats.

Accordingly, their future condition should be enhanced through a landscape-scale approach that brings all habitats in the rest of the Park into good condition – it is not just designated sites that are of importance. This will be achieved through a strategic approach to management that targets habitat enhancement in key locations which will increase the viability of the designated areas by increasing the connectivity between them. It will also improve the extent of high quality habitats and associated native plant and animal communities that is already unparalleled in Britain.

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy seeks to help meet the UK's international obligations under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), under which the European Union seeks to protect and restore the functioning of natural systems and to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The National Park can make a valuable contribution to these efforts.



Ruthven Barracks, Kingussie



Pearl bordered fritillary butterfly

Natura 2000 – A Network of Special Sites

Natura 2000 is a European network of protected sites which represent areas of the highest value for habitats and species of plants and animals which are rare, endangered or vulnerable in the European Community.

The network includes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which support valuable habitats and species (other than birds) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which support significant numbers of rare and/or migratory wild birds and their habitats.

The network is established in response to the 1992 Habitats Directive and the 1979 Birds Directive, with the enabling legislation in the UK being provided by the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. Through these, Scotland has a responsibility to identify and protect SACs and SPAs. There are currently 19 SACs and 12 SPAs in the Park, which together with other nationally designated Sites of Scientific Interest must be protected and managed positively for their qualifying nature conservation interest.

The Park also has a number of wetlands of international importance listed under the Ramsar Convention. As a matter of policy, the government has chosen to afford these sites protection equivalent to Natura sites, although many have dual designation already.

The qualifying habitats in these designated areas usually extend outside the site boundaries. The objective of achieving favourable conservation status for them can only be secured in the long-term by safeguarding the habitats and protected species wherever they occur. This adds impetus to the need to manage all semi-natural habitats and native species in the Park to the highest standards. For Natura sites, there is an obligation in law to prevent any activities being undertaken which are likely to have an adverse impact on the qualifying features of interest, unless such impact would be caused by an activity that is in the overriding public interest and for which, there was no available alternative.

Strategic Objectives for Biodiversity:

- a) **Conserve and enhance the condition and diversity of habitats and species present throughout the Park through a landscape-scale approach to habitat networks.**

The habitats and species throughout the Park are special qualities which underpin its designation as a National Park. Many are of national and international importance and their conservation, and where possible enhancement, is key. However, it is the existing

scale and proximity of habitats, such as semi-natural woodland, rivers, moorland and montane areas that give the Park its particular importance. Nature conservation efforts should therefore seek to bring all habitats in the Park into good condition.

Management should take a strategic view to enhance the linkages between habitats and their scale and to minimise fragmentation. Extensive and inter-connected networks of montane ground, moorland, forest, wetlands and semi-natural farmland habitats should be

maintained and enhanced, and protected from fragmentation. Robust networks will be vital to help many species adapt their range as a result of climate change.

- b) **Ensure all designated nature conservation sites are in favourable condition.**

Within the network of habitats in the Park, some are designated as being of national or international importance for particular nature conservation features including biodiversity, geology and landforms. These sites should be exemplars of good management where the natural heritage interest is secure within a long-term management plan devised in partnership with land managers. Public support and resources should seek to engage managers, local communities and visitors in understanding and caring for these sites.

All public bodies have responsibility to ensure that they safeguard designated sites when carrying out their functions. The use of targeted incentives will ensure specific actions to maintain and enhance the interests of designated sites. These will be complemented by incentives that promote the positive management of the connecting habitats between them.

- c) **Engage all sectors in meeting or exceeding international, national and local biodiversity targets.**

All partners in the Park have a key role to play in delivering aspects of European Union biodiversity objectives, the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan identifies a range of management issues and opportunities to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the area. Building on this, all sectors involved in managing, living and working in the Park should be engaged in helping to deliver the aims of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, thereby conserving and enhancing the biodiversity qualities of the Park.

While biodiversity objectives apply to all native species and semi-natural habitats throughout the Park, some species require extra effort to protect and enhance them either because of their particular ecological requirements or because they are threatened with extinction. In the Park, species such as capercaillie, hen harrier, water vole, sea lamprey and freshwater pearl mussel, as well as a range of plants, require extra effort.

- d) **Improve the long-term sustainability and restore the full range of montane habitats through managing pressures from grazing, other land management, recreation and development.**

The extent of montane habitats in the Park is unique in the UK and is one of the special qualities that make up the identity of the area. There are many pressures on the montane habitats, from a range of environmental and economic land management objectives as well as infrastructure for recreation and development. These pressures should be addressed to conserve the montane habitats, ensure they are in robust condition in the face of climate change and that the montane area remains a national asset at the heart of the National Park.

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES...cont

5.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Park

- e) **Ensure that populations of species given special protection under the Habitat Regulations, the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the Nature Conservation Act and European Directives are stable or, where appropriate, increasing.**

In addition to ensuring that the habitats necessary for those species given special protection are in good condition, a co-ordinated effort between public agencies, land managers, the police and public to address wildlife crime and irresponsible actions is required. These bodies need to develop partnerships with local communities to help prevent all forms of wildlife crime including poaching and illegal killing or taking of protected species. This will be supported by communications about the law, the nature of the species at risk and advice as to how everyone can help to safeguard them.

- f) **Promote access to appropriate policy and funding mechanisms to support nature conservation.**

Public policy and support for nature conservation should be targeted at all interests that can contribute, including land managers, but also businesses, communities and visitors. The support should focus on the nature conservation interests and opportunities particularly relevant to the Park and should be accessible and easily understood. Public support should be based on compliance with good management practice.

- g) **Identify, prioritise and take action to address non-native species that pose a threat to the natural heritage and land management of the Park.**

Non-native species can be introduced either deliberately or accidentally and many have the potential to damage the existing species, habitats and ecosystems, as well as affecting the landscape and land management.

Examples include non-native fish, sika deer and riparian and aquatic plants that currently pose a threat to river ecosystems and associated fisheries. Mink which threaten water voles, and grey squirrels which impact on red squirrel populations are also potential threats. To tackle these threats resources and incentives for implementation and monitoring are needed.

- h) **Promote appropriate reintroduction of species and reinstatement of habitats and identify the likely ecological, economic and management impacts.**

Consideration will be given to the reintroduction of some species, which through human intervention are currently extinct or very localised in the area, as well as the reinstatement of certain habitats in key areas. These may include for example, freshwater pearl mussel (already being reintroduced into two sites), reinstatement of water vole habitat and the reintroduction of the species after mink control. Some plant communities in floodplain and sub-alpine areas should also be considered for reinstatement. Opportunities should also be taken to manage habitats to attract the recolonisation of species that have become extinct in the Park, such as corncrakes. Where these or other species restoration measures are being considered, their potential impacts should be researched to inform decision making and mitigation measures.

- i) **Develop awareness and understanding of the interactions of land-uses, tourism, outdoor access and nature conservation amongst all interests.**

To ensure success in conserving and enhancing the natural heritage of the Park, all sectors need to be aware that their actions can impact – positively or negatively – on the natural heritage. Opportunities for interpretation, training or demonstration should encourage greater understanding of the interactions and mutual interests between nature conservation and the activities of managers, residents and visitors in the Park.

- j) **Identify and carry out a research programme designed to provide the information and monitoring on the habitats, species and ecosystems required to guide future decision-making.**

There is a specific need to address the monitoring and research in relation to the status of species, habitats and ecosystems as well as the key influences including climate change scenarios and recreational disturbance.

National policy context

- Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy
- Habitats Directive 1992
- Birds Directive 1979
- Deer (Scotland) Act 1996
- 'Birds of Prey in a Changing Environment', Scottish Natural Heritage
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- Scottish Forestry Strategy
- Natural Heritage Futures
- Making a difference for Scotland's species: a framework for action
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross-reference

- 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management
- 5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism
- 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation



Cairngorms woodland

Geodiversity

The geological and geomorphological features of the National Park form an outstanding record of natural processes, in particular glaciation. As well as underlying the landscape and habitats of the area, the geodiversity forms a valuable part of the natural heritage in its own right. There are 30 sites recognised for their geological importance in the Geological Conservation Review. These designations carry special responsibilities for public authorities, land managers and users. While these sites represent examples of the best of the natural heritage in the Park, they cannot be managed in isolation from the surrounding land.

Soils, derived from geological conditions, are a component of natural systems influencing land-uses, biodiversity, industry and infrastructure. The Park is exceptional because of its unusually large extent of rare, undisturbed soils compared to other areas of Scotland, particularly soils associated with the Caledonian pine forests and the montane plateaux. The structure of soils is integral to the drainage and nutrient functions that underpin habitats and land-use. Organic soils also store carbon and as such are a valuable resource in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Strategic Objectives for Geodiversity:

- a) **Safeguard the geological and geomorphological features and associated processes that contribute to the landscape of the Park.**

The physical evidence of geological and geomorphological features should be safeguarded as part of an approach that seeks to allow natural processes to continue and seeks to minimise disturbance to important ground features.

- b) **Raise awareness of the outstanding geology and geomorphology in the Park.**

The Park has an internationally important record of geology and geomorphology. To encourage its long-term conservation, together with understanding and enjoyment of geology and geomorphology as part of the Park's special qualities, greater effort is required in raising awareness through research, interpretation and education.

- c) **Prevent degradation and erosion of soils, particularly vulnerable montane and organic soils.**

Soil movement is a natural process, but the structure and functionality of soils can be damaged as a result of drainage and inappropriate cultivation for forestry and agriculture; excessive grazing or trampling by domestic livestock and wild deer; trampling by walkers and off-track cyclists; tracking from motorised vehicles; the construction of tracks; and by burning. Receipt of public support for management should require compliance with good soil management appropriate to the land holding, for example through the requirement of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition associated with rural development aid.

