

Authority will wish to clarify the role that gateways might play as a management tool both within and around the Park and may wish to draw on international experience.

Discussion

8-22 In view of the history of controversy that certain development proposals have generated in the area over the last two decades, the building of trust between the various stakeholders in the area remains a critical challenge, and this will require the active involvement of both local and national interests in the future management of the area. Against this background, a major factor in the decision to propose National Park status for the area was the judgement that the statutory governing structure and clear lines of accountability provided by a National Park should provide a sounder long-term basis for the integrated management of the area than the current arrangements. Nevertheless, it will be important that the future Park Authority builds on the successes of the Cairngorms Partnership, notably in respect to capacity building among some of the key stakeholders within the area; the preparation of the area's first management strategy; and in taking forward a number of strategic approaches, including the local forest framework and biodiversity action plan.

8-23 Both the number and diversity of views expressed to us concerning the future priorities for action by a future National Park Authority are indicative of the strong interest that many respondents have in the future management of the area. Such interest is to be welcomed, and will be a major resource for the future Park Authority to draw on in determining its programme of work for the area, and in taking this forward through the development and implementation of the Park Plan. Zoning is likely to form a crucial element in this plan, as Scottish Ministers made clear during the passage of the National Parks legislation. The impacts on areas adjacent to and between National Park areas will also need to be addressed through a range of measures.

Reporter's Advice

In developing arrangements for the National Park, it is important that the future policies for planning and management of the Park build on the foundations laid by the Cairngorms Working Party and the Cairngorms Partnership.

Guidance should be developed on the National Park Plan. This should include advice to the Park Authority on the use of zoning to achieve its aims. Further work should also be undertaken to examine the role of gateways and the impacts of National Park designation on adjacent areas and how these can be effectively managed.

SNH advice as natural heritage adviser

SNH supports this recommendation.

Annex A: The proposal for a National Park in the Cairngorms area

Introduction

1. Under The National Parks (Scotland) Act, an individual National Park (and its associated National Park Authority) may be established by means of a designation order approved by the Scottish Parliament. The Act sets out powers, functions and duties for all National Park Authorities, but leaves a number of issues – notably Park boundaries, details of composition of the Authority, and functions including those in respect of Town and Country Planning – to be specified in the designation order.

2. The Act also sets out the process of consultation which must precede the making of such a designation order. That starts with the publication of, and consultation on, a proposal for a National Park, covering the matters to be included in the eventual designation order setting up that Park.

3. This document is the National Park proposal for a National Park for the Cairngorms.

Legislative background

4. This proposal is issued under section 2(1) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

5. If Ministers are satisfied that the conditions in section 2(2) of that Act are, or may be, satisfied, they may under section 2(1) issue a National Park proposal. The conditions are:

- (a) that the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage;
- (b) that the area has a distinctive character and a coherent identity; and
- (c) that designating the area as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area, and would be the best means of ensuring that the National Park aims set out at section 1 of the Act are collectively achieved in relation to the area in a co-ordinated way.

6. The proposal under section 2(1) must propose the designation of an area as a

National Park, and the establishment of a National Park Authority to exercise in relation to that Park, the functions conferred on it by the Act. The proposal must be in writing and must set out (in general terms):

- (a) the area which it is proposed should be designated as a National Park;
- (b) the functions which it is proposed the National Park Authority should exercise.

Meeting the conditions

7. Advice was given to the Government by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in February 1999 in relation to the appropriateness and suitability of the establishment of a National Park for general area of the Cairngorms. Having regard to that advice, Scottish Ministers are satisfied that the conditions in section 2(2) of the Act are, or will be, met in relation to the general area of the Cairngorms.

Proposal

8. *Area:* The general area proposed in this proposal for consideration under section 2 of the Act is the larger of the two indicative areas set out in the SNH advice to Government of 1999, which coincides with the current Cairngorm Partnership boundary. However, the consideration of the optimal area for the National Park will need to take account, as required by the Act, of the conditions in section 2(2), which include distinctive character and coherent identity, as well as meeting the special needs of the area. The Scottish Ministers will wish to ensure that the overall size of the designated area, as well as its precise location, is commensurate with effective and efficient administration by the Park Authority of its functions and delivery of its purpose.

9. *Planning Functions :* The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 sets out certain functions (namely duties and powers) which all National Parks will exercise. However, section 10 provides for the exercise of powers under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 to be decided for each Park individually, and specified in the relevant designation order. Paragraph 10

of this proposal therefore addresses the question of the planning functions within the proposed National Park.

10. On the basis of SNH's advice to Government published in 1999, the proposed planning arrangements are as follows:

- the local authorities should remain the planning authorities under the terms of the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. However, the NPA should be a statutory consultee in the preparation of the relevant local plans and structure plans (as they affect the National Park);
- the NPA should also be a statutory consultee on development control decisions;
- the NPA should similarly be a statutory consultee on other functions exercised by the planning authorities: TPOs, conservation area and listed building consent, advertisement consent, minerals consent, and application of controls relating to hazardous substances.

As a statutory consultee, the NPA will be able to influence the outcome of planning decisions. In respect of local plans, if they maintain an objection this will trigger a local plan inquiry and subsequently submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers for determination as to whether the planning authority can adopt it; on structure plans, they will be able to make representations direct to the Scottish Ministers following submission of the draft plan to the Scottish Ministers by the planning authority for their approval. On development control, they will not only be able to object to any planning applications but in specified cases the planning authority will be obliged to notify Scottish Ministers if they were minded to give planning permission despite the objections of the NPA, or without any conditions sought by the NPA, so that they can decide whether or not to call-in the application for their determination.

Within these arrangements, there is the possibility of the local authorities preparing a joint local plan for the area of the National Park – while local authorities would remain the planning authorities, this arrangement would ensure a single coherent plan for the area covered by the National Park.

Views are sought on this proposed option, the types of cases that should be notified to Scottish Ministers by the planning authority, and the possibility of establishing a single local plan for the area.

However, while this must be an option for consultation, the possibility of alternative planning arrangements is not ruled out, and in the interests of ensuring that options are not closed off too early in the process of consultation, views are sought on the option of the NPA becoming the planning authority (with the local authorities given reciprocal rights as statutory consultees).

11. *Authority membership:* There has been a general understanding that authorities will have the maximum permitted number of members (25), with the minimum permitted number of directly elected members (5). These figures would allow maximum flexibility for appointments to cover the need to identify both local members and representatives of particular interest groups. However, although this is the Executive's proposal, and must be consulted upon, the Executive would be interested to know whether the proposed ratio of elected to appointed members is appropriate to the specific circumstances of the Cairngorms.

12 *Other Functions:* As mentioned above, the functions which all National Park Authorities will exercise are set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, and are not the subject of this proposal.

13. However, one additional function which it is proposed should be specified in the designation order, is that the National Park authority should have powers to appoint Park rangers.

