



THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

Badenoch & Strathspey Corridor Study



This report was produced by Matthew Eastwood, Vipre UK on behalf of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisation.

The project was part-financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community (Cairngorms Local Action Group) LEADER 2007-2013 Programme.

The project was also supported by the Energy Saving Trust and with assistance from the Highland Council.

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Executive Summary

The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisation (ACDMO) and key stakeholders managing tourism in the Cairngorms National Park recognise the need to address the balance between the needs of visitors, the environment and local communities and to conserve and promote the special qualities of the Park as the basis of tourism. There is however a gap between the aspirations to develop, promote and maintain the National Park as a sustainable tourism destination and current tourist travel patterns and transport provision within the Park.

This study came out of a desire to conduct a transport study looking at current travel patterns and transport provision at key visitor attractions along the Badenoch and Strathspey corridor. In particular, the purpose of this work was to identify opportunities to improve sustainable transport provision and promote more sustainable travel to, from and within the Badenoch and Strathspey area of the National Park.

The car dominates visitor travel to, from and around the National Park and there are a number of challenges in providing alternatives to car use, including:

- The comparatively small and dispersed population of the Badenoch and Strathspey area presents a significant challenge in providing financially sustainable public transport services;
- The geography of the Badenoch and Strathspey transport corridor and the location of many tourist attractions make it difficult to provide public transport to many attractions;
- Lack of connectivity between public transport services can limit the attractiveness of public transport compared to car use and can inconvenience public transport users;
- The lack of facilities that allow easy interchange and the limited provision for the carriage of cycles on most public transport services also restricts the utility of cycling as a mode of transport that can be used to access parts of the National Park. This can make access to a car necessary for some journeys;
- Many of the activities and attractions that draw visitors to the Cairngorms National Park involve walking and cycling but these modes of transport are often not viewed as ways to travel to and around the National Park.

While almost all the tourist attractions within the National Park are designed primarily around access by car, many do provide active travel infrastructure such as segregated pedestrian and cycle routes and dedicated cycle parking of some form. While few sites are well served by public transport, around half are located within comfortable walking distance of a bus stop and a large number are accessible by public transport in combination with walking and/or cycling.



A significant proportion of visitors to the Cairngorms National Park are not aware of all available public transport options. While there are a variety of sources of information available, there is no overall communications strategy for promoting sustainable modes of transport.

If the CNPA, ACDMO and key stakeholders are going to achieve their aim of seeing the National Park becoming a sustainable destination they will need to:

- Explore ways to improve connectivity between bus and train services, including:
 - Improving connectivity between bus and train services ensuring schedules are timed to minimise waits between connecting services;
 - Improve connectivity by identifying opportunities for integrated ticketing for bus and train services operating within and to the National Park;
 - Engage in further detailed discussions with the operators of key tourist attractions and transport operators with regards the feasibility of running a pilot scheme offering combined public transport tickets and attraction entry fees.
- Explore ways to improve interchange between active travel modes and public transport, including:
 - Improving facilities such as cycle parking at public transport interchanges (e.g. bus stops and train stations) or surfaced all-weather paths connecting bus stops that are in relatively close proximity to, but not directly serving, popular tourist destinations;
 - Improve the provision for bicycles on bus and train services operating within Badenoch and Strathspey in terms of capacity and ease of booking.
- Explore ways of improving public transport provision to and from key tourist destinations, including:
 - Identify a number of potential revisions or extensions to existing public transport services that would allow key tourist destinations to be served more effectively;
 - Identify a number of potential new public transport routes that could serve key tourist destinations seasonally or throughout the year, should funding be available in the future.

There may be an opportunity for the CNPA, ACDMO, key stakeholders and tourist attractions to work collectively to identify clusters of tourist attractions (such as the Glenmore Area) that can be supported through the provision of additional, or more frequent, public transport services and improved walking and cycling facilities. Glenmore already has an adequate hourly bus service, but more could be done to integrate the service with local attractions. The aim would be to create a unique selling point for those attractions, enabling visitors to travel to and from the National Park by coach or rail and around key tourist attractions by bus, bike and/or on foot. This would offer visitors the opportunity to enjoy the natural environment of the National Park while helping to conserve it.



Information plays a key role. One option may be to provide a web-based resource, possibly utilising the VisitCairngorms: www.visitcairngorms.com site, to provide an online 'one-stop-shop' to allow potential visitors to plan journeys to the Cairngorms National Park, providing information on how to travel both to and around the Park sustainably and providing links to journey planning websites and the websites of transport operators. Such a site might act as an online version of the Cairngorms Explorer booklet.

There may be an opportunity for the CNPA, ACDMO, key stakeholders and tourist attractions to work collectively to attract visitors drawn not only by the existing attractions the National Park has to offer but by the *sustainability* of holidays in the National Park where it is possible to use sustainable transportation for the duration of their stay. This approach could be adopted in conjunction with improvements to walking, cycling and public transport provision to a particular cluster of tourist attractions within the National Park and expanded to cover the whole of the park if this approach proves to be successful.

General destination marketing such as VisitScotland, accommodation providers and visitor attractions could then refer visitors to this 'one-stop-shop' for travel information rather than provide and maintain detailed travel information on their own sites.

General destination marketing of the Cairngorms National Park should:

- Identify the National Park as a sustainable tourism destination;
- Identify sustainable travel options such as walking, cycling and public transport as *the* way to travel around the National Park;
- Direct visitors to more detailed travel information to aid journey planning.

Individual tourist attractions and accommodation providers should be encouraged to provide travel information such as:

- Providing copies of the Cairngorms Explorer booklet to guests;
- Providing links to the websites of public transport providers and transport information providers;
- Incorporating the Transport Direct page landing service on to their own websites (see: www.transportdirect.info/web2/Tools/BusinessLinks.aspx for further details).

Individual tourist attractions within the National park should also be assisted in developing their own detailed 'access maps' for inclusion in published leaflets. These maps should identify local bus stops, core paths, cycle parking, approximate walking times and contact details for further information on walking, cycling and public transport.



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1 Introduction

1.1 Sustainable Transport

The way we travel has a huge impact on our economy, health, environment, and the resources available for future generations. It is currently estimated that 28%¹ of all greenhouse gas emissions in the UK are transport related² and congestion is estimated to cost the UK £20 billion every year through reduced efficiency and damage to the environment.³ Within Scotland, private car use accounts for approximately 90% of tourism travel.⁴ This traffic makes a significant contribution to UK greenhouse gas emissions, but also to airborne and waterborne pollutants, as well as noise pollution. It can also pose a danger to both people and wildlife. For this and other reasons it is easy to see why encouraging sustainable transport for tourism is important.

