Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown-on-Spey

Hybrid

13 March 2026 at 9.30am

Present in person

Russell Jones (Convener)
Paul Gibb (Deputy Convener)
Jackie Brierton
Dr Peter Cosgrove
Kenny Deans
John Kirk
Bill Lobban
Lauren MacCallum
Eleanor Mackintosh
Ian McLaren
Dr Fiona McLean
Duncan Miller

Virtual

Geva Blackett
Dr Hannah Grist
Steve Micklewright
Ann Ross
Derek Ross
Peter Ferguson, Harper MacLeod LLP
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

Sandy Bremner
Michael Williamson

In Attendance

Gavin Miles, Director of Planning and Place
David Berry, Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer
Emma Bryce, Planning Manager (Development Manager)
Katie Crerar, Planning Officer, Development Management

Katherine Donnachie, Planning Officer, Development Management
Lauren Neil, Planning Officer
Scott Shanks, Ecological Advice Officer
Emma Greenlees, Planning Systems Support
Karen Johnstone, Clerk to the Board

Agenda Item 1

Welcome and apologies

1. The Planning Convener welcomed all present including members of the public and apologies were noted.

2. The Planning Convener gave special welcome to Heather Boswell, the Park Authority's new Senior Planner.

Agenda Items 2 and 3

Approval of minutes of previous meetings and Matters arising

3. The minutes of the previous meeting on 23 January 2026 held at Cairngorms National Park Authority, Grantown-on-Spey, were approved with no amendments.

4. There was one matter arising:
    a) At para 12a): additional condition to prevent permanent occupancy was added to decision notice for 2025/0242/DET (Braemar Caravan Park) as agreed by the Committee.

Agenda Item 4

Declarations of interest

5. Bill Lobban declared an interest in Item 7 as he has history of previous comments on applications within the site and would leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion on this item.

6. Derek Ross declared an interest in Item 9 as he has previously made comments in national press about the cumulative effect and impact of wind farms on the landscape. Therefore, he would leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion on this item.

7. Dr Peter Cosgrove declared an interest in Item 10, as he and his company (Alba Ecology) have undertaken reptile and bird surveys on the site and so he would leave the meeting for the duration of this item.

Agenda Item 5

Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2025/0143/DET
Construction of flood defence bund
At Land 110M NE of Scottish Water, Dalwhinnie
Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

8. Katherine Donnachie, Planning Officer presented the paper to the committee.

9. The Committee were invited to ask the Planning Officer for clarity, and the following points were raised:
   a) A member asked for clarity regarding Scottish Environment Protection Agency's (SEPA) position and sought clarity on why they were unwilling to recognise the structure as a formal flood barrier in the future. Planning Officer advised that as it had not been designed by the local authority, SEPA were not recognising it as a formal flood defence structure. Planning Officer added that SEPA were welcoming of the community's proactive stance.
   b) A member raised concerns about the proposed liner in the middle of the bank, and whether this could weaken the bank. Planning Officer confirmed that this was raised by the flood risk management team who were satisfied with assurances and information supplied by the applicant's engineers.

10. The applicant Lesley Carr addressed the Committee.

11. The Planning Officer was invited to come back on points raised; she made the following point:
   a) With reference to email correspondence from SEPA, she read out their reason for not adopting the flood defence bund. They said given the informal nature of the proposed flood defence bund and because the design standard of protection is for lower more frequent events, they would not be including it on their flood maps.

12. The Committee were invited to discuss the report. The following points were raised:
   a) Member made an observation that there would be pollution risks associated with not doing the work; flooding in gardens, oil tanks flooding into the

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) during flood events, flooding posing a risk to breeding salmon for example.

b) Support for the application and commendation to the community for taking the initiative and undertaking such a development to benefit the wider community.
c) Member asked if there was something the Park Authority could do to help the community's flood defence bund to be recognised as such by the authorities.
d) Comment made that they would like to see it come through as a case study.
e) Member suggested an informal session on how the Board can influence the process, so that for future communities seeking to undertake such a process, it is not as hard or costly as it could have been.