14. There are no other proposals for powers or functions, specific to the Cairngorms National Park, which should be included in the designation order; however, suggestions made during the consultation on this proposal for such functions will be considered.

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Annex B: The requirement for SNH to act as the reporter

Introduction

1. As part of the process preliminary to the establishment of a National Park under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, Scottish Ministers must publish a National Park proposal. Such a proposal in relation to the area of the Cairngorms was published on 19 September 2000, a copy of which is annexed to this document. Following this publication, Scottish Ministers may undertake a process of consultation themselves (under section 4 of that Act), in which case they must publish a statement at the conclusion of the consultation, or they may require an appropriate public body to undertake a process of consideration of or consultation on, the proposal (under section 3 of that Act), and report to them thereon. The report required under section 3 is to be published and laid before Parliament.

2. The Scottish Ministers have decided, in relation to the National Park proposal for the Cairngorms to proceed under section 3 of that Act and that the appropriate body to act as a reporter for this purpose is Scottish Natural Heritage. This document therefore constitutes a requirement on Scottish Natural Heritage to undertake the obligations set out in section 3(1) of that Act.

Legislative background

3. Section 3(1) empowers Scottish Ministers to require the person on whom the requirement is imposed to consider and report to them on a National Park proposal, by a date as may be specified, on the following matters:

- (a) The area which it is proposed should be designated as a National Park;
- (b) The desirability of designating the area in question (with or without modifications) as a National Park;
- (c) The functions which it is proposed the National Park Authority for the Park should exercise;
- (d) The likely annual costs and capital expenses of the Authority in exercising its functions;
- (e) Such other matters relating to the proposal as the requirement may specify.

4. The Scottish Ministers are required to send a copy of the proposal and requirement to the reporter, who must then comply with the process set out in section 3(5), 3(8) and 3(9). Under section 3(6), Scottish Ministers may give the reporter directions as to how the consultation under 3(5)(d) is to be carried out (these provisions were added during the Bill, specifically in response to concerns that the consultation should be fully participatory, and that copies of the consultation document should be sent to all community councils).

Requirement

5. In terms of section 3 of the Act, SNH are by virtue of this requirement required to report on all of the matters set out at section 3(2)(a) to (e) of the Act. In supplement to the matter at section 3(2)(d), SNH are required to reconsider the figures on costs included in their published advice to the Government of 1999, in light of the provisions of the Act, and the proposed boundaries and functions.

A) In relation to section 3(2)(e), SNH are required to consider the following matters:

- The name of the National Park.
- An analysis of the balance of opinion on the matters considered, including specific reference to the views expressed by bodies and agencies representative of interests which fall outside SNH's main remit.
- Who the major stakeholders and interest groups are (a point that was raised during the passage of the Bill).
- Appointments and Elections to Park Authorities:

(a) Size of National Park Authority;

(b) Number of elected members;

(c) Date of election: it is difficult to be precise at this stage, but the date must give sufficient time after the approval of the designation order to allow prospective elected members to decide whether to stand for election and also ensure that elected members will be identified no later than appointed members.

A decision will be taken when the designation order is drafted, and other timings are clearer. However, any views of consultees on when the election should be held relative to other events – namely the approval of the designation order, and the establishment of the Park Authority – will be helpful to this decision, and should be recorded.

- (d) Number of appointed members (the difference between (a) and (b));
- (e) Number of members to be appointed on the nomination of each relevant local authority: this will depend upon the boundaries of the Park, and the basis on which each local authority “share” is determined.
- (f) Number of “local” members: The numbers to be included in the members nominated by each relevant local authority will depend upon the conclusions to (e). (Note: “local member” is defined in the Act as someone whose sole or main residence is within the National Park, or who is a councillor for an electoral ward or a member of a community council, any part of whose area is within the National Park.)
- (g) Particular expertise/experience/interests represented of directly appointed members (as set out in schedule 1, paragraph 6(2)).

The context of these electoral/appointment matters is provided by the Act which sets out the constitution of National Park Authorities as follows:

- Authority to be maximum of 25 members (actual number to be specified in the designation order);
- a minimum of one fifth of members (number to be specified in designation order) to be elected in special elections for the National Park Authority. (Election arrangements will be determined by an Election Order);
- the remainder to be appointed by Scottish Ministers, but half will be on the nomination of local authorities. Of these appointed members, a number equal to no less than one fifth of the total membership, must be “local”

members as defined in the Act. The designation order must specify how many members are to be nominated by each relevant local authority, and how many of these are to be “local”. (The remaining members will be subject to direct appointment by Scottish Ministers.);

- all appointees must have knowledge or experience relevant to the functions of the National Park Authority or National Park. However, in respect of members directly appointed by Scottish Ministers, the designation order can specify particular knowledge or experience, or particular interests, which appointees (or some appointees) must have or represent.

The processes governing the election of members or appointment of members are not (with the exceptions set out above) the subject of consultation. The election process will be the subject of an election Order, which will be drawn up and consulted on separately, before consideration by the Scottish Parliament in summer 2001. Appointments will be subject to the usual requirements of openness and transparency, and as required by the Act, Scottish Ministers will consult (i.e. advertise the posts, and seek expressions of interest) before making any direct appointments.

The proposed elements of those appointment/election matters which are to be specified in the designation order, and on which the Reporter should consult, are as set out above in (a) to (g).

B) In terms of section 3(1) of the Act, the report is required to be submitted to Scottish Ministers in writing by 9 July 2001.

6. SNH are reminded of the duties imposed upon them, as reporter, by the relevant sections of the Act. Section 3(5) requires SNH, upon receipt of the attached proposal, to send a copy of it, together with a copy of this requirement, to every local authority any part of whose area is within the area to which the proposal relates. Those local authorities are then required to make copies of both documents available for public inspection for the duration of the consultation. The dates are to be specified by SNH, but the period for consultation must be a minimum of 12 weeks.

7. SNH must also publicise the proposal in such a manner as they think fit. In the context of the other provisions of the Act, SNH must take all reasonable steps to ensure that those likely to have a legitimate interest in the proposal, and especially those living, working, or carrying on business within the proposed area are aware that the consultation is taking place. The use of local newspapers, Community Councils and other community groups and local meetings are obvious means of raising local awareness.