Those soils which are particularly vulnerable, such as the montane and peat soils, should be conserved through management to ensure that the functioning structures are not lost. These soils can hold significantly more carbon than cultivated soils. Management of existing developments in the montane zone, such as the ski areas, will require soil conservation actions to safeguard against damage that can be caused as the result of the activities and supporting infrastructure. Management of outdoor access, recreation and farming, in addition to development through the Local Plan should also contribute to soil conservation.

- d) **Safeguard against large-scale extraction and removal of mineral resource from the National Park.**

While small-scale mineral extraction for local use can be undertaken in appropriate places, large-scale commercial extraction for use beyond the National Park is not appropriate. In particular, features of geological and geomorphological importance should be safeguarded from extraction.

National policy context

- Geological Conservation Review
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy
- SPP4 Planning for Minerals
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013
- Scottish Soils Strategy (forthcoming)



Insh Marshes from Ruthven Farm



Rocks deposited by glacial action

Culture and Traditions

There is a wealth of culture and tradition associated with the long history of people living in the Park area. Many of these traditions and cultures remain a strong influence on the identity of the Park and its communities. The cultural traditions in the Park range from language, particularly Gaelic and Doric, to arts, sports and music. All express the connections between people and places and reflect the development of society in the Park.

Strategic Objectives for Culture and Traditions:

- a) **Develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the cultural traditions associated with the Park's places and communities.**
 Knowledge and understanding of the cultural traditions in the Park is often patchy, or specific to particular individuals, communities or places. There is a need to develop a sound knowledge of the cultural traditions of the Park in order to inform improved communication and co-operation between those involved in conserving and promoting cultural traditions. These include arts and crafts, language, folklore, music, dance, sport and other traditions.
- b) **Support and promote the diverse cultural traditions of communities within the Park.**
 The diversity of cultural traditions within the Park forms a key part of its identity. As well as being closely linked with community life, the cultural tradition of the Park is also one of the qualities visitors to the area can enjoy. The promotion of local cultural traditions and place names by communities and others should be supported.

National policy context

- UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)
- National Cultural Strategy 'Creating Our Future... Minding Our Past'
- Scotland's Culture (Scottish Executive 2006)
- National Plan for Gaelic
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross reference

5.2.2 Sustainable Communities



5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources

The special qualities that we value in the Park, together with the resources we use for much of our economy and communities, depend on the functioning natural systems which must be sustained. Many of the objectives set out in other sections of this plan will support effective management of these resources, but there are some objectives for sustainable resource use outlined here that should apply across all sectors.

Strategic Objective for Sustainable Use of Resources:

- a) **All management and development in the Park should seek to make the most sustainable use of natural resources, including water and energy.**
 All interests in the Park including households, land managers, visitors and businesses should seek to minimise their impact on natural resources and ensure their use is as sustainable as possible. New development and infrastructure should incorporate the most sustainable systems of energy, water, materials and other resources in order to minimise their impacts on natural processes.

Energy

There is currently no significant energy generation within the National Park, although the water catchments in the Park provide energy to several hydro-electric installations in surrounding areas. Settlements currently draw their energy needs from the National Grid. In pursuit of more sustainable development, there is a significant opportunity in the Park to develop renewable sources of energy (including heat) such as biomass, wind, hydro, geothermal and solar to serve communities and households. Large-scale wind farms are not appropriate in the National Park due to landscape and natural heritage impacts, but the development of domestic, business and community-scale facilities in a full range of energy options should be pursued in appropriate locations.



5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES...cont

5.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Park

Strategic Objectives for Energy:

- a) **Contribute to national targets for greater renewable production through increasing community, business and domestic-scale renewable energy schemes.**

There is a need to raise awareness of the range of renewable energy sources available and to encourage the necessary supply chains and infrastructure. By supporting small-scale schemes within communities, in halls, houses, land-based industries and businesses, the Park can help Scotland achieve its national targets and work towards an efficient use of energy within the Park. There is a particular opportunity to develop the use of wood-fuel energy within the Park. The public sector should also take a lead in using renewable energy in its own facilities within the Park.

- b) **Help communities, businesses and households to obtain the information, expertise and support they need to reduce energy consumption and increase renewable generation.**

There is a wide range of technology, expertise and information available on renewable energy technologies including biomass, wind and solar generation, together with measures to reduce energy consumption. The key to realising this potential is to provide communities, businesses and households with easily accessible support and guidance that links the process and organisations together.

National policy context

- UK Climate Change Programme
- Choosing Our Future: Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy
- Securing a Renewable Future: Scotland's Renewable Energy
- Scottish Executive Green Jobs Strategy
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013
- Changing our ways: Scotland's climate change programme

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.2.2 Sustainable Communities
- 5.2.3 Economy and Employment
- 5.2.6 Waste Management



Water

The watercourses and lochs of the Park generally have an excellent water quality, but there are pressures associated with settlement development and land management on both surface water and ground water. There can be extreme fluctuations in quantity arising particularly from heavy rain and snow-melt. As well as providing part of the essential infrastructure for living and working in the Park, the water resource is an important habitat for many species and a popular recreation resource.

The rivers Dee and Spey and their tributaries are among those classified as being of European importance for nature conservation, along with many other lochs, lochans and fens such as the Insh marshes. Other rivers, such as the Feshie, are also recognised for their fluvial geomorphological interest. Management of the water resource needs to account for these varied uses and benefits, focus on water quality, quantity, hydromorphology and ecology and be closely integrated with surrounding land-uses.

The management of floodplains is one of the key issues in the Park, as parts of many rivers have been cut off from their river systems by flood walls. This results in flow being channelled in a much more intensive way than is natural, leading to erosion of river beds and loss of finer sediments. It also leads to the loss of wetland habitats that help to support the diversity and viability of the river systems. Flood waters that cannot spread out in the upper catchments can cause severe flooding downstream.

Catchment Management and The Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive 2000 establishes a new legal framework for the protection, improvement and sustainable use of surface and ground water. Its purpose includes:

- preventing further deterioration of, protecting and enhancing the status of aquatic ecosystems;
- promoting sustainable water use;
- reducing pollution; and
- contributing to the mitigation of floods and droughts.

The Directive is implemented in Scotland through the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2004. This sets out an approach to River Basin Management Planning upon which water management in the Park should build, by taking a catchment and ecosystem scale approach to maintaining or improving water quality and resource management to the benefit of the Park's waterbodies and the species and functions they support.



5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES...cont

5.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Park

Strategic Objectives for Water:

a) Maintain or where necessary enhance the existing high water quality and physical condition of waterbodies in the Park.

The water quality in the Park's rivers and lochs is generally excellent. Management of the watercourses, neighbouring land management and the water and waste infrastructure should aim to maintain, and where possible enhance the quality and quantity of water to the benefit of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and human use including services, access and recreation. Causes of pollution should be tackled at source. Management should also aim to allow river processes such as erosion and deposition to operate unhindered wherever possible.

b) Adopt a catchment-scale approach to water management that integrates land-use, nature conservation and flood management.

By managing watercourses in the context of the catchment area, there are opportunities to co-ordinate its management with surrounding land-uses and account for the up and down-stream influences and impacts. This offers benefits to water quality and quantity, flood management, fisheries, biodiversity, access and recreation. The catchment management approach currently developed for the rivers Spey and Dee provides a good basis on which to develop this approach in the Park.

c) Encourage more sustainable patterns of domestic, industrial, agricultural and recreational water use.

Managing the demand for water could have as much, if not greater environmental impact as managing its supply. Water supply can be a significant constraint to the development of communities. Water used wastefully is water lost from the environment and energy is

wasted in treating water that is surplus to requirements. All built development and activities using water in the Park should seek to minimise wastage and implement sustainable systems of water use through efficient systems. Reducing both leakage from water supply networks and the demand for water should be encouraged.

d) Promote sustainable flood management consistent with natural fluvial processes.

Potential flooding should be managed through a process of identifying risks. As the implications of climate change become clearer, these should be taken into account. Until then, a precautionary approach should be adopted. Opportunities to reduce flood risk should be taken, within and beyond the Park, such as modifying the flow through management of floodplains, wetland creation, sustainable urban drainage systems, surface flow and upstream activities. The Local Plan should ensure new development is free from the risk of flooding.

National policy context

- Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003
- Water Framework Directive 2000
- Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2006
- River Basin Management Plan for Scotland
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy
- Forests and Water Guidelines 4th Edition
- Scottish Water Quality & Standards 3
- SPP7 Planning and Flooding
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross-reference

- 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management
- 5.2.4 Housing
- 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation

Air

The air quality in the Cairngorms is high in comparison with many other areas of Scotland. The prevailing westerly maritime airflow and the absence of major industry in the area means there is little air pollution. As well as underpinning the natural heritage, the sense of fresh air, peace and quiet and lack of air pollution are qualities that people enjoy in the area.

Strategic Objectives for Air:

a) Maintain, and where possible enhance, the existing high level of air quality.

The air quality is a key part of the natural environment that people come to enjoy in the National Park and helps to sustain many of the habitats and species as well as contributing to the quality of life. Emissions, particularly carbon dioxide, from transport, industry and settlements should be minimised.

b) Retain dark night skies and minimise light and noise pollution.