13. The Committee approved the application as per the officer's recommendation.

14. Action Point arising:

i. Informal Planning Committee / Board discussion session to be considered on how the Committee / Board could support delivery of more community-led initiatives such as this flood defence bund.

Agenda Item 6

Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2025/0335/DET
Formation of 10 wildlife ponds at
Site At Knock House Strathgirnoc, Birkhall, Ballater, Aberdeenshire, AB35 5SR
Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

15. Katherine Donnachie, Planning Officer presented the paper to the committee. As well as the conditions recommended in the report, she highlighted the need for an additional condition to require a pre-construction protected species survey.

16. The Committee were invited to ask the Planning Officer for clarity, and the following points were raised:

a) Members praised the application.
b) A member sought clarification regarding the Community Council's comments and whether discussions with the applicant had resulted in any modifications. The Planning Officer confirmed that the Community Council had raised an issue and noted that the Dee Resilience Group had also been involved, as they

are exploring how ponds of this type can deliver multiple benefits, including fire-fighting water supply and flood alleviation.

c) The member also asked whether the Dee Catchment Officer had been consulted on hydrological matters, and how future applications would ensure that water table reduction is properly considered. The Planning Officer advised that the Dee Catchment Officer had been approached for comment and had confirmed that the application complies with all relevant policies. She added that for similar future proposals, early engagement with the Dee Catchment Officer would be undertaken.

d) Could the criteria be explained for when a pond requires a planning application? Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer advised that ponds can benefit from permitted development rights in some instances (eg for agricultural purposes). However, it was not the case for this proposal, so a planning application was required. The applicant in this case was joining all 10 ponds together to form one big application to avoid the need for individual applications for each pond.

e) The member explained that she had recently attended a meeting of the Cairngorms Agricultural Group where there had been lots of talk about ponds for fire mitigation purposes and stated they would welcome some clarity around this.

f) Member commented that it seemed an odd thing to call-in. Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer explained that the applicant has aspirations for many similar ponds across the national park and this initial application tested the concept of simplifying the application process by grouping ponds together. It was called in to ensure the approach worked before being rolled out elsewhere (noting the call-in category of new issues that have not previously been considered).

17. The Committee were invited to discuss the report. The following points were raised:

a) Member stated this could have been considered by the relevant local authority under delegated authority.

b) A few members stated that the planning application gave the community council an opportunity to have their say, the Dee Resilience Strategy Group an opportunity to input, and may assist the applicant with any funding applications.

c) Members advised it would be good to provide some guidance on permitted development rights for farmers in particular, who see construction of ponds as an easy win for biodiversity, alleviating flooding on farms.

d) A member asked if thresholds or clearer rules could be set so that ponds of a certain size do not require planning permission? Director of Planning and Place advised that this could not be changed locally, as it is set by government legislation.

e) It was suggested that the Authority write to the Scottish Government (SG) to request follow-up on the permitted development issue. Director of Planning and Place advised officers would be better placed to feed this back to SG, as this application was a good example. The Committee agreed.

18. The Committee approved the application as per the officer's recommendation with the additional condition.

19. Action Points arising:

i. Officers to follow up with the Scottish Government (SG) on the permitted development issue and the potential need for review of existing permitted development rights, using this application as an example.

ii. Officers to consider preparing guidance note on what constitutes permitted development versus what requires full planning permission for ponds.

Bill Lobban left the meeting at 10.36 am

Agenda Item 7

Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2026/0018/DET
Subdivision of house plot and erection of 2 houses
At 34 Farm Road, Aviemore, PH22 1AP
Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions and legal agreement / upfront payment to secure financial contribution towards affordable housing

20. Katie Crerar, Planning Officer presented the paper to the committee.

21. The Convener noted that the application was the same as one which was approved by the Committee in August 2025, although the applicant had withdrawn that

application before the decision notice was issued. The Committee approved the application as per the officer's recommendation.