8. SNH are also reminded that under section 3(5) they are required to consult (on the proposal) every local authority and every community council to which the proposal relates, those people who appear to be representative of the interests of those who live, work or carry on business in the area to which the proposal relates, as well as any other people SNH consider appropriate. Following up the concerns expressed during the passage of the Bill, and under the powers conferred on the Scottish Ministers under section 3(6) to issue directions to a reporter, SNH shall:

- Ensure that those who are statutory consultees (as described above) are sent a copy of the consultation documents. Every relevant local authority and community council must be sent copies, and it is considered desirable to send copies to local authorities and community councils with borders adjacent to the proposed area.
- Ensure that the consultation is participatory, and that steps are taken to ensure that people have an opportunity to discuss issues, and suggest and consider alternatives. Meetings with interested groups should be part of the process.
- Ensure that agencies and public bodies representative of relevant interests are consulted, and their views reported. In particular, these should include those representative of social and economic interests of the proposed Park.
- Build on the preparatory work by SNH during 2000, at the request of the Scottish Ministers, and done in conjunction with other relevant bodies in the area, paving the way for a formal consultation. This work should be described in the consultation papers which SNH produce as part of the consultation on the proposal, so that consultees can see how this

work has informed the conduct of the consultation. This work should also be covered in the report to the Scottish Ministers.

- Develop and report on objective criteria (based on the conditions in section 2(1)) and an associated methodology against which SNH make their assessments of the proposal and any comments and suggestions for modification.
- In carrying out its role as reporter, SNH shall seek to record and report on the views expressed by consultees, and shall make quite clear and distinct any views which are those of SNH as statutory adviser on natural heritage matters.

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Annex C: Summary of responses received and other sources of input to the consultation exercise

Full written responses		
	No. of Responses	%
By type of respondee	397	100%
Individuals/individual households	210	53
Individual landowners/managers /factors	20	5
Individual companies and businesses	19	5
Community councils and associations*	15	4
Local Authorities, including COSLA (e.g. Perth and Kinross Council)	8	2
MSPs/MPs/ Local Authority Councillors	2	<1
National agencies (e.g. Scottish Environment Protection Agency)	6	2
Regional/local public agencies (e.g. North of Scotland Water Authority)	10	2
Land Management groups (e.g. National Farmers' Union Scotland)	22	5
Natural/Cultural Heritage Groups (e.g. RSPB, Gaelic groups)	39	10
Recreation and sport interest groups (e.g. Scottish Canoe Association)	25	6
Social and economic groups (e.g. Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce)	3	1
Professional bodies (e.g. Royal Town Planning Association in Scotland)	7	2
Research/academic organisations/individual academics (e.g. The Macaulay Institute)	11	3
Others	0	0

Full written responses		
	No. of Responses	%
By Geographic Origin of Response	397	100%
Within the Park area	153	40
Individuals within Option A	43	11
Individuals within Option B, outside A	18	5
Individuals within Option C, outside A and B	22	6
Organisations, overlapping with or within Option C (e.g. Aberdeenshire Council)	70	18
Adjacent areas	60	15
Individuals outside Option C but within the 5 Local authority areas	60	15
Others outwith Park area	182	45
Individuals outside the 5 local authority areas but within Scotland	69	17
National Organisations (e.g. STB/visitscotland)	44	11
Other organisations, not within or overlapping with Option C (e.g. Cabrach and Mortlach Community Association)	41	10
Organisations and individuals based primarily outside Scotland	28	7
Unknown	2	<1
*These responses were submitted in addition to the reports from the dedicated community consultation exercise.		

Responses using the summary consultation leaflet		
	No. of Responses	%
By type of respondee	452	100%
Individuals/individual households	446	99
Individual landowners/managers/factors		
Individual companies and businesses	2	<1
Community councils and associations		
Local Authorities, including CoSLA (e.g. Perth and Kinross Council)		
MSPs/MPs/Local authority Councillors		
National agencies (e.g. Scottish Environment Protection Agency)		
Regional/local public agencies (e.g. North of Scotland Water Authority)		
Land Management groups (e.g. National Farmers' Union Scotland)		
Natural/cultural Heritage Groups (e.g. RSPB, Gaelic groups)		
Recreation and sport interest groups (e.g. Scottish Canoe Association)		
Social and economic groups (e.g. Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce)		
Professional bodies (e.g. Royal Town Planning Association in Scotland)		
Research/academic organisations/individual academics (e.g. The Macaulay Institute)	1	<1
Others	3	<1

Responses using the summary consultation leaflet		
	No. of Responses	%
By Geographic Origin of Response	452	100%
Within the Park area	196	43
Individuals within Option A	83	18
Individuals within Option B, outside A	39	9
Individuals within Option C, outside A and B	72	16
Organisations, within or overlapping with Option C (e.g. Aberdeenshire Council)	2	<1
Adjacent areas	131	29
Individuals outside Option C but within the 5 local authority areas	131	29
Others outwith Park area	120	27
Individuals outside the 5 local authority areas but within Scotland	90	20
National Organisations (e.g. STB/visitscotland)	0	
Other organisations, not within or overlapping with Option C (e.g. Cabrach and Mortlach Community Association)	0	
Organisations and individuals based primarily outside Scotland	30	7
Unknown (Z)	5	1

Community-led consultation exercises

Aviemore
Ballater and Crathie
Ballogie and Birse
Blair Atholl and Struan
Boat of Garten
Braemar
Carr-Bridge
Cromdale and Advie
Dulnain Bridge
Finzean
Grantown-on-Spey
Killiecrankie and Fincastle
Kincraig
Kingussie
Kirkmichael & Tomintoul
Kirriemuir
Laggan
Mid Deeside
Nethy Bridge
Rothiemurchus and Glenmore

Communities involved in independently facilitated meetings

Pitlochry and Moulin
Grandtully
Dalwhinnie
Donside
Rannoch and Tummel
Glenlivet and Inveravon
Newtonmore
Kirriemuir Landward East
Kirriemuir Landward West
Mount Blair

Additional meetings held around the area

Aberfeldy
Aberlour
Alford
Blairgowrie
Laurencekirk
Pitlochry Tourist Committee

City meetings

Aberdeen
Dundee
Edinburgh
Glasgow
Inverness
Perth

Schools participating in the consultation exercise

Aboyne Academy
Banchory Academy
Brechin Academy
Charleston Academy, Inverness
Gordon's School, Huntly
Kingussie High School
Pitlochry High School
Websters High School, Kirriemuir

Other sources of information

The Cairngorms Youth National Park Manifesto
University of Aberdeen, Rural, Regional and Resources Planning Students' Report
University of Dundee Student Consultation Seminar Report
"Born in Born" International Student Conference Report
Report of Think-net discussion web-site
Highland Perthshire Community Partnership Report

Annexe D: Assessment of the general area of the proposed National Park against conditions from the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000

Sub-areas for consideration

The sub-area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or a combination of its natural and cultural heritage importance, including:

- natural heritage (nature & landscape conservation)
- cultural heritage
- natural systems & processes
- recreation interests

The sub-area contributes to the distinctive character and coherent identity of the Cairngorms area, including:

- contribution to character of the Cairngorms
- common cultural identity with the Cairngorms

1. Cairngorms massif, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore

This area is of outstanding value for the natural heritage, with a large tract of wild land (within the Cairngorms National Scenic Area) and designated sites of national and international importance (e.g. for native pinewoods, alpine habitats and upland birds). Potential World Heritage Site for earth science features. Natural systems predominate over large areas, especially at high altitude, with dynamic river systems at lower levels, and important pinewood remnants contribute to the proposed Dee and Spey forest habitat networks. This area is extremely popular for public enjoyment, increasing understanding and awareness of the natural and cultural heritage. This is possibly the most important area in Scotland for wild land mountain recreation, including hill-walking, backpacking, rock and ice climbing and cross-country skiing.