1.2 Sustainable Tourism

The Cairngorms National Park is home to 16,000 people and attracts around 1.4 million visitors from around the UK and overseas each year. It makes a significant contribution to the regional and national economy, with tourism accounting directly and indirectly for a significant proportion of the local economy.⁵

The Cairngorms National Park has a large area of arctic mountain landscape at its heart, with diverse communities surrounding it. The Park stretches from Grantown-on-Spey to the heads of the Angus Glens, to Ballater, Dalwhinnie and Drumochter, including much of the Laggan area in the southwest and a large area of the Glen Livet estate and the Strathdon/Glen Buchat area.

The Park is also home to 25% of Britain's threatened species. It includes unique mountainous areas of wild land, moorlands, forests, rivers, lochs and glens. Sites designated as of importance to natural heritage take up 39% of the land area and two thirds of these are of Europe-wide importance.⁶ To be of lasting benefit, tourism needs to be sustainable and growth in tourism needs to be balanced with protection for the environment, which is tourism's major attraction.

¹ Scotland produced 44.619 million tonnes CO₂ in 2005. In total end user emissions from transport in Scotland accounted for 2.372 million tonnes CO₂ or 27.7% of Scotland's total emissions.

² Source: Local & Regional CO₂ Emissions for 2005 for the UK, DEFRA 2007:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/globalatmos/galocalghg.htm.

³ Source: Scottish Executive Publications, Costs of Congestion: Literature Based Review of Methodologies and Analytical Approaches, 2006.

⁴ Transport Tourism and the Environment in Scotland, 2000. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report F00NC17: www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/f00nc17.pdf

⁵ Cairngorms National Park Authority Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008

⁶ Source: www.cairngorms.co.uk/



A key challenge for those who manage the National Park is to promote and increase visitor numbers whilst protecting and enhancing the natural environment of the Park.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority's (CNPA) *Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism* defines sustainable tourism as:

*Sustainable tourism can be said to be tourism that takes account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. Making tourism more sustainable means taking these impacts and needs more fully into account in the planning, development and operation of tourism.*⁷

The CNPA has an aspiration for the National Park to be a world-class sustainable tourism destination.⁸ In July 2005 the Cairngorms National Park was 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 and emphasises the need to conserve and promote the special qualities of the Park as the basis of tourism.⁹ The CNPA's Strategic Objectives for Sustainable Tourism are to:

- Raise awareness of the Park as a premier, year-round, rural tourism destination, recognising its outstanding natural heritage and its National Park status;
- Improve and maintain the quality of experience in the Park for all visitors, communities and those working within the tourism industry;
- Maintain a high quality environment by encouraging sound environmental management by all those involved in tourism in the Park;
- Ensure effective involvement by all stakeholders in the planning, development and management of tourism in the Park and maintain good communication between them;
- Strengthen and maintain the viability of the tourism industry in the Park and the contribution that it makes to the local and regional economy;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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;

⁷ A Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism, 2005:

www.cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/publications/01022006/CNPA.Paper.193.A%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Sustainable%20Tourism.pdf

⁸ See: www.cairngorms.co.uk/parkauthority/nationalparkplan/national_park_plan_2007.php

⁹ See: www.europarc.org/home/



- 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;
- Ensure a cohesive Park-wide approach to ranger services which meets the needs of visitors, communities and land managers;
- Collate, analyse and use the best available information on visitor numbers, distribution, activities and perceptions to inform visitor management.¹⁰

The challenge for the CNPA is to put sustainable tourism measures into practice by providing information, support and infrastructure to help visitors to the Cairngorms National Park to choose to walk, cycle, take public transport, or lift share rather than travel to and around the Park by car.

1.3 How This Study Came About

In July 2008 the CNPA successfully applied to the Energy Saving Trust (EST) for a grant for site specific travel plan advice, and in September 2008 the Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisation (ACDMO) Limited successfully applied for LEADER funding to help fund a transport study looking at key trip attractors along the Badenoch and Strathspey corridor.

The CNPA and ACDMO were keen to build on the findings of the 2006 Cairngorms National Park Public Transport Audit and to conduct a transport study looking at current travel patterns and transport provision at key visitor attractions along the Badenoch and Strathspey corridor. In particular, the purpose of this work was to identify opportunities to improve sustainable transport provision and promote more sustainable travel to, from and within the National Park. The Highland Council already spend a large amount on subsidising local bus services, which are hourly on some main routes, and the work was to look at how these services are delivered and might be 'tweaked' or improved to help serve visitors better. Vipre UK carried out this study on behalf of the CNPA and ACDMO working with key tourist attractions and key Stakeholders to draw together this report.

1.4 Study Aims

The aim of this study was to examine key destinations and visitor traffic to attractions along the Badenoch and Strathspey corridor in the Cairngorms National Park in order to:

- Review the transport provision to 51 key visitor attractions & outdoor recreational hotspots and the five main-line railway stations within the area, and engage with those who manage them;
- Review active travel infrastructure, e.g. cycle shelters;

¹⁰ Cairngorms National Park Authority Corporate Plan 2005 – 2008



- Assess these attractions in terms of their accessibility by foot, cycling, public transport and private car and overlay Core Paths to ensure linkages;
- Identify and assess the options for reducing car use and, by doing so, reduce the Park's carbon footprint;
- Identify existing monitoring at sites, and establish baselines where practical;¹¹
- Identify management options for car parks in the study area;
- Identify opportunities for integrated ticketing and packaging combined travel and entry fees to attractions;
- Identify opportunities to promote more sustainable travel - such as walking, cycling, public transport and lift sharing - to visitors (including residents from elsewhere in the Park) travelling to key sites in the study area, and;
- Encourage larger sites to subsequently develop Travel Plans (possibly supported through EST consultancy assistance).

1.5 Study Partners

Several organisations worked together to make this study possible, including contributing staff time towards completion of the study, and each of these are detailed below.

Cairngorms National Park Authority¹²

The Cairngorms is the UK's largest National Park and was made a National Park in September 2003 to help protect the unique wildlife and countryside it contains and for the people that live in it, manage it and visit it. The Cairngorms National Park has the largest area of arctic mountain landscape in the UK at its heart, with diverse communities around it. It is home to 16,000 people and 25% of Britain's threatened birds, animals, and plants. It includes moorlands, forests, rivers, lochs and glens.

The statutory purpose of the Park Authority is to ensure that the four aims of the Park are achieved collectively and in a co-ordinated way. Those aims are to:

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

¹¹ It was acknowledged from the outset that there would be differing levels of knowledge at different sites

¹² Source: www.cairngorms.co.uk/



To do this, the CNPA employs approximately 58 officers and is directed by a board comprising 25 members, some of whom are appointed by Local Authorities, some of whom are nominated by the Scottish Government and some of whom are elected locally.

Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisation¹³

ACDMO is Scotland's first not-for-profit, private-sector led destination management organisation whose activities are directed towards community benefits from tourism. The Company has evolved with the support of public sector and community interest groups. It is led by a group of Directors from local businesses driven by their interest in corporate social responsibility.

The Highland Council¹⁴

The Highland Council is one of 32 unitary authorities in Scotland which came into being in 1996 following ratification of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994. The Highland Council is the largest local authority in Scotland, covering an area of approximately 26,484 square kilometres, similar in size to the country of Belgium. It is divided into 22 wards, each of which elects three or four member wards, totalling 80 councillors across the area who are elected by single transferable vote.

Highland Council serves a population of approximately 211,340. The Council provides its constituent population with a range of services including transport, education, social work, housing, waste management, conservation, leisure and economic development, and is the largest employer in Highland, employing approximately 12,500 staff to provide these services.

1.6 Funding Assistance

This study was made possible by funding from two sources, each of which is detailed below.

Energy Saving Trust Site Specific Travel Advice¹⁵

In July 2008 the CNPA successfully applied to the Energy Saving Trust (EST) for assistance to help fund a transport study looking at key trip attractors within the Cairngorms National Park along the Badenoch and Strathspey Corridor. EST runs a Site Specific Advice Scheme, funded by the Scottish Government, offering organisations throughout Scotland fully subsidised consultancy assistance to look at travel and transport arrangements. EST funded 10 days of consultancy assistance to contribute towards the completion of this study.

¹³ Source: www.visitaviemore.com/

¹⁴ Source: www.highland.gov.uk/

¹⁵ For further details see: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/transport



LEADER Grant Funding¹⁶

In September 2008 ACDMO successfully applied for LEADER¹⁷ funding for this study. Managed locally by the Cairngorms Local Action Group, LEADER is an initiative funded by the European Commission and run by the Scottish Government with funding support from the Cairngorms National Park Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The fund provides an opportunity for communities to realise ideas and ambitions and its overall aim is to increase the capacity of local rural communities and business networks to build human capital, innovate and co-operate in order to tackle local development objectives. The main aims of the new fund are:

- Revitalising communities, and;
- Encouraging progressive rural economies.

LEADER Grant Funding provided 15 days of consultancy assistance to contribute to the completion of this study.

1.7 Structure of This Document

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides a detailed programme of work based on the time available for this study;
- Section 3 provides details of the Badenoch and Strathspey area, including the nature of the area and transport provision;
- Section 4 looks at current information provision for visitors to the Cairngorms National Park;
- Section 5 provides the results of a site audit survey of the 51 key trip attractors in the National Park;
- Section 6 identifies the study's key findings, and;
- Section 7 summarises the key recommendations.

In addition, three appendices provide further information:

- Appendix 1 provides useful transport links;
- Appendix 2 provides a Site Survey Summary, and;

¹⁶ For further details see: www.cairngorms-leader.org/

¹⁷ LEADER stands for: **L**iaisons **E**ntre **A**ctions de **D**eveloppement de **L'**Economie **R**urale (Links between actions for the development of the rural community)



- Appendix 3 provides maps of key trip attractors with 1 mile and 3 mile radii to illustrate approximate comfortable walking and cycling distances.



2 Programme of Work

Table 1 below provides a detailed breakdown of how Vipre UK used the 25 days consultancy time available to carry out this study and identifies contributions from each of the study partners.

Table 1 – Programme of work.

Task	Description	Output	Time	Who
Inception	Inception meeting to finalise study proposal, firm up timescales and form steering group comprising CNPA, ACDMO, Highland Council and Vipre UK.	Study timescales and study outcomes agreed and steering group identified.	1½ days	Vipre UK and Study Partners
Literature Review	A Literature Review collating existing transport information on the study area provided by key stakeholders to inform the next stage of the study.	Transport information on study area informs next stage of the study.	3 days	Vipre UK
Develop Electronic Site Audit Questionnaire	Electronic Site Audit Questionnaire developed by Vipre to gather information on key destinations, identifying information such as the nature of the site, the number visitors, transport links, etc.	Electronic Site Audit Questionnaire developed.	2 days	Vipre UK
Site Audit Questionnaires distributed	Electronic Site Audit Questionnaire is distributed to 51 key destinations and 5 main-line Railway Stations, with invitation to participate issued by CNPA. Where destinations do not have a specific person responsible for their management, data will be gathered from key stakeholders.	Questionnaires distributed and completed.	-	CNPA
Site Audit Questionnaire returns analysed	Data from completed questionnaires is collated and additional information is gathered for larger sites. CNPA follow up where no questionnaire is returned and where 2 attempts to contact site management prove unsuccessful or where there is insufficient consultancy time available due to a low return rate. CNPA will make 2 further attempts and/or a site visit and provide Vipre with the available information.	Detailed information on the transport arrangements at each site as well as visitor numbers, modal split, and accessibility information where available. Provide a baseline for future reviews of transport in the study area.	10 days	Vipre UK and CNPA



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Task	Description	Output	Time	Who
Follow-up Consultation	Follow-up phone calls to selected destinations to prompt survey completion and clarify responses as appropriate. CNPA provide additional support where appropriate (see above).	Prompt survey completion and clarify responses.	1 day	Vipre UK and CNPA
Consultation with key stakeholders	Telephone based consultation with local transport operators and other stakeholders identified by CNPA, to identify issues, opportunities and fill gaps in available information in the study area.	Provide stakeholder engagement, identify issues, opportunities and fill gaps in available information in the study area.	1 ½ days	Vipre UK
GIS Mapping	Map the key destinations in study area including distance isochrones to identify walking and cycling opportunities and key public transport routes.	Map the key destinations in study area to provide additional access information.	-	CNPA / The Highland Council
Draft Report	Draft a Badenoch and Strathspey Corridor Study Report incorporating all the above and identifying a number of key recommendations.	Draft Report circulated to study partners for comment.	4 ½ days	Vipre UK
Feedback on Draft Report	Study partners provide feedback on Draft Report.	Final Report incorporates study partner feedback.	-	Study Partners
Final Report	Final Report drafted incorporating study partner feedback.	Final Report used to inform decision making on transport issues in the study area.	1 ½ days	Vipre UK
TOTAL:			25 days	



3 The Badenoch & Strathspey Corridor

The following sections provide background information on the study area, including current transport provision.