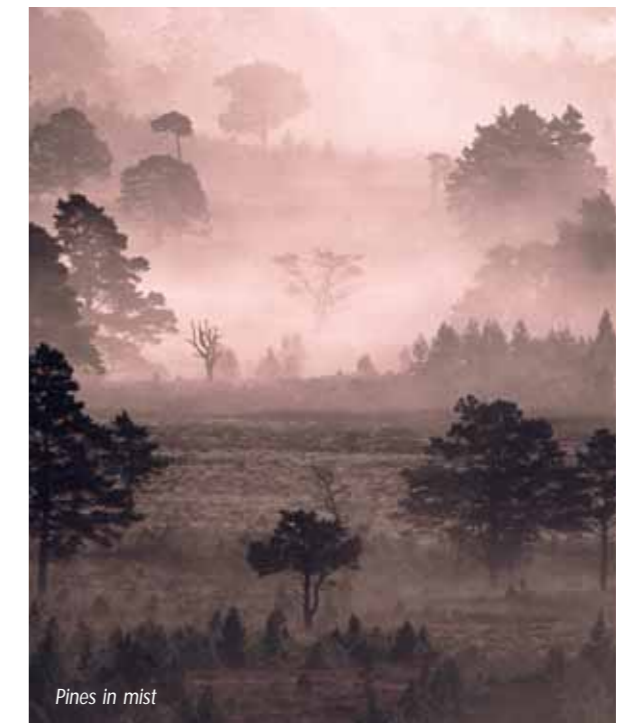
As well as the physical quality of the air, the low level of light pollution means the Park is one of the best areas in the UK for dark night skies. The tranquillity of the area is also a particular quality that should be retained and enhanced. The low noise and light pollution contributes significantly to the sense of wildness and to people's enjoyment and perceptions of the National Park. Transport and settlement planning in particular should seek to maintain and enhance these qualities.

National policy context

- EU Air Quality Framework Directive and subsequent EU Air Quality Daughter Directives
- The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Air Quality (Scotland) Regulations 2000 and 2002
- EU Environmental Noise Directive
- The Environmental Noise (Scotland) Regulations 2006
- Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2000

Cross-reference

- 5.2.5 Transport and Communications



Pines in mist

5.1.4 Integrated Land Management

Land and water management on farms, crofts, estates and reserves is a major influence on all four aims of the Park, and the landscape, natural and cultural heritage qualities of the Park. Land and water management creates and maintains many of the important habitats, as well as sustaining businesses and creating employment. The ongoing conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the Park will rely on a profitable land management sector whose varied objectives contribute positively to the outstanding natural and cultural environment. Current economic trends and changing international policy pose significant challenges to land management businesses.

Integration is a familiar concept at a policy level across rural Scotland. The challenge and opportunity in the Park is to identify the practical ways in which both policy-makers and land managers can take a joined-up approach and work with others to the benefit of both land management and the aims of the National Park.

This section identifies strategic objectives for land management as a whole, aimed at ensuring an integrated approach across different activities. It then identifies further strategic objectives that are specific to the main productive land management sectors and resources. However, strategic objectives across several sections of this plan are relevant to land management, particularly biodiversity, geodiversity, economy and employment, sustainable tourism, outdoor access and recreation.

There are potential conflicts inherent in identifying objectives for the management of different land-uses across the Park. In particular, the application of these objectives at an individual site level will require choices to be made within this overall framework, but this is the essence of integrated management.

Strategic Objectives for All Land Management:

- a) **Maintain and enhance a viable and productive land management sector that delivers private and public objectives and enhances the special qualities of the Park.**
The ongoing management of the land underpins many of the qualities for which the Park is valued. A vibrant land management sector that supports private enterprise and employment and provides active management is a key means to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Park and deliver other benefits for the public.
- b) **Integrate public support for all land and water management activities to deliver public benefits that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the Park.**
Land management can deliver many public benefits, such as access infrastructure, nature conservation and education. These are benefits that the public enjoy and use, but which have a cost attached to their provision and management. Currently there is a range of public support measures for land managers. In the future these should be targeted at delivering benefits that are relevant to the Park area, transparent in what they buy, straight-forward for managers to access and integrated across the varied land management sectors.

- c) **Develop and promote best practice in land and water management and its interactions with people and other land-uses.**
Land managers and public agencies should work together with local communities and other interests to ensure that land and water management in the Park is an example of best practice. It should take into account the range of objectives and the interactions of different land-uses, outdoor access and local communities.
- d) **Develop collaboration and communication between statutory agencies, land managers, non-governmental organisations, voluntary groups, communities and other interests.**
The interactions between land management, the natural heritage and the economy of the Park requires all sectors to work together, share information and be proactive in developing understanding and best practice in land management. Agencies and land managers should share information and management plans with local communities and each other.

- e) **Develop local supply chains and markets for local produce.**
The local consumption and branding of local produce offers many benefits including enhanced viability of production, a greater share of the value captured for producers and businesses within the Park, a marketing advantage and a reduced need to transport goods over long distances. Currently there are weak links in the supply chains for local processing and marketing which need to be addressed.
- f) **Reduce waste, energy use and pollution from all land management activities.**
All land management activities should actively seek ways to minimise waste, energy use and pollution. Where pollution incidents do occur, managers should have the necessary plans and infrastructure to deal with them quickly and effectively and minimise adverse impacts.



Spring ploughing

Diverse Land Ownership and Management

There is a wide diversity of land ownership across the National Park. The majority of land (about 75 per cent) is in diverse private ownership, with smaller areas owned by non-governmental organisations (about 13 per cent including the National Trust for Scotland and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) and public organisations (about 10 per cent including the Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage). Some areas, particularly woodlands, are owned by community trusts (about 2 per cent).

Different owners and managers set varied objectives. For example, some land is managed primarily for nature conservation, whilst other areas are managed primarily for agricultural production, for sporting businesses or for recreation.

While the primary objective or context will vary, most land managers will be delivering several different objectives within one area. In managing this mosaic of uses, managers should therefore have regard to the objectives of their neighbours and potential implications beyond their own land holding.

As well as producing primary products, land in the National Park is also managed for biodiversity, tourism, outdoor access, recreation and community benefit. Any land holding is likely to be involved in several of these activities within the context of their own aims and objectives. The diversity of ownership and management across the area helps to support the varied landscape and special qualities that give the National Park its character. However, greater integration is also required to achieve the vision of the National Park.

Farming and Crofting

With approximately 570 farm holdings and 105 crofts covering over 70 per cent of the Cairngorms area, agriculture has a significant influence on the landscape and natural heritage of the Park. Much of this area is rough grazing and moorland, with the improved grassland and arable production generally being restricted to the straths.

The following objectives promote and support sustainable forms of agriculture and crofting. These seek to produce good quality food and sustain businesses, as well as conserve and enhance semi-natural habitats and their associated wildlife; the landforms and landscapes; and the re-creation of features such as dykes and hedges that have diminished.

Strategic Objectives for Farming and Crofting:

- a) **Manage agricultural production to be consistent with, and enhance, the special qualities of the Park.**
The farmland of the Park supports many valuable habitats, for example for breeding waders such as lapwing and oyster catchers. Farming methods should be consistent with the conservation of habitats and species present. These should actively seek to maximise the opportunities to create and support habitat networks, enhance the landscape and contribute to the natural heritage of the Park. This includes features that have diminished such as dykes and scrub where appropriate.

- b) **Maintain a productive and viable agricultural sector.**
A productive and viable agricultural sector underpins many of the public benefits that land management delivers, particularly some farmland habitats. As well as support for public benefits, it is important for long-term sustainability that agricultural businesses throughout the Park are producing a range of marketable goods and contributing to the economy and employment in the area.
- c) **Encourage the continued development of crofting.**
Crofting tenure applies only to the Badenoch and Strathspey area within the Park, where it provides opportunities for small-scale and part-time land management and production, in addition to the mainstream farming sector. Crofting in this area helps to maintain people living in rural locations and forms a part of the land-use pattern, particularly around settlements. Outside Badenoch and Strathspey, similar small-scale agricultural activity that will contribute to supporting rural communities and local production should be encouraged.
- d) **Encourage access to land for those who wish to farm, particularly new-entrants.**
The availability of land is a key constraint on the number of new people able to take up farming or crofting. This is the result of many factors including the viability of existing holdings, access to finance and the existing pattern of land holdings. Where possible, assistance in sourcing land for those wishing to farm should be encouraged in locations consistent with good management of the natural and cultural heritage and economic viability.

National policy context

- Common Agricultural Policy Reform
- Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture: Next Steps
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013
- Structural Funds Policy
- Agricultural Environmental Impact Assessments
- Water Framework Directive
- National Waste Strategy
- National Waste Plan
- Area Waste Plans
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy
- General Permitted Development Orders
- SPP15 Planning for Rural Development
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- National Strategy for farm business advice and skills
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.2.3 Economy and Employment



Forest and Woodland Management

The forests and woodlands of Strathspey, Strath Avon, Glenlivet, Donside, Deeside, and the Angus Glens form an extensive and predominantly native forest resource. While the native pine forests are the most renowned feature, the Park also contains the largest area of native birch woodland in Britain and the most important stands of aspen woodland. The value of the Park's forest is increased further by the occurrence of smaller areas of oak, ash and riparian woodlands and the occurrence of the only remaining natural example of an altitudinal forest tree line in the country. The extent of this forest, together with the close proximity and connectivity of individual woodlands combines to form one of the most valuable ecological networks in the country and one of the widely recognised special qualities of the Park. It is also a valuable economic and tourism resource.

The conservation and enhancement of this network and its predominantly native character, whether self-sown or planted, is important. It should be integrated with work to support the production, processing and local use of timber in pursuit of broader objectives, including sustainable design, construction and renewable energy. Public support and policy needs to encourage the wide range of benefits provided by forests, including business and community development, timber production, landscape enhancement, nature conservation, sport, recreation, health, environmental quality and carbon sequestration.



Strategic Objectives for Forest and Woodland Management:

a) Promote multi-objective forest and woodland management that delivers environmental, economic and social benefits.

The forests and woodlands of the Park are a major asset because of the multiple objectives their management delivers, ranging from marketable timber, to biodiversity, wood fuel, recreation, tourism, and carbon sequestration.

b) Enhance the condition of existing woodland cover and expand to develop habitat networks that complement the landscape character and other land-uses.