This area represents the classic identity and character of the Cairngorms. Extensive granite plateaux, incised by deep corries, often with lochans, steep, rocky headwalls and extensive snow-lie. Summits often include huge boulder fields and tors. Glens variously steep-sided or open and sweeping, typically with vigorous heather cover and pine and birch woodland. Very high wild land value. With the important exceptions of Rothiemurchus and Glenmore, which look strongly to the Cairngorms, this area is very sparsely populated.

2. Carn Ealasaid and Tomintoul

This area is of considerable natural heritage value, including open moorland habitats and upland bird populations. The area is bounded by the former military road linking Strathdon/Deeside with Strath Avon /Strathspey. Natural gradations of habitats are common at higher levels, with a wider predominance of managed moorland on lower hills and glens. Recreational use is more limited but certain areas, including the popular eastern approaches to Ben Avon, are popular for hill-walking and mountain biking and there is a downhill skiing facility at the Lecht.

Strong Cairngorms character, including open, rolling moorland landscape to north and east of central Cairngorms massif, with views into the centre of the massif. Open moorland with low and rounded summits, gentle slopes and long smooth interlocking spurs. Heather moorland and muir-burning patterns widespread. Birch woodland and braided rivers at lower levels. Includes the planned village of Tomintoul, which has a close affiliation to the Cairngorms.

Designation as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the four aims of Parks are collectively achieved in a co-ordinated way, including:

- **threats to, and opportunity for, heritage interests**
- **complexity of land use management issues**
- **dependence of economy on natural and cultural heritage**

Judgement on the degree to which the sub-unit meets the conditions for a National Park, where:

- 5 – represents extensive**
- 4 – represents significant**
- 3 – represents partial**
- 2 – represents minor**
- 1 – represents minimal**

Aspects of the natural heritage are under significant pressure in some areas due to grazing pressure, some built development and, locally, the impact of recreation. There is considerable potential for native woodland and other habitat restoration. Many positive initiatives are under way including the Forest of Spey and Dee projects and hill track restoration on Mar Lodge. These issues assume particular importance because of exceptional value of natural heritage in this area. Land uses include field sports and nature conservation, with large estates focused on both. The area is extremely popular for recreation (including the Cairngorm ski area), with varying levels of competition/conflict between these activities. Local economy is very strongly dependent on the natural and heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 5
 Cairngorms character & identity: 5
 Special needs: 5

Natural heritage under significant pressure due to certain aspects of land management (including forestry) and some built development, including highly visible power lines and hill tracks. Widespread potential for habitat enhancement, and current initiatives include integrated land management by the Crown Estate assisted by ESA scheme. Land uses include grouse shooting, forestry, sheep farming and recreation. Many tourists drive through area and local businesses are keen to encourage longer stays. Local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural and cultural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 4
 Cairngorms character & identity: 4
 Special needs: 4

3. Lochnagar, Glen Muick and Upper Deeside

This area is of high natural heritage value. Much of the area is designated as a National Scenic Area, and both the native pinewoods and the River Dee are of international importance. The area also has a strong cultural heritage with links to the Jacobite uprising, continuing associations with the Royal Family (Balmoral) and a well-established tradition of Highland games. Numerous archaeological sites. Natural processes are widely predominant at higher altitude and along parts of the Dee. The area is exceedingly popular for mountain recreation, including hill-walking, climbing and cross-country skiing, based around a number of popular Munros and the attractions of the straths.

Strong Cairngorms character, with broad undulating plateau and deep corries, steep-sided or open glens, extensive heather moorland and native pinewoods. Lochnagar is a famous and distinctive mountain, with characteristic views through trees to the high tops. Glen Clunie is distinct, with enclosed pasture and grassy slopes largely reflecting underlying richer schists. Many aspects of the cultural heritage are strongly characteristic of this area, particularly including the association with the Royal Family. The communities of this area are very strongly linked to the Cairngorms area by provision for tourism/outdoor recreation and long-established cultural connections.

4. Gaick

This remote area of rounded plateaux is of quite wild character and includes some designated sites of particular natural heritage value, including part of the Drumochter Hills (internationally important for alpine habitats and species). Natural processes are widely predominant at high altitude, with managed moorland at lower levels. The area sees moderate recreational use for hill walking, which is concentrated on the Munro of Meall Chuaich and the Gaick pass.

Strong Central Highland character - remote rolling uplands with broad often heathery ridges and mostly gentle slopes. Some ecological similarity to lower hills in heart of Cairngorms. Often remote and wild in character. Fringed by A9 to west. This area is very sparsely populated.

5. Mid-Strathspey

This area includes many sites of high natural heritage importance including the birchwoods of Craigellachie National Nature Reserve, the wetlands of Insh and the Rivers Spey and Alvie. The cultural heritage is also of great significance. There is a strong Gaelic influence, and crofting is economically important. Shinty has a strong base in the area. Archaeological sites and features such as Ruthven Barracks and the Wade military road reflect the long history of this major transport route. Much of the area is managed to some degree, but more natural habitats also occur, particularly at higher levels. The area offers various outdoor recreational resources including the southern approaches to A'Chailleach and two Corbetts in the Monadhliath, and links to the Speyside Way, the national cycle network and many opportunities for water-sports.

A diverse landscape with close links to central Cairngorms, which are often prominent in distant views. Landscape includes extensive moorland, enclosed pasture, settlement and transport lines. Large regular arable fields and enclosed pastures bound the river, and extensive wetlands and woodlands are characteristic features of the natural heritage. In common with other parts of Speyside, this area retains a significant Gaelic influence including crofting and shinty. Area also includes planned villages such as Newtonmore, and derives historical importance from its association with a major transport corridor. These communities relate particularly closely to Cairngorms due to economic importance of tourism and outdoor recreation.

6. Ben Rinnes

This area is dominated by Ben Rinnes, an important landscape feature, but contains relatively few designated sites of national importance to the natural heritage. Managed habitats are predominant over much of the area. Ben Rinnes is of regional importance for recreation, and the area contains part of the Speyside Way.

A transitional area with upland, enclosed pasture and forestry. Landscape broadly characteristic of upland fringes in Central and Eastern Highlands. Ben Rinnes itself is the strongest defining feature of this area, with long smooth heather slopes and tors resembling some hills in the central Cairngorms massif.