3.1 The Study Area

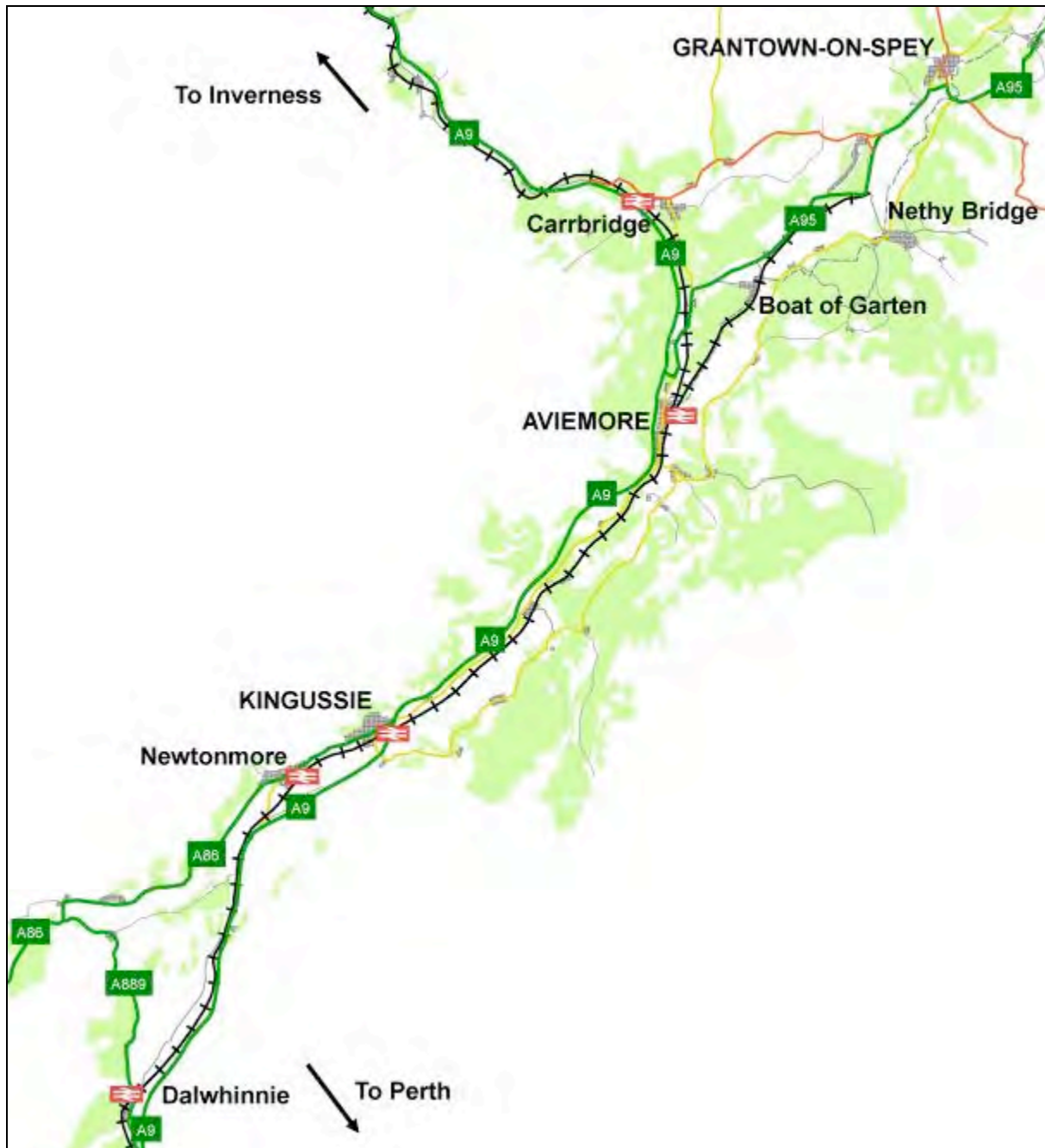


Figure 1 – Badenoch and Strathspey corridor, including the A9 and the Highland main line.



The Badenoch and Strathspey corridor was chosen as the study area because it provides a distinct research area and is the National Park's major population centre as well as a centre of economic activity.

The area covers the approximate area of the Highland Council's Badenoch and Strathspey Council Ward, one of 22 wards within the Highland Council area. Badenoch and Strathspey has a population of approximately 12,272, the main population centres being Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey.¹⁸ The key settlements in the area along with their approximate populations are as follows:

- Aviemore - 2600 (including Coylumbridge and Glenmore)
- Grantown-on-Spey - 2170
- Kingussie - 1400
- Newtonmore - 1000
- Boat of Garten - 700
- Carrbridge - 700
- Nethy Bridge – 500
- Dalwhinnie - 100¹⁹

Tourism plays a key role in the local economy and the Badenoch and Strathspey ward has the highest proportion of jobs in tourism in the Highland region, with just over 36% in the distribution, hotels and restaurants employment sectors.²⁰

Aviemore

Aviemore is the largest village in the Badenoch and Strathspey area and plays a key role in providing access to a wide range of tourist attractions and activities located in west of the Cairngorms National Park, and is a regional centre for shopping, accommodation and recreation in its own right.

The Glenmore Area

The Glenmore area (referred to locally as the Cairngorms, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore [CRAG] area) runs from the B970 at Coylumbridge, following the 'Ski Road' through Glenmore Forest Park, to the Cairn Gorm Mountain. The area includes tourist attractions such as:

- Glenmore Forest Park
- Glenmore Lodge
- Loch Morlich Watersports
- The Cairngorm Sleddog Centre
- The Funhouse, Hilton Coylumbridge
- The Rothiemurchus Estate

¹⁸ Source: www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/yourward/ward21/

¹⁹ Source: Cairngorms National Park Visitor Guide 2008

²⁰ Source: www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/yourward/ward21/ward-21-z-wardstats.htm



- Cairngorm Reindeer Centre

Kingussie

Kingussie is the traditional capital of Badenoch, the area of the upper Spey Valley and is a centre for local activities such as:

- Kingussie Camanachd (Shinty) Club
- RSPB Insh Marshes Nature Reserve
- Ruthven Barracks

There are also a number of attractions located between Aviemore and Kingussie along the route of the A9 near Kincaig including:

- Loch Insh Watersports
- The Highland Wildlife Park
- The Frank Bruce Sculpture Trail

Newtonmore

Newtonmore is southern-most of the larger settlements along the River Spey, and offers a number of museums and outdoor activities being styled as a haven for walkers, including:

- The Highland Folk Museum
- Newtonmore Craft Centre and Gallery
- The Clan Macpherson Museum
- The Wildcat Trail

The Laggan Area

Laggan is a small settlement in the south-west of the National Park surrounded by the Monadhliath and Grampian mountains, providing a start point for local walking and cycling activities, including:

- Strathmashie Forest
- Dun da Lamh, Spey Dam and Kinloch Laggan
- Laggan Wolftrax



The Dalwhinnie Area

Dalwhinnie is a small settlement in the south of the National Park and forms the southern gateway to the Cairngorms. Local tourist attractions include:

- Dalwhinnie Distillery
- Pass of Drumochter
- Gaick Pass and Glen Tromie

Grantown on Spey

An 18th century planned town, Grantown-on-Spey is the original 'capital' of Strathspey. Grantown-on-Spey and the settlements Nethy Bridge and Speybridge offer a number of visitor attractions on or near the Spey River, including local museums and outdoor activities such as:

- Grantown Museum
- Revack Estate
- Explore Abernethy
- Dulnain Bridge Roche Moutonnee
- Speyside Heather Visitor and Garden Centre

The Tomintoul Area

Tomintoul is located between Deeside and Speyside, between the high Cairngorms and Glenlivet and is one of the highest villages in the Highlands. Tomintoul has a number of local attractions and is close to the Lecht Ski Centre, the Tomintoul Glenlivet Estate and is the start point many walking and cycling routes.