22. Action Point arising: None

Bill Lobban returned to the meeting at 10.43 am

Agenda Item 8

Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2026/0026/DET
Change of house types on Plots 22-25 and 31-32 and the road and car parking design (07/230/CP) (2024/0149/DET)
At Land between Perth Road and Station Road, Newtonmore, Highland
Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

23. Lauren Neil, Planning Officer presented the paper to the committee.

24. The Committee approved the application as per the officer's recommendation.

25. Action Point arising: None

Derek Ross left the meeting at 10.49 am
Geva Blackett left the meeting at 10.50 am

Agenda Item 9

For decision
Dorenell Extension Wind Farm 2025/0202/PAC (ECU00004862)
Recommendation: Objection

26. Emma Bryce, Planning Manager presented the paper to the committee.

27. The Committee were invited to ask the Planning Manager for clarity, and the following points were raised:
    a) A member asked if there were any proposed changes to the grid connection process with this extension? Planning Manager advised that she had not been made aware of that.

b) A member raised concerns that there was no reference to Dark Skies status from NatureScot and asked if there should be some mention of the lighting effect of the proposal. Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer advised that Dark Skies SLQ 32 was mentioned briefly at para 26 of the NatureScot report. He added that impact on dark skies could be added as a concern to the Committee's objection.

28. The Committee were invited to discuss the report. The following points were agreed:

a) Committee unanimously agreed that the proposal would have significant adverse impacts on the Cairngorms National Park.

b) The Committee agreed to add SLQ 32 Dark Skies as a concern in their Objection.

c) Conversation with NatureScot to be had about ensuring that they assess SLQ 32 when appraising future windfarm applications in and around the Cairngorms National Park.

29. The Committee agreed the Objection with the additional concern on SLQ Dark Skies.

30. Action Point arising:

i. Officers to have a conversation with NatureScot about ensuring that they assess SLQ 32 when appraising future windfarm applications in and around the Cairngorms National Park.

Geva Blackett returned to the meeting at 11.03 am
Peter Cosgrove left the meeting at 11.07 am
Derek Ross returned to the meeting at 11.08 am

Agenda Item 10

For information
Proposal of Application Notice (PoAN) PRE/2026/0004
Kingussie Phase 3
Site A - 108 dwellings and associated infrastructure
At land between Dunbarry Terrace and General Wade's Military Road and;
Site B - 8 residential plots and associated infrastructure

At Land adjacent to Ardbroilach Road - Land to North and East and West of Dunbarry Terrace and Kerrow Drive, Kingussie
Recommendation: Note the paper

31. Lauren Neil, Planning Officer presented the paper to the committee.

32. The Committee were invited to ask the Planning Officer for clarity, and the following points were raised:
    a) A member asked about the provision of core paths. Planning Officer agreed this was key information the applicant would have to consider.
    b) A Member requested that play facilities for children are included in the application. The Planning Officer agreed.

33. The Committee noted the paper.

34. Action Point arising: None

Peter Cosgrove returned to the meeting 11.14am

Agenda Item 11

For decision
Onshore electricity generation: Consultation on increasing the threshold for applications under the Electricity Act
Recommendation: Approve consultation response

35. David Berry, Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer presented the paper to the committee.

36. The Committee were invited to discuss the paper. The following comment was made:
    a) Suggestion made for the Committee to visit the battery storage facility at Boat of Garten.

37. The Committee approved the consultation response.

38. Action Point arising:

i. Planning Committee visit to the battery storage facility in Boat of Garten to be considered.

Agenda Item 12

AOCB

39. David Berry, Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer gave the following update:

a) Update on next Local Development Plan

ii. Members (sitting as Board) would be asked to approve the Evidence Report for the next Local Development Plan (LDP) immediately after this Committee meeting - subject to approval, it would be submitted to the DPEA for 'gatecheck' assessment.

iii. A 'call for sites and ideas' would be launched week commencing 16 March 2026. It will run for approximately 3 months (in parallel with gatecheck process) and allow people to submit ideas for inclusion in the new local development plan. Developers and landowners will be able to submit potential development sites for consideration.

43. The Committee Convener raised a motion to move to a confidential session.

Date of next meeting

44. The public business of the meeting concluded at 11.23 am

Date of next meeting 24 April 2026.