Natural heritage under localised pressure due to grazing, some aspects of land management and, locally, recreation. Numerous hill tracks mark the landscape. Significant potential for habitat and landscape enhancement, and low altitude footpath provision - the Deeside Forest initiative and the Upper Deeside Access Trust are making progress with these issues. Land uses include stalking (large estates) and recreation (including Glenshee ski area), with some competition/conflict. Some outstanding issues relating to traffic congestion. The local economy is strongly dependent on the natural and cultural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 5

Cairngorms character & identity: 5

Special needs: 5

Natural heritage is under some pressure due to grazing, some other aspects of land management and some built development. Considerable scope for habitat and landscape enhancement, including restoration of native woodland and scrub. Main land uses are field sports and water management; the latter has scarred the area. Localised informal recreation. This remote area supports relatively little other economic activity, so economy generally has at least some linkage to the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 4

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage is under localised pressure due to some aspects of land management and there are issues surrounding the design and location of some built development. There is potential to enhance and diversify managed landscapes in some areas. Land uses comprise an intimate mix of settlement and transport infrastructure, low-intensity agriculture, woodland management and conservation. The local economy is strongly dependent on tourism, usually associated with the natural and cultural heritage. Problems of low paid seasonal employment and affordable housing are common.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 4

Cairngorms character & identity: 5

Special needs: 4

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to certain aspects of land management and, locally, recreation. Enthusiastic support for footpath repair and maintenance and significant scope for habitat enhancement in the area. Land uses include moorland management, agriculture, forestry and recreation. The local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural and cultural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 2

Special needs: 2

7. Strath Avon/Glenlivet

This area includes native birchwood and moorland, some of which is designated as being of national importance, although more managed habitats are also widespread within the area. The cultural heritage includes many stone churches, graveyards and ancient ring cairns. Distilleries are a more recent and highly characteristic feature. The area is of value for outdoor recreation, including cycling, riding and walking.

A transitional area with upland, enclosed pasture and forestry. Large upland areas (the Cromdales and Ladder Hills) are of similar character to lower hills in the central Cairngorms massif. Distilleries are a highly characteristic feature of the area, along with stone churches and graveyards. Communities have strong cohesion, in part because of the common influence of Glenlivet Estate, but do not relate strongly to the central Cairngorms.

8. Strathdon

This area includes the nationally important moorland habitats of the Ladder Hills, serpentine grasslands and significant areas of mixed woodland, while the cultural heritage includes notable features such as the Lonach Games and several castles. The area includes a combination of both managed habitats and areas in which natural processes are more predominant. There is significant potential for this area to contribute to wider forest habitat networks. This area is of recreational value, with a variety of upland and lowland walking opportunities.

A transitional area between central Cairngorms massif and NE lowlands with open moorlands, enclosed pasture and forestry. Landscape broadly characteristic of upland fringes of Central and Eastern Highlands, with some rolling moorland of similar character to more central Cairngorms. Characteristic local features include the narrow glen of the River Don with improved pasture and small scale arable fields, surrounded by low and generally commercially afforested hills. Area includes several large estate houses. Community is dispersed along glen bottom and looks predominantly to Lower Donside.

9. Mid Deeside

This area is of considerable importance for the natural heritage, including the National Nature Reserves at Muir of Dinnet and Glen Tanar, with large tracts of native pine and birchwoods, and a large stretch of the River Dee. Natural processes widely influence habitat distribution, especially at higher levels and along parts of the Dee. The area is very popular for mountain biking, fishing and walking, and includes the north-eastern approaches to Mount Keen, the most easterly Munro.

A transitional area with strong landscape and ecological links to the Cairngorms core, including upland, enclosed pasture and forestry with a high proportion of native pine. Much higher ground shows a strongly characteristic combination of rolling heather moorland, scattered pinewoods and juniper scrub which is also found in more central parts of the Cairngorms. Characteristic local features include low flat-topped hills around the broad River Dee and policy woodland associated with large estates. Community links to the east are increasingly dominated by Aberdeen.

10. Birse

This area is of significant natural heritage and cultural interest, including the most easterly native pinewood in Scotland (making an important contribution to wider forest habitat networks) and important areas of open moorland. Natural habitat gradations are not uncommon, especially at higher levels. The area provides various recreational opportunities which are of regional value. The rich cultural heritage includes unique legal rights associated with Forest of Birse community and a landscape of national significance for archaeological features.

A transitional area with upland, enclosed pasture and forestry with a high proportion of native pine. Landscape is broadly characteristic of upland margins throughout Central and Eastern Highlands, but rolling heather moorland above the Water of Feugh is particularly reminiscent of the Cairngorm fringes. Historic community links to central Cairngorms and Mounth, which are weaker in eastern part of area.

Natural heritage is under varying pressure due to certain aspects of land management. Considerable scope for habitat and landscape enhancement in relation to the main land uses (grouse moor management, forestry and hill farming). Whisky production important for economy (incl. tourism), though there is a perception that tourists tend to pass through the area. Local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 3

Considerable scope for enhancement of the natural heritage including diversification of forest structure and development of path networks and other recreational facilities. Forestry, field sports, agriculture and tourism are economically important, although the area does not attract many extended visits. Some land use conflicts are evident, for example forestry is thought to be adversely affecting some private water supplies. Strathdon is one of the principal eastern approaches to the Cairngorms massif. The local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage under localised pressure due to various aspects of land management and some built development. Some scope for habitat enhancement through Deeside Forest project. Particular scope for integrated management of lower ground. Important land uses and economic activities include forestry and timber processing, field sports, fishing and tourism, based in part on the NNRs and walks on Forest Enterprise and other land. Local economy is thus quite closely dependent on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 4

Cairngorms character & identity: 4

Special needs: 4

Natural heritage under localised pressure due to certain aspects of land management, with scope for habitat/landscape enhancement in some areas. Important land uses include woodland management and timber processing and small scale agriculture, and area includes an existing community ownership and development initiative - Birse Community Trust. Strong sense of social cohesion. The local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural and cultural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 4

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 2

11. Glen Esk

This area is of sweeping, open landscape and contains remnant native woods of regional significance (of potential value in relation to wider habitat networks), along with a few other designated sites. Relatively natural vegetation is widespread at higher levels, along with significant areas of managed grouse moor. The area includes the very popular south-eastern approaches to Mount Keen and also offers opportunities for mountain biking.

Strong Central/Eastern Highland character – a vast, rolling upland plateau with much landscape and ecological similarity to lower hills in the heart of the Cairngorms. Low, rounded heather-clad hills fall to steep-sided and sometimes craggy glens, and much of area is quite remote. Muirburn patterns, characteristic of much of the Central and Eastern Highlands, are particularly extensive. Strong community links to adjacent parts of the Mounth.

12. Tannadice

This area is of upland-lowland transitional character, with few natural heritage designations. The influence of natural processes is relatively low, and management is widespread. The long settlement history of the area is reflected by a number of sites of archaeological interest. The area includes recreational opportunities of local value.