The existing native woodland is an important special quality of the Park and the current ratio of native to non-native species forms a distinctive part of the landscape and biodiversity. There should continue to be a mix of species, age and woodland structure that can deliver the objectives of production, recreation and conservation. The condition of existing native woods should be conserved and enhanced and woodland habitats currently in a poor or unfavourable condition should be restored.

Woodland cover should be expanded to increase the degree of connection between individual woodland sites to strengthen habitat networks. These should be planned to integrate with other habitats and land-uses (in particular moorland management), in order to enhance ecosystem viability and help to encourage species that require large habitat areas in which to thrive. In the long-term networks could lead to links between the rivers Spey, Dee and Don. Where expansion of native woodland is through planting rather than natural regeneration, seed of local origin should be used.

c) Encourage a full range of forest ecosystems from valley floor to natural altitudinal tree-line in targeted areas and the re-development of woodland types that have declined.

Woodland cover in the Cairngorms has generally retreated to a lower altitude than its previous natural extent. In targeted locations identified as part of a strategic approach to a habitat network, the upper tree-line, including scrub cover such as juniper and montane willows, should be encouraged to extend up to its natural altitudinal limit. This will bring benefits to landscape and biodiversity.

d) Increase the value of timber and other local forest products, strengthen supply chains and develop new markets.

The economic viability of forest management remains key to ensuring the wide range of benefits in the long-term. Active investment and management is needed to raise awareness of the quality of local forest products, make better links between producers, processors and customers and develop new and emerging markets such as wood fuel and biomass for energy.

e) Promote the value of forests and woodlands as a major sustainable tourism asset, increasing the derived economic benefits to woodland owners and local communities.

Forests and woodlands should continue to develop as a major asset to sustainable tourism, providing a range of accessible and high quality recreation opportunities and creating a resource that underpins the landscape character and identity of the National Park. Ways to help woodland owners and local communities realise and capture the economic benefits of forest-based tourism should be explored.

f) Promote community participation in forest and woodland planning and management.

Forests and woodlands form a significant part of the local and cultural identity for many communities within the Park and local woodlands are valued for their amenity and recreation opportunities. Woodland management also offers potential economic and social benefits to local communities through contracting, use and marketing of forest products, learning and interpretation. Communities should also be able to inform forest policy development and contribute to the objectives and planning for forest management in order to maximise the benefits.

g) Contribute to national efforts to address climate change.

Forests and woodlands are an important resource in addressing climate change. The extensive forests of the National Park can make a significant contribution to national targets. Forests can help mitigate climate change by off-setting carbon emissions through carbon sequestration. They also play an important role in enabling biodiversity to adapt to the effects of climate change by providing dispersal routes through robust habitat networks. The forest resource will play an increasingly important role in the provision of wood fuel as a source of renewable energy.

The Caledonian Forest

The Park contains the most extensive area of Caledonian Forest in Scotland. These native pine woodlands of predominantly self-sown Scots pine have regenerated from generation to generation and are now the western-most link to the extensive boreal forest which formerly covered a much larger area of northern Europe. Birch, juniper, holly and other tree and shrub species also occur according to the soil type and past management. This distinctive habitat is home to several rare species, including capercaillie, crested tit, Scottish crossbill, pine marten, wild cat and a wide range of specialist invertebrates, flowering plants, mosses, liverworts, lichens and fungi.

The Caledonian Forest is very important for biodiversity and is also a distinctive part of the Cairngorms landscape. Native pine woods are a

priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and Caledonian Forest is a notified feature in four Special Areas of Conservation within the Park.

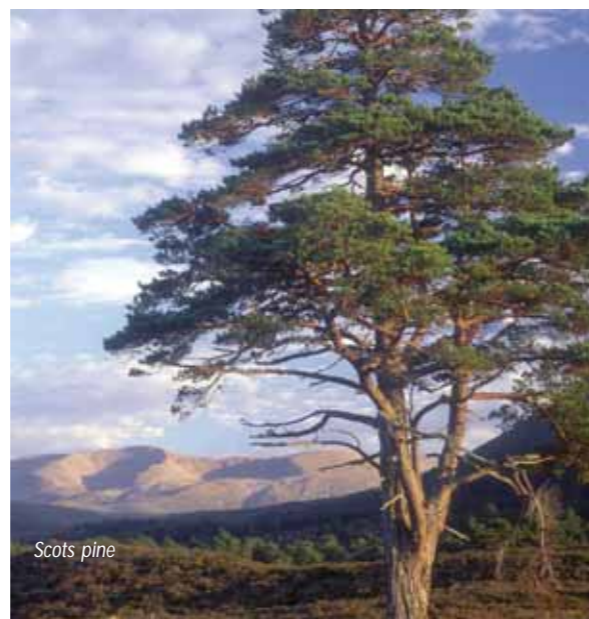
The conservation of the remaining Caledonian Forest through natural regeneration should be a key factor in guiding future forest and woodland expansion and developing habitat networks. Management should aim to reduce fragmentation, encourage regeneration and restore forest structure. In so doing, the value of links with existing plantations of Scots pine and some areas of non-native species to diversity in the overall forest structure should be recognised. Most of the plantations are on ancient native pine forest sites and are planted with stock of local genetic origin.

National policy context

- Scottish Forestry Strategy
- Scottish Forest Industries Cluster
- UK Forest Standard
- Forests and Water Guidelines 4th Edition
- UK Woodland Assurance Scheme
- National Cultural Heritage Strategy
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- National Strategy for farm business advice and skills
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources
- 5.2.2 Sustainable Communities
- 5.2.3 Economy and Employment
- 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation



Scots pine

Moorland Management

Just as woodlands are a characteristic part of the Park's landscape character, so are the extensive moorlands, defined here as the open areas below the montane zone, dominated by heather, juniper scrub, wet heath, blanket bog and semi-natural dry grasslands. This includes a significant area of lowland heath.

Moorland covers approximately 40 per cent of the Park so its management has a significant impact on the landscape and biodiversity resource, contributing to a number of the special qualities of the Park. Moorland management in much of the Park is focused primarily on grouse shooting which has brought significant socio-economic investment and is closely connected with the cultural heritage of land-use in the area.

Strategic Objectives for Moorland Management:

- a) **Enhance moorlands as a high value and sustainable resource for nature conservation, sport, agriculture, landscape and recreation.**
Carefully planned grazing and muirburn regimes, can optimise the landscape, biodiversity and sporting values of moorlands, while excessive burning, grazing and trampling can have deleterious effects. Active management of moorlands, including stock and game, disease and tick control and infrastructure is needed to deliver the potential benefits which in turn support local communities and employment, while conserving the special qualities associated with moorlands. The conservation and restoration of the extensive blanket bogs associated with moorlands can enhance biodiversity, increase grouse productivity and help to moderate precipitation runoff. Blanket bogs are also an extremely valuable carbon sink.

- b) **Demonstrate and enhance the delivery of biodiversity targets by moorland management.**

The moorland habitat is an internationally significant biodiversity resource. The profile of this resource amongst managers and the public should be increased, so that moorland management and the understanding of it, can recognise and realise the opportunities to benefit biodiversity. Management for grouse should respect the full moorland ecosystem.

- c) **Manage the interaction of moorlands with surrounding land-uses to maintain and enhance the integrity of the moorland landscape, ecosystems, key habitat networks and hydrology.**

Individual moorlands cannot be managed in isolation. The extent of ecosystems and hydrology associated with moorlands means that they need to be managed on a large-scale and integrated with neighbouring woodland edges through a habitat network approach.

National policy context

- Principles of Moorland Management (Scotland's Moorland Forum)
- The Muirburn Code
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- National Strategy for farm business advice and skills
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.2.3 Economy and Employment
- 5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism
- 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation

Forests, Woodlands and Moorlands – a network of habitats

In the Park as a whole, forestry and moorlands are both important components of the landscape, habitats and economy. In fact it is the particular combination of forests, woodlands, moorlands and montane areas that contribute to the Park's special character. However, there are tensions between the objectives for each, not least because the two cannot occupy the same site at the same time. While the objectives give long-term encouragement to both land-uses, decisions on the appropriate locations for each can only be made on a more detailed assessment by land managers of the characteristics and opportunities of particular sites.

The expansion of native woodland should focus on areas which will give the best advantages in terms of habitat networks and links, particularly among and between the existing core areas of Strathspey and Deeside. They should also seek to

establish a full sequence of woodland types including riparian woods, oak/birch, pine/birch and sub-alpine scrub; and the enhancement of the landscape character.

There are also places where it will be appropriate to fell woodland plantations and restore ground to moorland, particularly where inappropriate and unproductive forest planting has taken place in the past.

Overall, a large scale mosaic of forest and open moorland is likely to deliver a valuable mix of benefits for biodiversity, land-use, recreation and landscape. Management decisions should be informed by the opportunities to develop a network that meets the needs of different land-uses and enhances the species valued as part of the special qualities of the Park.

Deer Management

Red, roe and sika deer are present in the Park. Red and roe deer are a valuable part of the natural and cultural heritage of the Park and contribute significantly to the economic viability of some communities, particularly through stalking and the sale of venison. They are a feature of the natural heritage that visitors associate with the area and wish to see. Deer can have a beneficial impact on some habitats, but there are areas within the Park where deer populations are currently having a significant adverse impact on the natural heritage qualities which is a particular management issue to be addressed.

The management of deer populations interacts with a number of other land management activities. These include moorland management, forestry and farming and management of other habitats and species. While the management of deer will vary across the Park according to species, different land units and conditions, the following objectives set out a framework to address deer management consistently.