3.2 The Transport Corridor

The west of the National Park sits on the mainline rail network and A9 coach routes, with road and rail links primarily running north to south. The Badenoch and Strathspey area acts as a key transport corridor and the primary access route to the Cairngorms National Park from the north and south. Transport links within the Park, particularly east-west, are however, less well developed.

The A9

The A9 forms part of the M9/A9 Edinburgh - Stirling - Thurso Trunk Road. The A9 has both dual-carriageway (1km of dual carriageway within the Park) and single-carriageway sections and runs from central Scotland to Thurso through settlements in the Cairngorms National Park including Dalwhinnie, Kingussie, Aviemore and Carrbridge. The Scottish CityLink and Megabus M91 coach services follow the general route of the A9, linking Perth to Inverness,



running through the Cairngorms National Park and stopping at Newtonmore, Kingussie and Aviemore.

The Highland Main Line

The Highland Main Line links Perth and Inverness and runs through the Cairngorms National Park, as well as Dalwhinnie, Newtonmore, Kingussie, Aviemore and Carrbridge railway stations, which are located within the Park. Much of the Highland Main Line is single track, with services timed to arrive at stations at the same time to utilise passing loops. Services operated by First ScotRail and National Express East Coast (NEXC) running between Inverness and Edinburgh, Glasgow and London use the Highland Main Line.

National Cycle Network Route 7

Route 7 of the National Cycle Network (NCN), linking Sunderland and Inverness and between Glasgow and Inverness, is branded as the 'Lochs & Glens North' as well as NCN Route 7, and passes through both the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs and the Cairngorms National Parks. NCN Route 7 largely follows the general route of the A9, on and off road, through the study area and passes through Dalwhinnie, Newtonmore, Kingussie, Aviemore and Carrbridge.²¹

3.3 The Road Network

The A9 and the Highland Main Line play a key role in visitors accessing the Park. There is also a local road network connecting settlements and key trip attractors as well as more peripheral areas of the National Park.

The road network in the Badenoch and Strathspey area consists of local roads and trunk roads. Roads that form the trunk road network are managed by Transport Scotland using Transerv Scotland Ltd and BEAR Scotland Ltd. The trunk roads in the area include:

- The A9 (described above) forming part of the M9/A9 Edinburgh - Stirling - Thurso Trunk Road and running through the Cairngorms National Park and the Badenoch and Strathspey area;
- The A889 running between the A86 and Drumgask, through Dalwhinnie to the A9;
- The A86 running from the A9, through Kingussie, Newtonmore to the A82 and Spean Bridge, and;
- The A95 running north and east from the A9 to the A96 and Keith.

²¹ Source: www.sustrans.org.uk/default.asp?sID=1095346028093



The Highland Council is responsible for the local road network, including improvements and maintenance throughout Badenoch and Strathspey.²² Key local roads in the area include:

- The B9152 following the original route of the A9 starting at Kingussie and passing through Aviemore, now bypassed by the new route of the A9;
- The B970 starting at Kingussie and running north to the west of the River Spey to Nethy Bridge and Spey Bridge;
- The B9102 running from the A95 through Grantown-on-Spey to the A939;
- The A938 running from the A9 and Carrbridge to Dulnain Bridge and the A95 towards Grantown-on-Spey;
- The A939 running north from the A95 and Grantown-on-Spey to Nairn, and;
- The A939 running south and east from the A95 to the A93 and Ballater.

3.4 Local Public Transport Provision

The following sections identify rail, coach, local bus and seasonal services that facilitate travel to, from and within the Badenoch and Strathspey area.

Rail Services

Rail services are provided along the Highland Main Line, linking Perth and Inverness and running through the National Park, including stops at Dalwhinnie, Newtonmore, Kingussie, Aviemore and Carrbridge Railway Stations (), each of which is located within the Park. See Table 2 below for further details, see www.firstgroup.com/scotrail/travelinfo/station-info.html

²² Source: www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A0607B33-17BA-486B-9CD1-43F1C7D0823B/0/RoadsinBadenochandStrathspey.pdf



Table 2 – Highland Mainline Railway Stations.

Highland Mainline Railway Stations						
Highland Mainline Railway Station	Annual visitor numbers ²³	Shared site	Cycle parking Provision	Accessible by bus	Distance to closest bus stop	Staffing
Dalwhinnie	1,975	×	3 cycle racks	✓	<100 metres	Unstaffed halt
Newtonmore	7,062	×	3 cycle racks	✓	<100 metres	Unstaffed halt
Kingussie	33,427	×	5 cycle spaces	✓	<100 metres	Staffed part time
Aviemore	115,542	✓	3 cycle racks	✓	<100 metres	Staffed for most trains
Carrbridge	5,437	×	3 cycle racks	✓	<1 km	Unstaffed halt

Services operating on the Highland Main Line include:

- First ScotRail operated service between Inverness and Perth and on to either Glasgow Queen Street or Edinburgh Waverley: www.firstgroup.com/scotrail.
- First ScotRail also operate an overnight sleeper service known as 'The Caledonian Sleeper' between Inverness and London Euston via the West Coast Main Line: www.firstgroup.com/scotrail/caledoniansleeper/index.html.
- NXC operates a service known as 'The Highland Chieftain' between Inverness and London Kings Cross via the East Coast Main Line: www.nationalexpresseastcoast.com.
- Kingussie, Aviemore and Carrbridge Railway Stations also form part of the Invernet Project with the aim of developing a suburban network for the Highland capital, Inverness: www.invernet.info.

Express coach services

Express coach services operate along the route of the A9, linking Perth to Inverness, running through the National Park and stopping at Newtonmore, Kingussie and Aviemore. Express coaches on the A9 run a seven-day service and there are up to 9 services each way each day including:

- Scottish CityLink/Megabus M90/M91 and M10: www.citylink.co.uk/timetables.html.

²³ Annual visitor numbers courtesy of First Scotrail.



- National Express 588 and 538: www.nationalexpress.com/coach/index.cfm.
- Parks of Hamilton M91: www.parksofhamilton.co.uk/cgi-bin/index.pl.