This transitional area includes a substantial proportion of relatively intensive agricultural land, and has only a marginal resemblance to the central Cairngorms. The area nonetheless has a fairly distinctive landscape character which is common to other parts of the Angus Glens, with improved agricultural land and mixed hill farming in a lowland setting, dissected by minor roads and scattered farms. Communities look predominantly to Angus lowlands.

13. Glen Clova

This area is of outstanding value to the natural heritage. The area falls largely within a National Scenic Area, and includes the uplands of Caenlochan, of international value for alpine habitats and species, and carrying various designations. Important native woodland and scrub remnants with potential to contribute to wider habitat networks. Natural processes strongly influence the natural heritage over large areas. Cultural heritage includes many historic and post-medieval monuments. This area is of great importance for outdoor recreation including hill-walking and cross-country skiing, and includes many popular Munros.

This area is quite different from the central Cairngorms in terms of both landscape and ecology, which in turn reflect geological differences, but is nonetheless of very strong character in its own right. The high but less rugged plateau is incised by steep-sided glens and deep corries, sometimes grassy and with scattered commercial plantations and native birchwoods. Variable community links to Mounth or to Angus lowlands.

14. Glen Isla

This area includes a number of sites of national importance for nature conservation, including Balloch Moss and Crossbog Pinewood. The area is of upland-lowland transitional character, with comparatively widespread management. Cat Law and the approaches to Monamenach fall within this area, along with other recreational resources of local importance.

A transitional area with upland, enclosed pasture and forestry. Rolling hills are variously grassy or heathery, while lower ground supports forestry plantations and mixed hill farming, a landscape with some resemblance to other parts of the Angus Glens. Community looks perhaps more strongly to Angus lowlands.

Natural heritage under localised pressure due to certain aspects of land management, including poorly-designed conifer plantations, and development including hill tracks. Significant scope for habitat enhancement, particularly native woodland expansion – Tayside Native Woodlands initiative ongoing. Main land uses are sporting estate management and forestry, with more local tourism and informal recreation and some potential for conflict. Area has some potential as a ‘buffer zone’ adjacent to the Glen Muick and Lochnagar areas. The local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 4

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to different aspects of land management, many of which are more typical of intensive lowland agriculture. Ongoing initiatives include Wild Rivers demonstration project. Some economic dependence on the natural heritage, and nearby Brechin or Kirriemuir might have some potential to provide services and accommodation.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 2

Cairngorms character & identity: 1

Special needs: 2

Natural heritage under significant pressure due to grazing, other aspects of land management and, locally, recreation. Considerable scope for habitat and landscape enhancement – initiatives underway include Tayside Native Woodlands and the recently formed Angus Glens Ranger Service. Land uses include extensive informal recreation, together with forestry and field sports (large estates), with some competition/conflict. There are outstanding issues relating to traffic and visitor management. Local economy strongly depends on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 5

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 4

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to different aspects of land management. Considerable scope for habitat and landscape enhancement. Prominent land uses are agriculture, forestry and recreation including field sports, with some potential for conflict. The local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 2

Special needs: 3

15. Upper Glenshee

This tract of rolling hill country includes the nationally important upland SSSI of Glas Tulaichean, and a number of areas of importance to black grouse. Natural processes strongly influence the natural heritage over large areas, especially at higher altitude. The north-western part of the area is very remote and of some wild land character, and the area includes, or borders onto, several Munros which are popular for hill-walking and cross-country skiing. The area borders with the Glenshee ski area which is well used for hang gliding in summer. Spittal of Glenshee is a common stopover for tourist buses.

Strong Central Highland character - remote rolling uplands with broad ridges and gentle grassy or heathery slopes. Much landscape and ecological similarity to hills above Glen Clunie and Glen Ey, closer to heart of Cairngorms. North-western parts of area are quite remote. A sparsely populated area.

16. Kirkmichael

This area is of considerable natural heritage value and includes much of the Forest of Clunie, which is of international importance for breeding moorland birds and black grouse. The area shows natural habitat gradations in many areas, particularly on high ground, but managed land, including farmland and forestry, is quite extensive. Strathardle and Glen Shee have very long settlement histories with numerous prehistoric sites and more recent remains. The area is generally of local value for recreation.

A transitional area with upland, enclosed pasture and forestry. Landscape is broadly intermediate between rolling Grampian uplands and the more managed character of most of Perthshire. Communities do not relate strongly to central Cairngorms.

17. Atholl

This large area is of considerable natural heritage value, including a large tract of rolling and remote upland of considerable wild land character. Numerous designated sites, including Beinn a'Ghlo and the Drumochter Hills, which are of international value for alpine habitats, and other sites with important woodland and earth science features. Potential for development of large scale habitat networks, particularly woodland. Natural processes strongly influence the natural heritage over large areas, especially at higher altitude. This area is also of considerable value for outdoor recreation and includes several popular Munros and important and historic transport routes, including the Minigaig Pass.

Upland core has strong Central Highland character - remote rolling uplands with broad heathery or grassy ridges and mostly gentle slopes. Some ecological similarity to hills in heart of Cairngorms, perhaps most resembling those areas where schists are extensive. Often remote and wild in character. Southern parts of more transitional character to Perthshire. Edges of area include mix of woodlands, forests and pastures. Characteristic features include parklands, Atholl policy woodlands and Blair Atholl, a prominent feature of the landscape. The area derives historical importance from link with a major transport corridor, and includes a number of large estate houses. Communities of the area generally look southward to Perthshire rather than to Cairngorms.

18. Pitlochry and Tummel

This area is of significant value to the natural heritage, falling largely within a National Scenic Area, and including several designated sites, some of which are of international value. The area shows natural habitat gradations in many areas, particularly on high ground, but also includes much managed land including forestry. The area is of considerable importance for tourism, focused on Pitlochry and the Queens View.

Character is typical of Highland Perthshire and quite distinct from that of the central Cairngorms and their surrounding straths. Extensive areas of mixed woodland and linear lochs give the area a strong identity of its own. Communities of the area look southward to Perthshire and Perth itself.