Strategic Objectives for Deer Management:

a) Manage deer populations at densities consistent with maintaining and enhancing the special natural heritage qualities of the Park, particularly native woodland, montane and moorland habitats.

Deer are an essential part in the functioning of many of the Park's habitats and need to be present within the carrying capacity of the land. However, deer can have an adverse impact on some habitats through over-grazing and trampling. Management of deer populations should be based on regular assessments of habitat impact, co-ordinated at the level of biological populations and maintained at levels that do not cause significant adverse impact to habitats and allow restoration of habitats in poor or unfavourable condition.

b) Encourage co-ordination of deer management across the Park.

As deer move across ownership and management boundaries throughout the Park, their management needs to be co-ordinated. There are opportunities to develop the existing collaboration of Deer Management Groups to include managers, communities and public agencies, to further co-ordinate the planning and implementation of management and address issues at a scale appropriate to deer populations.

c) Maintain and enhance the socio-economic sustainability of the deer resource.

Deer management contributes significantly to the economy of the Park and provides employment, direct and indirect, often in the more remote areas. The skills and expertise of deer managers are important to the management of the Park and their roles often support communities in remote areas.

d) Make accessible, research and use the best available data on habitat impacts, population models and good practice to inform deer management planning.

Deer management should be based as far as possible on sound data and evidence. Existing sources of data should be collated and easily accessible to managers and others to develop greater understanding of the issues and impacts of management and promote informed debate.



Roe deer

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES...cont

5.1 Conserving and Enhancing the Park

- e) Where deer fencing is considered appropriate, minimise the impacts on public safety, deer welfare, biodiversity, landscape, cultural heritage and recreation.

Deer fencing can serve a useful purpose for controlling deer, helping to achieve environmental objectives and preventing deer causing a public hazard, but the full range of options for control should be considered before fencing. Where it is considered appropriate, fences should be designed to minimise the impacts on public safety, deer welfare, biodiversity, landscape, cultural heritage and recreation. Decisions on whether fencing is appropriate should refer to the Joint Agency Statement and Guidance on Deer Fencing adopted by public agencies in 2004 as a starting point. Fencing should only be used as part of a wider management plan and should remain in place only as long as necessary.

National policy context

- Deer (Scotland) Act 1996
- Deer Commission for Scotland Long Term Strategy (under review)
- Deer Commission for Scotland Best Practice Guidance
- Joint Agency Statement and Guidance on Deer Fencing
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- Deer Interagency Liaison Group Formal Joint Working Agreement
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.2.3 Economy and Employment
- 5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism
- 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation

Fisheries Management

Atlantic Salmon, Sea Trout and Brown Trout are the principal species for which river fisheries are managed in the Park. Significant lengths of the Spey, Dee, Don, North and South Esk are within the Park and make up an important fishery resource in the Scottish context. The surrounding land-uses, water abstraction and use, river engineering and interactions with non-native species, all have a significant impact on the quality of the fishery resource. The Park's rivers, particularly the Spey and Dee and their tributaries, are of national and international importance for biodiversity as well as being an integral part of the outstanding landscape of the Cairngorms.

Strategic Objectives for Fisheries Management:

- a) Encourage co-ordination of fisheries management at river system and catchment level.

The issues affecting river fisheries within the Park, including the proliferation of invasive weed species, non-native fish and the need for broader integration of fisheries management with the positive management of riparian habitats, surrounding land-uses and recreation, requires co-ordination at the scale of catchments and river systems between river managers and with other interests.

Building on the existing work of District Fishery Boards, management should support the implementation of Catchment Management Plans through regulation and incentive schemes, education, awareness and targeted initiatives for specific issues.

- b) Encourage removal and minimisation of artificial barriers that impede passage of fish and affect river flow.

There are a number of artificial barriers and physical deterrents to fish migration within rivers which can also alter the river habitat and structure through erosion and deposition. Where not required for current use, these barriers should be removed and their impact on the river flow minimised, in consultation with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. Fisheries should be managed as a part of naturally functioning dynamic river systems.

National policy context

- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013
- Scottish Historic Environment Policy

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources



Reintroduction of fresh water pearl mussels

5.2. Living and Working in the Park

5.2.1 Introduction – Encouraging Sustainable Development

As well as being a national asset and a place of recreation and enjoyment, the Park is a place of work and daily life for approximately 16,000 people. The economic and social needs and issues in the area are similar to those throughout rural Scotland, but its designation as a National Park brings a new focus to finding solutions that are sustainable in the long-term. As well as improving opportunities for people within the area, the National Park has the potential to contribute significantly to the well-being of the wider region.

Sustainable development means that the resources and special qualities of the National Park are used and enjoyed by current generations in such a way that future generations can continue to use and enjoy them.

There is an opportunity to bring a renewed focus to sustainable development in the area, building on the existing links between the economy, the natural environment and communities. The integration of these interests should ensure that economic development builds on the special qualities of the Park, is consistent with their conservation and enhancement and helps to create and maintain sustainable communities.

5.2.2 Sustainable Communities

The long-term vision for the National Park needs communities that are sustainable in social, economic and environmental terms. The current population of the Park (approximately 16,000) is concentrated in communities of varied size, spread across 23 community council areas. Current projections indicate that there is likely to be a small growth in population (approximately 600 people) between 2006 and 2016. The population in the Park is also expected to get older (at a higher rate than the national average) as a result of more young adults leaving the area than coming into it, with the greatest net in-migration being in the 40-60 age group.

These trends pose clear challenges to creating and maintaining sustainable communities, particularly in maintaining and enhancing economic activity and service provision.

The main settlements of the National Park – Aviemore, Grantown-on-Spey, Kingussie, Newtonmore and Ballater – all play a strategic role in the wider region. In particular, the transport links of the A9 (to Perth and Inverness) and A93 (to Aberdeen) mean that these settlements are home to those working elsewhere, as well as being centres for visitors coming into the Park. Aviemore is distinct in being a significant economic driver and a growth centre for the wider region and city of Inverness.

Strategic Objectives for Sustainable Communities:

- a) **Encourage a population level and mix in the Park that meets the current and future needs of its communities and businesses.** Many of the objectives in this section of the Plan will influence and contribute to the population level and mix. However, it is important to actively encourage a population in the National Park that can continue to support thriving communities in the long-term. In the short-term this means seeking to retain or attract more young people.
- b) **Make proactive provision to focus settlement growth in the main settlements and plan for growth to meet community needs in other settlements.** The main settlements of the National Park have the greatest range of existing services and infrastructure which can best accommodate increased growth in a sustainable way. Other settlements in the National Park require growth that meets the communities' needs, but that also reflects the scale and qualities of the settlements, as well as the viability of services and infrastructure present.
- c) **Promote provision of local services that meet the needs of communities through Community Planning and other community development initiatives.** The provision of services should contribute to thriving communities that have the appropriate facilities to meet their needs. Access to services, including schools, health care and social infrastructure such as shops, post offices, pubs and phone boxes, is key to the long-term sustainability of communities.

New development should seek to reinforce the sustainability of communities and support the provision of services in settlements.

- d) **Strengthen the capacity of local communities and encourage community development building on existing networks, expertise and experience.** Communities should be supported in building their confidence, skills, knowledge and resources to encourage development and activity within communities and effective engagement in shaping the National Park and public policy. Communities should be supported in developing effective community councils, associations and enterprises.
- e) **Promote community involvement and more inclusive representation in the management of the National Park.** Local communities should be able to inform and participate in the management of the National Park and be well-informed about its management. Communities should be able to understand the role of public bodies and how they can contribute to and influence their work. Public bodies should have an understanding of the needs and issues at a community level and of how to engage effectively with communities.

Community Planning

Community Planning is a process which helps public bodies work with communities to plan and deliver better services which make a difference to people's lives. It is a means for people to become involved in the planning and services for their area and have a say in its future. The processes of Community Planning led by local authorities provide a good basis for people to influence many aspects of the future management and development of the National Park and their own communities.

The principles of Community Planning should be extended as a means to involve people in management planning across all aspects of this plan – it is only through active engagement that the knowledge, needs and ambitions of communities can be shared and realised.

National policy context

- National Standards for Community Engagement
- Smart Successful Scotland
- Smart Successful Highlands and Islands
- Smart Successful Grampian
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management
- 5.2.3 Economy and Employment
- 5.2.4 Housing
- 5.2.5 Transport and Communications

5.2.3 Economy and Employment

The economy of the National Park is interrelated with the major centres of population and growth located on the periphery of the Park. Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee and Perth all contribute to and derive benefit from the Cairngorms National Park in a number of areas, such as business opportunities, movements of labour and recreation. For example, the National Park is used as a 'pull factor' for new business and in recruiting staff for companies based both within and outwith the Park.

Employment in the Park is currently based primarily on the tourism, land management and food and drink sectors. Compared with Scotland as a whole, there is low unemployment and a high number of self-employed. However, many jobs in these sectors are highly seasonal with little long-term security and these figures may mask the fact that many have to look elsewhere or leave the area to find work. The sustainable growth of the economy is key to maintaining sustainable communities and to creating a strong and vibrant National Park which also stimulates and supports the wider regional economy.

Enterprise strategies for the area already include aspirations to maintain and increase the population, create new employment opportunities, raise income levels and be 'an international shop window for the best the country has to offer'. The National Park can make a full contribution to these aspirations and help communities in the area progress the four Enterprise Network themes of communities, skills, businesses and global connections, while emphasising the core theme of sustainable development underpinning all activity.

The strategic objectives for land management in Section 5.1.4 contribute significantly to supporting the economy and communities, through those sectors that are directly related to managing the natural resources of the Park. This section sets out objectives for the broader economy in the Park to strengthen its sustainability and ensure it contributes positively to all four aims of the National Park.