Local bus services

Most local bus services in the Badenoch and Strathspey area are subsidised by The Highland Council and operated by Highland Bus and Coach, which is due to be re-launched and rebranded as 'Stagecoach in Inverness' following the acquisition of The Rapsons Group by The Stagecoach Group.²⁴ Table 3 below identifies local bus services, routes and operators.

Table 3 – Local Bus Services in Badenoch and Strathspey.

Route Number	Route Detail	Operator
15/15X	Inverness - Grantown - Aviemore	Highland Country Buses
33/33A	Aviemore - Grantown - Tormore	Highland Country Buses
34/34B	Cairngorm - Aviemore - Grantown	Highland Country Buses
34C	Aviemore - Grantown	Highland Country Buses
35	Inverness - Carrbridge - Aviemore - Newtonmore	Highland Country Buses
36	Aviemore - Grantown	Highland Country Buses
37	Glenmore - Kingussie High School	Highland Country Buses
38/38A/38B	Aviemore - Newtonmore	Highland Country Buses
39/39A	Kinlochlaggan - Kingussie	Highland Country Buses
209	Grantown - Aviemore / Newtonmore	Bremners
338 / 338A	Grantown - Aberlour	Maynes / Speyside
501	Ballater - Grantown	Coopers Tourmaster / Stagecoach
Dial-a-Bus	Grantown on Spey Area	Strachans

The Highland Council produces a free Public Transport Map for the Highlands and Islands and 6 local 'Highlands Guides' timetables in partnership with local transport operators, which are available from the Highlands Council free of charge. Highlands Guide 2 covers Badenoch and Strathspey.²⁵

Some accommodation providers and tourist attractions also provide their own limited transport; ferrying visitors between their site and local car parks and train stations, etc.

²⁴ For further details see: www.rapsons.co.uk/

²⁵ See: www.rapsons.com/images/Area%20Book%202%20September%202007.pdf further details.



Seasonal services

In addition to local services, there are also a number of seasonal bus services that cater for tourist traffic during the peak tourist season. These include:

- The 500 Strathspey Stroller - a seasonal service supported by Moray Council, which runs from Cullen to Cairngorm via Buckie, Elgin, Dufftown, Aberlour, Grantown and Aviemore. It runs Saturdays and Sundays only from mid-May to late September. Unfortunately the service did not operate during 2008 due to budgetary constraints.²⁶
- The 501 Heather Hopper - a seasonal service, supported by the CNPA, Aberdeenshire Council and The Highland Council. The Heather Hopper connects Ballater and Grantown-on-Spey, going right through the centre of the National Park. It runs twice a day in the summer, connecting with the 502 service to Aberdeen and Aberfeldy and the 503 service to Aberdeen and Perth.²⁷
- Occasional bus services – services run to support special events such as the Angus Glens Walking Festival, and the Spirit of Speyside whisky festival.²⁸

The challenges and limitations of current provision

The comparatively small and dispersed population of the Badenoch and Strathspey area creates the significant challenge of providing financially sustainable public transport services due to the absence of economies of scale, present in more populous and less dispersed settlements.

As identified above, most local bus services in the study area are subsidised by The Highland Council and are therefore, understandably, primarily timetabled to facilitate resident, rather than visitor, traffic. Services in the study area are not specifically designed to serve tourist attractions but rather resident travel between residential areas and primary locations of employment and services. Tourist attractions are generally only served where their location coincides with the routes designed to serve the needs of Badenoch and Strathspey residents.

The geography of the Badenoch and Strathspey transport corridor also presents a challenge for the provision of public transport. The transport corridor forms a linear route along which residential areas, the locations of employment and services and key tourist attractions are distributed, rather than a central 'hub' around which services can be arranged as in many more urban areas. In addition many key tourist attractions are located in the 'hinterland' away

²⁶ See: www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_1678.html#Service_500 for details.

²⁷ See: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/publictransport/timetables/detail.asp?ServiceID=226 for details.

²⁸ See: Cairngorms National Park Public Transport Audit Final Report, Colin Buchanan, December 2006.



from the main transport corridor making it difficult for them to be effectively served by public transport.

The Highland Council provide services to all the local villages, and an hourly service runs from Grantown-on-Spey via Aviemore to Cairngorm during the week. Other services are less frequent, but are supplemented by the express coach services and mainline train line.

The visitor numbers and seasonal nature of many tourist attractions in the National Park also makes it difficult for them to support financially sustainable public transport services. There may however be opportunities to look at providing more frequent public transport services to particular 'clusters' of tourist attractions located in close proximity within the National Park.

A key issue highlighted by a previous study,²⁹ and also highlighted as a concern of the operators of key tourist attractions in the National Park through consultation associated with this study, are the way trains and buses interconnect. Lack of connectivity between public transport services can limit the attractiveness of public transport compared to car use and inconvenience public transport users due prolonged waits between connecting services. This is a difficult issue to overcome with infrequent services, and train services especially are constrained, mainly due to the single line nature of the rail infrastructure. The council and train operators do work together to minimise 'near misses', however early trains and late trains often do not connect to onward bus travel. There is also a lack of services on Sundays, with no Grantown-on-Spey to Aviemore service.

The acquisition of Rapsons by Stagecoach may provide an opportunity to improve integrated ticketing within the National Park. However, a key barrier may be integrating ticketing between bus and rail services. Whilst PlusBus (See: www.plusbus.info for further information) offers discount price bus tickets at the start, the finish, or both ends of a train journey, this offer currently only covers Inverness and Fort William in the Highlands.

3.5 Active Travel Provision

Active travel modes such as walking and cycling are ideal forms of transport for shorter journeys or as part of a longer journey by other modes of transport. Many of the activities and attractions that draw visitors to the Cairngorms National Park involve walking and cycling but these modes of transport are often not viewed as ways to travel to and around the National Park (see Section 3.6 below for further information on visitor travel patterns).

In addition to NCN Route 7 identified above, provision for pedestrians and cyclists includes the core paths network. Key walking and cycle facilities and routes within and between communities throughout Badenoch and Strathspey include pedestrian paths, off-road cycle routes and recommended cycle streets.

²⁹ Cairngorms National Park Public Transport Audit Final Report, Colin Buchanan, December 2006.



The location of the Badenoch and Strathspey area relative to the rest of Scotland and the nature of the transport network locally and between the area and other parts of Scotland mean that walking and cycling are unlikely to be the primary means of transport around the National Park for more than a very small proportion of visitors. Therefore walking and cycling are best promoted in conjunction with other modes of transport and through the provision of easy carriage on and interchange with other modes of transport.