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to grazing and other aspects of land management, with potential to enhance habitats (including woodland) and landscape. Main land uses include recreation, tourism, hill farming, sporting estate management and forestry, with some potential for conflict. The area has some potential as a 'buffer zone' for upland areas to the immediate north. The local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage. Spittal of Glenshee has potential to be a suitable entrance point to the Park from the south.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 4

Cairngorms character & identity: 4

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to aspects of land management, with considerable scope for enhancement of the resource, particularly moorland. Main land uses include hill farming, sporting estate management and forestry. The local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 4

Cairngorms character & identity: 2

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to grazing, other aspects of land management and some built development. Significant scope for habitat and landscape enhancement, including woodland regeneration, upland path repair on Beinn a'Ghlo and track restoration. Tourism is particularly important, and other main land uses and economic activities include informal recreation, hill farming, sporting estate management and forestry, with significant potential for conflict/competition. The area has some potential as a 'buffer zone' adjacent to the Cairngorms core. Kindrogan Field Centre is a well established educational resource within the area. The local economy has a strong dependence on the natural and cultural heritage. Blair Atholl has potential to provide services and accommodation.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 4

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 4

Natural heritage is under some pressure due to certain aspects of land management and some built development. Significant scope for habitat and landscape enhancement, including forest restructuring. Tourism and forestry are dominant activities, and local economy has a strong dependence on the natural heritage. Pitlochry has potential to provide services and accommodation.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 1

Special needs: 2

19. Dalnaspidal

This area is of significant natural heritage value, including a large area of upland with part of the Drumochter Hills, which are of international value for alpine habitats, and a few other sites. Natural processes influence the natural heritage over significant areas, especially at higher altitude. Northern parts of the area, including the Munros of the Beinn Udlmain group, are well used for outdoor recreation including ski touring, and the national cycle-way traverses this area.

Most of area has strong Central Highland character - remote rolling uplands with broad often heathery ridges and mostly gentle slopes. Some ecological similarity to lower hills in heart of Cairngorms. Fringed by prominent features of A9 to east and Loch Ericht to west. This area is very sparsely populated indeed.

20. Rannoch

This area is of significant value to the natural heritage, falling partially within a National Scenic Area and including some designated sites of international value. The area shows natural habitat gradations in many areas, particularly on high ground, but also includes more managed land along its southern edge. Much of this area is quite remote, with isolated Corbetts such as Beinn Mholach and Beinn a'Chullaich attracting light recreational use. The drive along Loch Rannoch is also an attraction for tourism.

Character quite different to Cairngorms massifs, with Loch Rannoch fringed with native woodland and plantations. Landscape and ecological character transitional to Western Highlands, with increasing proportion of oceanic plant communities. This area is distinct from what is normally regarded as the Cairngorms and local communities do not relate significantly to that area.

21. Glen Truim triangle

This small area includes some sites of natural heritage importance, notably including a short stretch of the River Spey. The cultural heritage is also marked by strong Gaelic connections, in common with other parts of Strathspey. The area includes some areas of relatively unmodified habitats and landforms, both along the Spey and elsewhere, and is generally of local value for recreation.

Quite a distinctive area, wide, largely flat plains are flanked by gentle, occasionally craggy hill slopes. Characteristic features include meandering River Spey and Dalwhinnie, prominent from the A9. In common with other parts of Speyside, this area retains a significant Gaelic influence including crofting, shinty and whisky production. Some community links to Cairngorms, but also westward (e.g. to Ben Alder Estate).

22. Strathmashie

This area contains very few designated sites and is extensively afforested around the margins. The core of the area nonetheless contains significant areas of high ground on which natural processes exert a dominant influence. This area is occasionally used for recreation, including access to Ben Alder, The Fara and rock climbing at Dirc Mhor.

Landscape and ecological character transitional to Western Highlands, with much relatively oceanic vegetation. Open, gently undulating terrain with occasional craggy hills and few strongly characteristic features. This area is very sparsely populated.

23. Ardverikie/Ben Alder

This area is of considerable natural heritage value with designated sites including Ben Alder, of international importance for alpine habitats and species. The area also contains a substantial tract of wild and remote upland. Natural processes strongly influence the natural heritage over large areas and, to varying degrees, at all altitudes. This area is of notable value for outdoor recreation, including remote Munros and modest opportunities for both rock and ice climbing.

Landscape and ecological character transitional to Western Highlands, with isolated and well defined mountain groups. Beyond the area widely regarded as Cairngorms. This area is very sparsely populated.

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to grazing, other aspects of land management and some built development. Water resource management is locally prominent. Significant scope for enhancement of natural heritage, including expansion of woodland remnants. This sparsely populated area supports relatively little economic activity, but main land uses are recreation, hill farming, sporting estate management, forestry and tourism along A9 corridor, with some potential for conflict, and significant dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to grazing, other aspects of land management and some built development. Significant scope for habitat and landscape enhancement, including expansion of native woodland. Major economic activities are sporting estate management, tourism and forestry, with some potential for conflict. Local economy thus has significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 1

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to some aspects of land management, with some scope for enhancement of this resource - Laggan Community Forest initiative ongoing. Main land uses are agriculture and field sports, with some tourism based on distillery visits. The local economy has significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 2

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage under localised pressure due to some aspects of land management, with corresponding scope for enhancement – Laggan Forest initiative is active in this regard. This sparsely populated area supports relatively little economic activity (largely forestry and sporting management), which generally has some linkage to the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 2

Cairngorms character & identity: 2

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to grazing, some other aspects of land management and inappropriate development. Considerable scope for habitat and landscape enhancement, including native woodland, and for sensitive path improvement. Dominant land uses are recreation, including sporting estates, and forestry – significant potential for conflict. These activities have varying but generally strong links to the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 5

Cairngorms character & identity: 1

Special needs: 4

24. Upper Spey catchment

This area is of substantial natural heritage value, including parts of Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve, of international importance for alpine habitats, and the rolling massif of the Monadhliath. Natural processes strongly influence the natural heritage over large areas and, to varying degrees, at most altitudes. Many important historic features including the Pictish fort of Dun-da-lamh, the Corrieyairack Pass and pre-historic and pre-Improvement settlements in Glen Banchor. This area is of great importance for various types of outdoor recreation, including hill-walking and cross-country skiing on the Munros, and both rock and ice climbing, with the latter focused on Coire Ardair.

Eastern parts including Monadhliath have strong Central Highland character - remote rolling uplands, with much ecological similarity to lower hills in heart of Cairngorms. Further west, landscape and ecological character become transitional to Western Highlands, with hills of more defined form and much oceanic wet heath. Most of the latter area is beyond what is generally regarded as the Cairngorms. The entire area is sparsely populated.

25. Upper Dulnain

This rolling and very remote hill area includes part of the high Monadhliath, which are of national importance for alpine heath and mire habitats. The area is also of significant cultural importance, including substantial remains of post-medieval settlement. Natural processes influence the natural heritage over much of the area, although lower moorland is commonly managed for grouse. The area is generally of local value for recreation.

Monadhliath have strong Central Highland character - remote rolling uplands, with much ecological similarity to lower hills in heart of Cairngorms. Landscape is even more open than central Cairngorms, with very few bold landforms. This area is very sparsely populated.

26. Grantown-on-Spey

This area contains relatively few sites of great nature conservation importance, with the exception of the River Spey, but the area shares a rich cultural heritage with other parts of Speyside. Long standing settlement is reflected by prehistoric and post-medieval sites. The prevailing landscapes are of cultural origin and natural processes only exert a minor influence on habitats and species. The area provides for a variety of outdoor recreation including walking both on the Speyside way and village path networks, and canoeing.