Cairngorms Farmers Market, Grantown-on-Spey



Technology Park, Aviemore

Strategic Objectives for Economy and Employment:

a) Create conditions conducive to business growth and investment that are consistent with the special qualities of the Park and its strategic location.

The special qualities and environment of the Park provide an opportunity to underpin business growth and investment in the area. The growth and diversification of the wider regional economy can be harnessed to reinforce and stimulate the economy within the Park, to benefit communities in the area and complement the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities, which give the Park its identity and provide many of its resources. It is important therefore to ensure that there is an appropriate framework in place to support business development through development planning and management.

b) Encourage entrepreneurship, especially in young people and in sectors which complement the special qualities of the Park.

Entrepreneurship is vital to encourage more business growth and raise income levels in the Park. Young people with good ideas need to be supported, whether through better vocational training or information from an early stage on how they can obtain the skills they seek. In particular, the opportunities associated with the sustainable use of the natural and cultural resources of the Park should be encouraged.

c) Promote 'green business' opportunities.

As well as being an area of outstanding conservation value, the Park is a place to work and should be a place where businesses can thrive. Promoting green business means encouraging sectors that complement the Park's aims in ways that do not adversely impact on the special qualities. Particularly important sectors include tourism, food and drink and renewable energy.

Improving the environmental performance of businesses more generally through, for example, resource and energy efficiency and waste management measures will also be encouraged. As well as being more environmentally sustainable, such action can help reduce operating costs and create marketing advantage with consumers looking at the 'green' credentials of businesses and their products/services.

d) Promote opportunities for economic diversification across all areas of the Park.

The Park currently has a relatively narrow economic base, depending on a few key sectors for employment. Many of the jobs associated with these sectors are seasonal and/or part-time, and are relatively low waged. Supporting appropriate opportunities for economic diversification has the potential to create higher paid, more permanent employment. It also increases the resilience of the local economy to downturns within individual sectors.

e) Address barriers to employment uptake.

With relatively low unemployment, businesses can face difficulties in recruiting labour. On the other hand, there are a number of barriers to employment such as poor access to transport, seasonal demand for employment, lack of childcare and the inflexibility of working hours. Childcare is often inadequate to meet parents' needs, particularly in sparsely populated areas. Through childcare partnerships, childminder and nursery provision can be improved in some places. Measures to address these barriers will encourage greater employment, contributing to more sustainable communities.

f) Raise the profile and excellence of local produce and services.

A relatively high proportion of the value of local products is currently taken out of the local economy through processing and sale elsewhere. Strengthening local supply chains, branding and marketing and adding value through processing local produce, can all help to retain a greater share of the economic value deriving from resources in the Park.

g) Promote access to education and vocational training at all levels across the Park.

Those wishing to study and train locally require more opportunities to do so. The provision of more trainers, courses and modules delivered in the Park will assist local people to gain skills that will improve their earning potential while at the same time improving business productivity.

h) Ensure a match between training provision and current/future skills needs.

It is vital that the needs of local businesses and school leavers are met by local and national training and education schemes. Schemes should be both relevant and useful to local companies and young people.

National policy context

- Framework for Economic Development in Scotland 2004
- Smart Successful Scotland 2005
- Smart Successful Highlands and Islands
- Smart Successful Grampian
- Scottish Executive Green Jobs Strategy
- Highlands and Islands Special Transitional Programme
- European Union Objective 2 Programme
- Education and Training (Scotland) Act 2000
- Skills in Scotland 2006
- National Plan for Gaelic
- National Priorities for Schools
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross-reference

- 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management
- 5.2.2 Sustainable Communities
- 5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism

5.2.4 Housing

The need to ensure greater access to affordable and good quality housing to help create and maintain sustainable communities is a key challenge in the National Park. This includes both owner-occupier properties and those rented through social and private landlords. The projected small increase in population, together with a trend to smaller household size, means that the demand for housing in the area is likely to increase between 2006 and 2016 by between 600 and 1,000 households, based on current trends.

Currently, 75 per cent of households in the National Park have an income that would not be sufficient to secure a mortgage great enough to purchase a house at the average 2005 price in the Park. While registered social landlords target housing provision at those in most need, and those on the highest incomes have a range of housing options, those in intermediate income brackets have difficulty in accessing the current housing market.

The quality and design of new housing should meet high standards of water and energy efficiency and sustainable design and be consistent with or enhance the special qualities of the Park through careful design and siting.



Strategic Objectives for Housing:

a) Increase the accessibility of rented and owned housing to meet the needs of communities throughout the Park.

There is a need to ensure access to rented and low cost housing in perpetuity. This means identifying appropriate sites for housing and prioritising these in strategic planning as well as in funding programmes and making appropriate provision for land through the Local Plan.

Access to housing could be improved by increasing the supply of housing targeted at those who have difficulty entering the open housing market, widening the availability of existing properties and using mechanisms such as section 75 planning agreements to ensure housing remains affordable to those who need it in the long-term.

b) Promote effective co-ordination and co-operation between all public and private organisations involved in housing provision in the Park and the communities living there.

To achieve all the housing objectives, there is a need for all organisations involved to work closely together and share information and good practice. This requires good communication between the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as within these sectors.

c) Improve the physical quality, energy efficiency and sustainable design of housing in all tenures throughout the Park.

Housing in the Park should aim to be an exemplar of good practice in energy and water efficiency and sustainable design. The lessons learned from different construction methods and approaches should be shared between partners to ensure a continuing improvement in quality and efficiency. The Local Plan and associated design guidance should promote appropriate locations, high quality design and efficiency.

d) Ensure there is effective land and investment for market and affordable housing to meet the economic and social needs of communities throughout the Park.

The availability of appropriate land and investment in infrastructure and services is key to the provision of housing. To ensure the availability of land and investment in the Park that is consistent with the special qualities of the area and avoids damage to important nature conservation sites and species, a long-term approach and partnership working are required.

National policy context

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
- Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003
- Crofters Acts 1993 and 1997
- Title Conditions (Scotland) Act 2003
- Agenda 21
- Strategic Housing Investment Framework
- Scottish Executive Policy on Architecture for Scotland
- SPP3 Planning for Housing
- SPP15 Planning for Rural Development
- SPP17 Transport and Planning
- PAN72 Housing in the Countryside
- PAN74 Affordable Housing
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.2.2 Sustainable Communities
- 5.2.3 Economy and Employment



5.2.5 Transport and Communications

Transport infrastructure is central to the future sustainability of communities and to meeting the aspiration to be a world-class sustainable tourism destination. The National Park sits at the centre of a national and regional transport network that provides good road and rail links to Inverness, Aberdeen and Perth. However, the transport links within the Park, particularly east-west, are less well developed.

Bus services provide the main form of public transport within the Park, although there remain barriers to use including service routes and frequency. There is an opportunity to improve the service provision to benefit residents, visitors and businesses and reduce the number of journeys by car. Walking and cycling are the most sustainable forms of transport and the integration of good transport provision with outdoor access is key to facilitating a more sustainable transport network.

Telecommunications are generally good in the main settlements of the Park, most of which are able to access broadband technology, although some remain without it.

Strategic Objectives for Transport and Communications:

a) **Encourage and support improvements to public transport quality and accessibility to better meet demand and increase use.**

Use of public transport is currently limited by route provision, frequency and a lack of connectivity in places. Services should be targeted to meet the needs of residents and visitors, with a particular focus on integration between transport types and ticketing. Better timetable information for residents and visitors will increase ease of access and use.

b) **Encourage improvements to the transport infrastructure to support socio-economic development.**

Improvements to the transport infrastructure, including road and rail, to better serve the area's communities should be encouraged, subject to meeting high standards of environmental management.

c) **Ensure transport and communications infrastructure is managed and developed in ways consistent with the special qualities of the Park.**

The transport and communications infrastructure provides valuable benefits to the Park, but the potential negative impacts of it on the landscape, natural heritage and other special qualities should be minimised. The immediate surroundings of transport routes form an important part of the experience of the Park for both residents and visitors and should be managed to retain and enhance surrounding features and provide safe viewpoints.

d) **Improve access to and encourage use of information technology, so creating opportunities for businesses and individuals to stay in, or locate to, the Park.**

Most areas of Scotland have access to broadband. The expansion of its use can assist in attracting hi-tech businesses to the Park and in providing better support to home-workers and small or medium-scale enterprises.

National policy context

- Scotland's National Transport Strategy 2006
- Scotland's Transport Future
- HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy
- Delivering a Modern Transport System, NESTRANS
- Scottish Executive Green Jobs Strategy
- SPP17 Planning for Transport
- PAN76 New Residential Streets
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross reference

- 5.2.2 Sustainable Communities
- 5.2.3 Economy and Employment
- 5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism
- 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation



Rail links in the National Park



Local transport

5.2.6 Waste Management

Current waste management schemes vary across local authority areas and include some kerbside provision and a number of recycling points. The long-term approach to waste management in the Park should be firstly to reduce the amount of waste to the minimum through careful use and re-use, then to ensure that there are easily accessible recycling facilities within communities.

Strategic Objectives for Waste Management:

a) Minimise waste and encourage better waste management through community and domestic-scale recycling facilities.

Waste should be minimised, re-used or recycled and the necessary infrastructure to enable communities, individuals and businesses to minimise, re-use and recycle should be developed.

b) Increase awareness of the benefits of effective waste management through reducing, re-using and re-cycling.

Waste is a potential resource which can have economic and social benefits, but its inefficient processing, particularly through landfill, results in the loss of raw materials and further impacts on the environment. Through raising awareness of the impacts of producing and processing waste, communities, visitors and businesses can adapt systems to manage resources more efficiently through their life-cycle. Termed 'Zero Waste', this approach includes increasing the number of local composting, re-use and recycling projects, through partnerships between community initiatives, private waste companies and local authorities.

c) Reduce litter in the Park.