Core Paths Plan

The CNPA has produced a draft Core Paths Plan identifying an 879km path network across the National Park. The draft Core Paths Plan divides the Badenoch and Strathspey area in two, identifying 142 core paths in lower, and 35 in upper Badenoch and Strathspey.³⁰

The aim of developing a Core Paths Plan is to identify a network of paths that will provide opportunities for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and canoeists and will enable people of all ages and abilities to move around their area, whether for leisure or as part of their daily activities. The long term aim is for the process to lead to a widespread and highly visible network of paths that are attractive and easy to use.³¹

At the time of writing, the CNPA Core Paths Plan has yet to be finalised and therefore only indicative popular pathways are identified in maps in this report.

Interchange with other modes of transport

For longer journeys, facilities that allow easy interchange with other modes of transport may provide the best option for facilitating and encouraging greater uptake of active travel options. This can include facilities such as cycle parking at public transport interchanges (e.g. bus and train stations) or surfaced all-weather paths connecting bus stops and at car parks in proximity to, but not directly serving, popular tourist destinations. It also includes improved provision for bicycles on buses and trains.

Advance reservations for bicycles are mandatory on most trains operating on the Highland Mainline as cycle parking space tends to be limited.³² Most bus services within Badenoch and Strathspey do not carry bicycles. There is a Highland Cycle Bus, with a covered trailer that can carry 11 cycles and a tandem, which operates outside the study area between Inverness to Durness and Smoo Cave via Ullapool, Ledmore Junction, Lochinver, Scourie, Kinlochbervie and onto Durness.³³ A similar service may be of benefit within the study area.

³⁰ Source:

www.cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/publications/31032008/CNPA.Paper.576.Draft%20Core%20Paths%20Plan.pdf

³¹ See www.cairngorms.co.uk/access/corepaths/index.php?h=core%20paths for further details.

³² For further details See: www.firstgroup.com/scotrail/travelinfo/cycle-info.html

³³ See: www.timdearmancoaches.co.uk/cyclebus.htm



The lack cycle provision on most public transport services limits the utility of cycling as a mode of transport that can be used to access parts of the National Park. This makes access to a car necessary for some journeys.

3.6 Current Visitor Travel Patterns

The following section looks at current travel patterns in the Badenoch and Strathspey area and the Highlands more generally.

Modal split

The car dominates the Highland transport system. According to the 2001 Census, 75% of households in the Highlands area own 1 or more cars or vans³⁴ and according to the Scottish Household Survey results for 2005 and 2006, 68% of journeys to work are by car.³⁵

This high level of car dependence partly reflects the largely rural nature of much of the area and (as suggested above) the limits to which comparatively sparsely populated areas can support commercially sustainable public transport services. At the same time it is important to bear in mind that there are a significant number of people in the study area with limited or no access to a car.

The visitor survey conducted for the 2006 Cairngorms National Park Public Transport Audit found that 85% of visitors travelled to the Cairngorms National Park by car. See Table 4 below for details.

Table 4 – Mode of Transport to the Cairngorms National Park.³⁶

Mode of Transport	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Private Car (Driver)	306	61%
Private Car (Passenger)	119	24%
Tour Coach	9	2%
Public Bus	29	6%
Rail	33	7%
Cycle	8	2%
Foot	7	1%
Other	17	3%

The survey also found that and 82% of visitors travelled within the Park by car. See Table 5 below.

Table 5 – Mode of Transport within the Park.³⁷

³⁴ Source: www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/highlandfactsandfigures/highlandprofile.htm

³⁵ Source: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/29142052/29

³⁶ Source: Cairngorms National Park Public Transport Audit Final Report, Colin Buchanan, December 2006.

³⁷ Ibid.



Mode of Transport	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Private Car (Driver)	289	58%
Private Car (Passenger)	122	24%
Tour Coach	9	2%
Public Bus	43	9%
Rail	18	4%
Cycle	59	12%
Foot	113	23%
Other	11	2%

The results of the 2006 visitor survey conducted for the Cairngorms National Park Public Transport Audit therefore also suggest that the car dominates visitor travel to and around the Cairngorms National Park.

Awareness of public transport options

The 2006 visitor survey found that awareness of public transport provision in the Park was low, with 37% of respondents reporting that they were 'not aware at all' of public transport within the Cairngorms National Park and 45% reporting that they were 'generally aware of public transport availability but not aware of specific details'.³⁸

Table 6 below also shows that 42% of respondents reported that they were not aware of and did not use any public transport information sources.

Table 6 – Awareness and Use of Public Transport Information sources.³⁹

Information Source	Number of respondents	Percentage
Cairngorms Explorer	80	16%
Bus Operators Timetable Booklet	150	30%
ScotRail Timetable Booklet	129	26%
Traveline (Phone or Internet)	59	12%
Transport Direct (Internet)	24	5%
Other	39	8%
None	213	42%

The percentage of visitors that access the Cairngorms National Park by public transport (13% discounting coach tours), the percentage that use public transport to travel within the park (also 13% discounting coach tours) and the low level of awareness of public transport options (18%), all suggest that there is significant amount of work required if visitors are to be encouraged to access the Cairngorms National Park more sustainably.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Source: Cairngorms National Park Public Transport Audit Final Report, Colin Buchanan, December 2006.



Cycling

The visitor survey shows that, while just 2% of visitors access the Cairngorms National Park by bicycle, 12% use the bicycle as their primary mode of transport whilst travelling in the Park. 9% of respondents to the Visitor Survey also reported a desire to have public transport within the park cater for bicycles, suggesting that improving facilities for cycles both on and off public transport may serve to encourage cycling within the Cairngorms National Park.



4 Promoting Sustainable Transport to Visitors

With 85% of visitors travelling to and 82% travelling around the Cairngorms National Park by car, there is a significant potential to encourage modal shift by visitors away from the private car to journeys via public transport, cycling and walking. This shift to more sustainable modes of transport can help reduce the environmental impact of leisure travel to, from and within the Park and can play a significant role in making the Park a more sustainable tourism destination.

The following sections briefly identify key sources of general and transport-specific information available to visitors planning journeys to and within the National Park.

4.1 General Destination Marketing

A variety of general destination marketing exists, promoting the Cairngorms National Park as a tourist attraction and available to visitors planning journeys to the National Park. This includes:

- VisitBritain: www.visitbritain.co.uk, providing useful general information, primarily catering to the international market but lacking the detailed travel information necessary to plan more sustainable journeys.
- VisitScotland: www.visitscotland.com also providing general information primarily catering to the international market but also lacking the detailed travel information necessary to plan more sustainable journeys.
- VisitAviemore: www.visitaviemore.com providing detailed information on local activities, attractions and accommodation. The site has a 'how to get here' section which provides some limited information, including the Traveline Scotland page landing service.
- VisitCairngorms: www.visitcairngorms.com is the new Park visitor website. Launching in 2009, it will have detailed information on how to get to and around the Park without a car, and links to travel planning websites.
- A large number of visitor attractions and accommodation providers within the Park have their own websites and produce their own printed material providing information and contact details to visitors.