Transitional area with upland, enclosed pasture and woodland, flanked by the Cromdales, of similar character to lower hills in the Cairngorms core. Diverse landscape with fairly close links to and views of central Cairngorms. Strong pattern of shelter-belts and woodlands, with rolling arable fields and improved pasture on strath floor and sides - clear similarities to lowlands further east. Includes the planned settlement of Grantown-on-Spey and scattered smaller settlements and distilleries which add to the character of the area. In common with other parts of Speyside, this area retains a significant Gaelic influence including crofting and shinty. Community relates strongly to the Cairngorms.

27. Dava Moor

This area is of rolling upland character with much heather moorland and peatland, although relatively little of this carries natural heritage designations. The area includes significant historical associations centred on Lochindorb. Natural processes influence the natural heritage over parts of the area, although lower and more accessible moorland is commonly managed. The area is of local value for recreation.

Lower, rolling upland with some similarity to the Monadhliath and lower hills in the Cairngorms core, although rather distant from area conventionally regarded as Cairngorms. Sparsely populated.

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to grazing, other aspects of land management, some built development and, locally, recreation. Considerable scope for habitat and landscape enhancement as is already demonstrated at Creag Meagaidh NNR. Significant scope for conflict between dominant land uses – conservation, sporting management, agriculture, forestry and informal recreation. Local economy has significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 4

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 4

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to some aspects of land management and built development. Significant scope for habitat and landscape enhancement. Pattern of land use is comparatively simple and dominated by grouse moors. This limited range of economic activity thus has some linkage to the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 2

Natural heritage under localised pressure due to certain aspects of land management, some of which are more typical of intensive lowland agriculture, and inappropriate development. Potential to enhance and diversify managed landscapes in some areas. Tourism is economically very significant (with hotels commonly used by bus parties), along with farming and sporting estate management. The local economy therefore has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 4

Special needs: 3

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to certain aspects of land management and inappropriate development, with scope to enhance resource. Moorland management is extensive and area is regularly burnt. The local economy has a significant direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 2

Cairngorms character & identity: 3

Special needs: 3

28. Aboyne

This area contains several sites of significant conservation value, including the River Dee, and some features of archaeological or historic importance. The prevailing landscapes are of cultural origin with both farmland and commercial forestry, and natural processes therefore exert a minor influence on habitats and species. The area provides for a variety of open-air recreation, which is primarily of local value.

A transitional area with upland, enclosed pasture and forestry, with the combination of prominent native woodland and distant hill views which characterises much of mid-Deeside. Community has some links to the Mounth but looks more strongly to the Aberdeenshire lowlands and Aberdeen itself.

29. Tarland area

This area contains few sites of nature conservation value, but a long history of settlement is reflected by many features of historic or archaeological importance, including Kildrummy Castle and numerous standing stones, cairns and hut circles. The area is extensively managed and natural processes exert a comparatively minor influence on the natural heritage. The area provides for a variety of open-air recreation, which is primarily of local value.

A transitional area with some afforested upland and much enclosed farmland. This area is largely distinct from the Cairngorms core, with clear similarities to the lowlands further east. Abundance of archaeological sites reflects a long history of human settlement. Community looks to the Aberdeenshire lowlands and Aberdeen itself.

Natural heritage under localised pressure due to some aspects of land management and built development, with corresponding scope for enhancement. Tourism and primary land-based activities are economically significant, and directly or indirectly depend on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 2

Cairngorms character & identity: 2

Special needs: 2

Natural heritage under varying pressure due to different aspects of land management, many of which are more typical of intensive lowland agriculture. Agriculture and forestry are dominant land uses, with less dependence on tourism than settlements closer to Cairngorms massifs. The local economy thus has some direct and indirect dependence on the natural heritage.

Natural & cultural heritage importance: 3

Cairngorms character & identity: 1

Special needs: 2

Summary assessment of case for inclusion and exclusion of sub-areas

NB: This assessment is intended to provide general guidance and should not be regarded as definitive. The assessment is based on the combination of all three criteria as follows:

- Very strong case for inclusion: where all three conditions are met (either extensively or significantly);
- Strong case for inclusion: where all three conditions are met to varying degrees (either extensively, significantly or partially);
- Weak case for inclusion: where only one or two conditions are met to varying degrees (either extensively, significantly or partially);
- Exclude: where all three conditions are only weakly met (to a minor or minimal extent).

Sub-unit	Condition 1: Natural and cultural heritage importance	Condition 2: Distinctive character and coherent identity	Condition 3: Special needs	Assessment of case for inclusion
1. Cairngorms massif, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore	5: Extensive	5: Extensive	5: Extensive	Very strong
2. Carn Ealasaid and Tomintoul	4: Significant	4: Significant	4: Significant	Very strong
3. Lochnagar, Glen Muick and Upper Deeside	5: Extensive	5: Extensive	5: Extensive	Very strong
4. Gaick	3: Partial	4: Significant	3: Partial	Strong
5. Mid-Strathspey	4: Significant	5: Extensive	4: Significant	Very strong
6. Ben Rinnes	3: Partial	2: Minor	2: Minor	Weak
7. Strath Avon/Glenlivet	3: Partial	3: Partial	3: Partial	Strong
8. Strathdon	3: Partial	3: Partial	3: Partial	Strong
9. Mid Deeside	4: Significant	4: Significant	4: Significant	Very strong
10. Birse	4: Significant	3: Partial	2: Minor	Weak
11. Glen Esk	4: Significant	3: Partial	3: Partial	Strong
12. Tannadice	2: Minor	1: Minimal	2: Minor	Exclude
13. Glen Clova	5: Extensive	3: Partial	4: Significant	Strong
14. Glen Isla	3: Partial	2: Minor	3: Partial	Weak
15. Upper Glenshee	4: Significant	4: Significant	3: Partial	Strong
16. Kirkmichael	4: Significant	2: Minor	3: Partial	Weak
17. Atholl	4: Significant	3: Partial	4: Significant	Strong
18. Pitlochry and Tummel	3: Partial	1: Minimal	2: Minor	Weak
19. Dalnaspidal	3: Partial	3: Partial	3: Partial	Strong
20. Rannoch	3: Partial	1: Minimal	3: Partial	Weak
21. Glen Truim triangle	2: Minor	3: Partial	3: Partial	Weak
22. Strathmashie	2: Minor	2: Minor	3: Partial	Weak
23. Ardverikie/Ben Alder	5: Extensive	1: Minimal	4: Significant	Weak
24. Upper Spey catchment	4: Significant	3: Partial	4: Significant	Strong
25. Upper Dulnain	3: Partial	3: Partial	2: Minor	Weak
26. Grantown-on-Spey	3: Partial	4: Significant	3: Partial	Strong
27. Dava Moor	2: Minor	3: Partial	3: Partial	Weak
28. Aboyne	2: Minor	2: Minor	1: Minimal	Exclude
29. Tarland area	3: Partial	1: Minimal	2: Minor	Weak