As a National Park with an outstanding natural environment and an important tourist industry, reducing the occurrence and presence of litter across the Park, particularly around roads, settlements and popular visitor attractions, will contribute significantly to the quality of life and experience in the Park. A 'zero tolerance' approach to litter should be encouraged.

National policy context

- Waste Framework Directive
- Landfill Directive
- Scottish Executive Green Jobs Strategy
- National Waste Strategy
- National and Area Waste Plans
- NPPG10 Planning and Waste Management 2007-2013
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013
- Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse

Cross-reference

5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources



Recycling bin

5.3 Enjoying and Understanding the Park

5.3.1 Introduction – Creating a World-Class Experience

The Cairngorms National Park is known for its outstanding environment and outdoor recreation opportunities – the vision for the Park seeks to go further and develop a world-class destination which plays a significant part in the regional and national tourism economy. This requires a sustainable approach to developing tourism, an excellent quality provision of outdoor access and recreation opportunities and a significantly enhanced awareness and understanding of the National Park, its special qualities and management needs.

Visitors come from many different places, with different interests and levels of knowledge about the area. Enjoyment of the area is not only relevant to those people travelling to the Park, but is part of the everyday experience of those living in and around the area. References to visitors throughout the plan therefore include all these different groups – from those enjoying their local area to those who travel far to come here.

The experiences of residents and visitors enjoying the National Park should be of the highest quality. Part of the integration required in managing the Park is to promote the enjoyment of the area in ways that are not only consistent with the special qualities, but actively develop understanding about the Park and contribute to its conservation and enhancement.

The promotion and management of outdoor access, recreation and visitor services is an integral part of developing a sustainable approach to tourism, in line with the principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. It is also integral to land and water management, sustaining vibrant communities and conserving and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage.

The need to understand more about what makes the National Park so special and how it functions is relevant not only to visitors, but to residents, businesses, specialist interest groups and people elsewhere in Scotland and beyond. The National Park is a national asset and effective future management relies on informed debate and understanding of the Park, its national and international importance.



Braemar Heritage Centre

5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism

The National Park is already a popular tourism area, attracting about 1.4million visits from around the UK and overseas each year. Tourism accounts directly and indirectly for a significant part of the area's economy. The National Park has the potential to become a world-class destination with the highest standards of service, quality of experience and environmental performance. It is already an important asset and has the potential to make a significant contribution to the regional and national economy, helping to promote Scotland on a world stage.

In considering how sustainability principles relate to tourism, the following description by the World Tourism Organisation is useful:

*"Sustainability principles refer to the **environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects** of tourism development, and a **suitable balance must be established** between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.*

*"Sustainable tourism development requires the **informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership** to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a **continuous process** and it requires **constant monitoring of impacts**, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.*

*"Sustainable tourism should also maintain a **high level of tourist satisfaction** and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them."*

World Tourism Organisation 2004

In the National Park, tourism is everyone's business. The experience of those visiting the Park is formed by everyone they have contact with and everywhere they go in the area. A collective commitment to high quality services and collaboration is therefore essential.

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism

In July 2005 the Cairngorms National Park was the first UK National Park to be awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism by the Europarc Federation. The Charter recognises that the management of tourism in the Cairngorms National Park addresses the balance between the needs of visitors, the environment and local communities. It emphasises the need to conserve and promote the special qualities of the Park as the basis of tourism.

There are currently over 30 protected areas throughout Europe where sustainable tourism management is recognised by award of the Charter.



Horse riding, Cairngorms

Strategic Objectives for Sustainable Tourism:

a) **Raise awareness of the Park as a premier, year-round, rural tourism destination, recognising its outstanding natural heritage and its National Park status.**

A co-ordinated approach to marketing the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park can increase awareness, nationally and internationally and encourage more visits to the Park. Many businesses are seeking to increase their income throughout the year, particularly by boosting visits outside the current peak seasons. Marketing should be consistent with the good management of the special qualities that underpin the Park's appeal and bring together public and private sector networks.

b) **Improve and maintain the quality of experience in the Park for all visitors, communities and those working within the tourism industry.**

Quality of experience is key to the long-term sustainability of tourism. This includes the experience that visitors enjoy when they come to the Park, the experience of those working in the industry and the interactions between communities and local tourism providers. In all these, good practice should be recognised and become the benchmark for everyone involved in tourism across the Park.

c) **Maintain a high quality environment by encouraging sound environmental management by all those involved in tourism in the Park.**

The high quality environment forms the basis for tourism in the Park and is therefore one of the sector's most important assets. Everyone involved in tourism should minimise negative impacts and support positive enhancement of the environment. This includes action for the landscape and habitat resources that underpin much of the visitor appeal, as well as sound environmental management practice in individual tourist businesses. Those advising and supporting the development of new tourism businesses should ensure that high environmental standards are built into business development.

d) **Ensure effective involvement by all stakeholders in the planning, development and management of tourism in the Park and maintain good communication between them.**

Structures that bring together organisations and people with different interests to work in partnership are needed to deliver a sustainable approach to tourism. The interests of industry providers, visitors, land managers and communities, both in the Park and in surrounding areas, need to come together to develop a mutual understanding and communication of each other's needs and priorities.

- e) **Strengthen and maintain the viability of the tourism industry in the Park and the contribution that it makes to the local and regional economy.**

Despite the importance of tourism to the local and regional economy, many individual businesses are relatively fragile and are seeking additional income to underpin their viability. In addition to the promotion and marketing of the Park, there is a need to support business development and increase the economic benefits generated in the local and regional economy through strengthening local supply chains. Investment in tourism infrastructure, including accommodation, is also needed in some areas of the Park and should be encouraged through a co-ordinated approach to development planning and management that contributes to all four aims of the Park.

- f) **Develop and maintain a wide range of opportunities for visitors to experience and enjoy the special qualities, distinctiveness and natural and cultural heritage of the Park.**

The special natural and cultural heritage qualities of the Park underpin its appeal and offer a distinctive visitor experience. Development of tourism products and services should help to develop discovery and understanding of the area through activities, events and products that draw on the special qualities of the Park. Focusing on this distinctiveness offers the potential for greater long-term sustainability in economic, environmental and social terms.

- g) **Ensure that visitors to the Cairngorms are aware of the range of opportunities, places to visit and things to do throughout the Park and appreciate and respect its special qualities.**

The transfer of information to visitors about the Park, its special qualities and ways in which they can be experienced is key to developing an appreciation and understanding of the area and what it offers. It is therefore an important process for managing tourism and encouraging greater exploration, longer stays, increased spending, responsible behaviour and repeat visits.

- h) **Encourage an optimum flow and spread of visitors across the Park and minimise social and environmental impact including traffic generated by visitors and conflicts between different forms of recreation.**

While tourism is a vital part of the local economy, its impacts on the environment and local communities need to be managed to ensure long-term sustainability. Certain attractions or areas may suffer damage to the habitats or species that people come to enjoy, or disruption and congestion in local communities. All these potential impacts should be taken into account in managing tourism and their negative effects minimised. It is also desirable to spread the benefits of tourism across different areas of the Park and throughout the year.

- i) **Ensure that visitor information is targeted at specific audiences and encourages resource protection, responsible access, visitor safety and the health benefits of regular outdoor exercise.**

As well as promoting the special qualities of the Park, visitor information should promote an understanding of visitor impacts on the natural heritage and help people to take action that reduces their impact and ensures long-term resource protection. It should also help people to understand their impacts on other users, land or water management and communities as well as advise on responsible and safe ways to enjoy the Park. The health benefits of outdoor access and activities should also be promoted as part of a coherent approach to the benefits and responsibilities for visitors enjoying the Park.

- j) **Ensure a cohesive Park-wide approach to ranger services which meets the needs of visitors, communities and land managers.**

The ranger services in the Park are a valuable contact between visitors, communities and land managers and contribute to many other strategic objectives through their roles in promoting enjoyment and understanding and managing the interactions of visitors with the places and communities they come to see. To the visitor, ranger services are a popular point of contact for information about the National Park. A cohesive approach to service delivery, closely linked to the Park, is needed to maximise the impact of both local and Park-wide knowledge.

- k) **Collate, analyse and use the best available information on visitor numbers, distribution, activities and perceptions to inform visitor management.**

To deliver all objectives relating to visitor services and tourism, from the quality of experience to resource protection, requires up-to-date information about visitor numbers, distribution, activities and perceptions. Although a wealth of information is currently collected, there are opportunities to put it to better use. Everyone involved in visitor services should seek to source and use the best available information in their planning and decision-making and the information should be widely available in a variety of forms.

National policy context

- Scottish Tourism: The Next Decade – A Tourism Framework for Change 2006
- European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
- National Plan for Gaelic
- Highland Tourism Strategy
- NESTOUR Strategy
- Scottish Executive Green Jobs Strategy
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management
- 5.2.3 Economy and Employment
- 5.2.5 Transport and Communications
- 5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation
- 5.3.4 Learning and Understanding

5.3.3 Outdoor Access and Recreation

The National Park is internationally renowned for the exceptional range and quality of outdoor access and recreation opportunities. From challenging mountaineering and kayaking to quiet walking, cycling, horse-riding and paddling, and from organised sport and recreation to informal exploration, the area provides many people with the chance to enjoy this exceptional natural environment in many different ways.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gives Scotland what is probably the best system for outdoor access in the world. The legislation offers people fantastic opportunities to enjoy the special qualities of the National Park in a responsible way. The provision of outdoor access opportunities that are well managed can also contribute significantly to important public policy agendas including social inclusion, improving health and transport and improving overall quality of life.