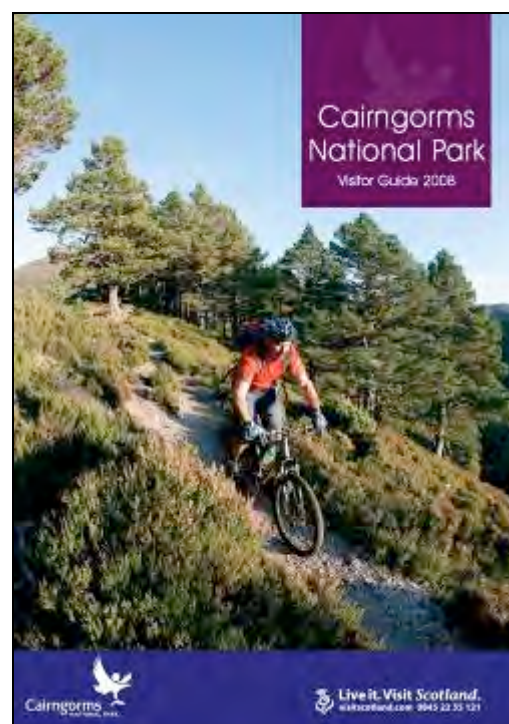


Figure 2 – Cairngorms National Park Visitor Guide 2008.



- The CNPA produces a range of marketing and information material, including the Cairngorms National Park Visitor Guide, providing details of key Park attractions including contact details and descriptions including opening hours, entry fees and how to obtain further information. The Guide also incorporates a section on 'How to be a Green Visitor', including some general suggestions on how to travel around the Park without a car.
- Travel agents also serve as a key source of information as can Tourist Information Centres located within the National Park and in towns and cities throughout Scotland which are operated by Visit Scotland. Park Ranger Services also provide an important source of information for visitors.

4.2 Specific Travel Information

There are a variety of sources of transport information available to visitors planning journeys to the Cairngorms National Park. These include:

- The Cairngorms Explorer booklet, published by the CNPA with the aim of bringing together all the information visitors need to get around the Park without a car. This booklet divides the Park into 4 colour coded areas (Badenoch and Strathspey; Tomintoul, Strathdon and District; Deeside, and; Angus Glens), detailing public transport provision and identifying suggested walking and cycling routes linked with local services.
- 6 'Highlands Guides' produced by the Highland Council in partnership with local transport operators. Highlands Guide 2 details public transport in the Badenoch & Strathspey area.
- Traveline Scotland: www.travelinescotland.com is a public transport information and journey planning service that is also available 24/7 over the phone by its phone enquiry service on 0871 200 22 33.
- Transport Direct: www.transportdirect.info is a public transport information and journey planning service that also allows users to plan car journeys and calculate CO₂ emissions.
- National Rail Enquiries: www.nationalrail.co.uk is rail journey planner website that also

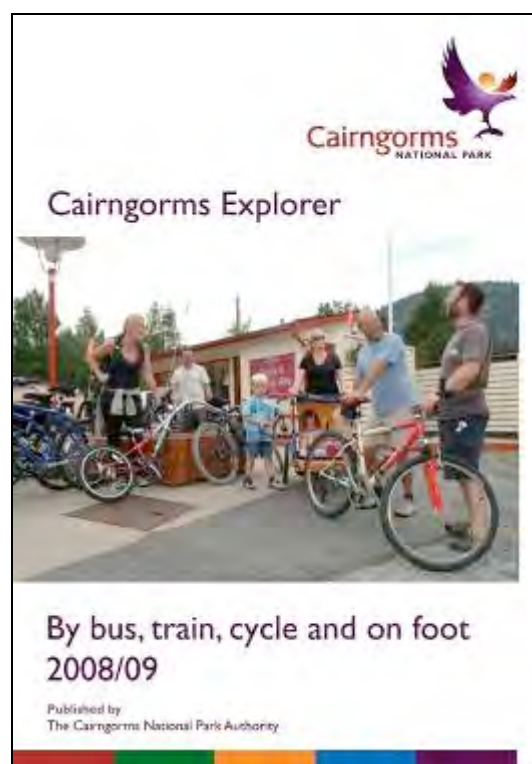


Figure 3 – The Cairngorms Explorer 2008/09.



allows users to buy a variety of different tickets.

- Ifyoucareshare.com: ifyoucareshare.com is a free lift sharing scheme set up by the regional transport partnerships HITRANS and ZetTrans and as such covers the Badenoch and Strathspey area and allows users to organise lift sharing arrangements.
- Most public transport operators' websites - such as for Citylink, National Express, MegaBus, First Scotrail, The Caledonian Sleeper and NXEC - also provide information about their services and allow users to book tickets. Services such as www.raileasy.co.uk and www.thetrainline.com allow train journeys to be planned. www.journeycheck.com/firstscotrail lets travellers check for rail-related delays.

4.3 Gaps in Information Provision

Information has a key role to play in encouraging visitors to the Cairngorm National Park to travel to and within the Park more sustainably more often. Despite the aspiration for the Cairngorms National Park to be a destination for sustainable tourism, the majority of visitors to the Cairngorms National Park travel by car. If visitors are to be encouraged to travel more sustainably, the alternatives to travel by car need to be more effectively highlighted and actively marketed.

General destination marketing of the Cairngorms National Park as a tourist destination should:

- Identify the National Park as a sustainable tourism destination.
- Identify sustainable travel options such as walking, cycling and public transport as *the* way to travel around the National Park.
- Direct visitors to more detailed travel information to aid journey planning.

Marketing the National Park as a sustainable tourism destination should be a way of generating new business, as well as a way of re-focusing current tourism business to become more sustainable.

There is an opportunity for the CNPA, ACDMO, key stakeholders and tourist attractions to work collectively to attract visitors drawn not only by the existing attractions the National Park has to offer but by the *sustainability* of holidays in the National Park where it is possible to use sustainable transport for the whole duration of their stay

For example, many tourists may be attracted by the possibility of being able to travel to the Park by coach or rail and around the park by bus or bike. The ability to enjoy the natural environment of the National Park while helping to conserve it is a marketable commodity that can enhance economic activity from tourism as well as the sustainability of that tourism.



One option may be to provide a web-based resource, possibly utilising the VisitCairngorms: www.visitcairngorms.com site, to provide an online 'one-stop-shop' to allow potential visitors to plan journeys to the Cairngorms National Park, providing information on how to travel both to and around the Park sustainably and providing links to journey planning websites and the websites of transport operators. Such a site might act as an online version of the Cairngorms Explorer booklet.

General destination marketing such as that offered by VisitScotland, accommodation providers and visitor attractions could then refer visitors to this 'one-stop-shop' for travel information rather than provide and maintain detailed travel information on their own sites.