As the Park has both significant recreational appeal as well as special habitats and species that may be vulnerable to damage or disturbance, a key challenge is to establish exemplary recreation management, building on the existing expertise already in the area. Much of the tourism industry is based on people having good opportunities to get out and about and enjoy the area and the wide range of sports and recreation enjoyed by many depends on responsible access to land and water.

It is therefore vital to many aspects of the National Park's environment, communities and economy that there is a range of high quality opportunities for people to enjoy the area in ways that conserve the special qualities and maximise the benefits to all sectors.

Strategic Objectives for Outdoor Access and Recreation:

a) Encourage people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and experience the outdoor environment.

People of all ages and abilities, regardless of social, economic or physical constraints, should be able to enjoy and experience the special qualities of the Cairngorms safely. This means that a range of opportunities should be available and promoted, from organised activities to informal exploration, from guided or way-marked routes through to unmarked routes, and from quiet enjoyment to adventure sports. The quality and co-ordination of outdoor access infrastructure, information and interpretation should be enhanced so as to be accessible and appropriate for a range of different users and appropriate to the landscape, natural and cultural heritage setting.

b) Promote high standards of responsible enjoyment of the Park so that its special qualities are understood and appreciated, safeguarded now and for future generations to enjoy and the interests of others are respected.

The enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park must be accompanied by an understanding of responsibilities to other visitors, land managers, communities and the natural and cultural heritage. This should ensure that the very qualities people come to enjoy are safeguarded and enhance the quality of visitors' experiences. Those enjoying outdoor access should develop an understanding of their potential impacts and responsibilities and ensure that they help to maintain and enhance the special qualities of the Park.

c) Develop a co-ordinated approach to the sustainable management of high quality outdoor access and recreation by the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

To secure responsible outdoor access and recreation throughout the Park in the long-term requires co-ordination of the efforts of a wide range of interests to develop a mutual understanding and to communicate each other's needs and priorities. These include public agencies, land managers, tourism operators, communities, sports and access user groups.

d) Plan for future outdoor recreation needs and opportunities in a co-ordinated way across sectors.

Recreation interests should actively plan to cater for changing trends in recreation and recreation opportunities and work with other sectors to plan and manage these opportunities to best advantage and in the context of the National Park.

e) Support and encourage local community involvement in the planning and management of outdoor access throughout the Park.

People in communities have a particular interest in local outdoor access routes surrounding their homes. Often these provide access facilities for residents' recreation, dog-walking, routes to schools or shops, as well as being part of a wider access network used by others. Local routes can also form important attractions linked to local businesses and community interpretation facilities. It is therefore desirable that communities play a key role in developing and managing the outdoor access routes around their homes to maximise the potential benefits.

f) Develop a high standard of responsible management of outdoor access based on a common understanding of the needs of access managers and users.

The strong links between land management, access and tourism in the Park, together with the presence of some vulnerable habitats, requires a proactive and exemplary approach to managing outdoor access. Building on the approach to responsible management identified in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, support should be given to land managers and access providers to share knowledge and experience in developing good practice in access management.

g) Protect the more fragile areas of the Park from pressures arising from outdoor access and recreation.

There are areas of the Park, particularly parts of the mountains, native woodlands and water, in which there are nationally and internationally important, but fragile, habitats or species. These are a key part of the Park's natural heritage and underpin its designation and attraction. There are also many



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5.3 Enjoying and Understanding the Park

important sites of cultural and historic significance in the Park, some of which are vulnerable. These areas must be protected from the physical pressures arising from outdoor access and recreation and sites that are currently suffering from these pressures should be addressed through sound and unobtrusive management wherever possible. Protecting these areas does not mean that they cannot be enjoyed for recreation, but that access should be managed and enjoyed responsibly to avoid adverse impacts. Those enjoying the outdoors can also contribute to this protection through responsible behaviour and taking positive action to conserve these important interests.

National policy context

- Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
- Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Scottish Physical Activity Strategy
- National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-being
- Scotland's Sport 21 2003-2007, The National Strategy for Sport – Shaping Scotland's Future
- Scotland's Transport Future
- Natural Futures, Scottish Natural Heritage
- Highland Tourism Strategy
- NESTOUR Strategy
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross-reference

- 5.1.2 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Cultural Heritage
- 5.1.4 Integrated Land Management
- 5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism

Local Outdoor Access Forum

The National Park Authority has established a Local Outdoor Access Forum to advise on the exercise of access rights, rights of way and development of a core paths plan for the Park. The National Park Authority has a statutory duty to establish this Forum and its membership brings together experienced people from a variety of different fields – land managers, recreational users and community representatives – interested in or affected by access rights.

The Forum advises the National Park Authority and others on:

- Strategic outdoor access issues;
- Preparation of an Outdoor Access Strategy;
- Preparation and adoption of a Core Paths Plan;
- Resolution of disputes concerning the exercise of access rights.

It also promotes responsible access and land management through the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, promotes discussion and sharing of good practice and supports the provision of appropriate infrastructure.



Way markers, Kingussie

5.3.4 Learning and Understanding

The National Park offers an opportunity to develop learning, understanding and experience for people of all ages, abilities and interests. The Park is both a location for learning and a focus for learning about sustainable development. It offers opportunities for both formal and informal education, for people living and working in the area, but also people from across Scotland and beyond, to help fulfil their potential.

Managing the particular challenges and needs of the Cairngorms also needs a renewed emphasis on bringing together people involved in all aspects of the Park, to strengthen their mutual understanding and capacity to address the sometimes difficult management challenges. Awareness of the Park, its special qualities and management needs is a necessary basis from which to influence future management and develop understanding about the connections between activities and the consequences of our collective actions.

As well as developing learning and understanding within the Park, it is important to raise awareness and understanding of the Park itself, its special qualities and its status as a national asset across Scotland and beyond. The lessons learned in other areas of the world should also be used in developing understanding of the Park in its Scottish and international context.

Strategic Objectives for Learning and Understanding:

- a) **Increase the awareness and understanding of the Park's special qualities and the management needed to sustain and enhance them.**

Understanding the special qualities and management needs of the Park is vital to the enjoyment, sustainable development and long-term future of it. While much is known about some special qualities, there are many gaps in our collective knowledge. Increasing awareness of the management needs across sectors will help the integrated approach needed to deliver the vision for the Park.

- b) **Seek and share experience and knowledge from the management of other areas in Scotland and the world.**

There is a wide range of experience in managing protected areas around the world and managing other rural areas in Scotland. Many other areas face similar challenges to the Park and everyone involved in it should continually look to identify good practice. They should also learn from experience elsewhere in order to inform management tailored to the particular circumstances of the Park. The transfer of experience to and from the Park is vital in informing Scottish and international debate about resource management, land-use and rural development.

c) Develop learning resources that draw on the special qualities of the Park.

The National Park can be both a place and a focus for life-long learning. Opportunities to develop learning resources and materials that draw on the special qualities of the Park and its management should be pursued. These include the use of local examples, case studies and visits within formal learning and a wide range of informal learning opportunities building on the existing provision of outdoor education and training facilities and outreach work.

d) Encourage people of all ages, abilities and walks of life to get outdoors frequently and experience the special natural and cultural qualities of the area at first hand.

Understanding about the Park and its management is closely linked to experiencing its places and its special qualities at first hand. Formal and informal education should take every opportunity to use the Park as a learning resource and help people of all ages to explore and get to know it. More should be made of the opportunities to use creative approaches, including music, art and drama, to engage people in the outdoors.

e) Develop and support opportunities for volunteering.

Some local schemes are already in place to help people volunteer across a range of areas. The opportunity exists to better co-ordinate volunteering in all sectors, particularly related to the special qualities of the Park and to develop more local initiatives to allow residents, visitors and students to take part in caring for the National Park and to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the area.

f) Capture knowledge and factual information about the Park in a range of appropriate ways so that it is easily accessible to anyone who wants to use it and can be passed on to future generations.

Information about the Park, its special qualities and its management needs to be widely available and accessible to people with a wide spectrum of interest and specialist knowledge. There is a great deal of information held locally or by individuals that is not formally recorded, but that contributes greatly to our understanding of the area's history, use and communities. Finding ways to capture and transfer both oral and written information is important in developing understanding about the Park and informing its future management.

g) Ensure that the Park is a place where both scientific and traditional forms of knowledge about the land and its management are valued and put to good use in the long-term management of the area.

There is a significant amount of scientific data on certain aspects of the Cairngorms and there is a wealth of knowledge amongst those who have lived and worked in the area. It is important that future management draws on the full range of this knowledge, using the best available information from scientific study and formal monitoring, together with the experience of people that have lived and worked in the area.



h) Increase mutual understanding and trust amongst people interested in the Park through exchange of ideas, perspectives and knowledge.

The successful management of the Park in the long-term relies on a mutual understanding of the needs and priorities of different interests and a trust between them in sharing information and working together to resolve potentially conflicting objectives. Communication and exchange of ideas, different perspectives and individual knowledge is the key to developing this understanding and trust and to ensuring that future management is based on well-informed

and constructive debate. This will require, amongst other things, the formation of appropriate inter-disciplinary groups and skilled facilitation.

i) Ensure that people across Scotland are aware of the Cairngorms National Park and understand why it is worth investing in.

The Park is a national asset and information about the Park, its management and the opportunities for enjoying it should be widely available to everyone in Scotland and beyond. The Park has many important natural and cultural heritage qualities and it is important to develop understanding at a national level of its value, international status and management needs. In turn, management of the Park should be informed by national perspectives.

National policy context

- National Priorities for Schools: National Priority 4, Values and Citizenship
- Highland Tourism Strategy
- NESTOUR Strategy
- Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy
- Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Cross-reference

- 5.1.3 Sustainable Use of Resources
- 5.2.2 Sustainable Communities
- 5.3.2 Sustainable Tourism

