



Draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting

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

12 June 2026 at 10.30am

Present in person

Russell Jones (Convener)
Sandy Bremner
Kenny Deans
Eleanor Mackintosh
Derek Ross

Paul Gibb (Deputy Convener)
Dr Peter Cosgrove
Bill Lobban
Ian McLaren
Michael Williamson

Virtual

Geva Blackett
Dr Fiona McLean
Lauren MacCallum
Ann Ross

Jackie Brierton
Dr Hannah Grist
Steve Micklewright

Scott Shanks, Ecological Advice Officer (Planning)
Heather Boswell, Senior Planning Officer

Apologies

John Kirk

Duncan Miller

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



Lacquarn Rose, Graduate Planner
Deirdre Straw, Planning Administration and Systems Officer
Edward Swales, Monitoring and Enforcement Officer
Peter Ferguson, Harper MacLeod LLP
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board

Agenda Item 1

Welcome and apologies

1. Russell Jones, Planning Committee Convener welcomed all present including members of the public and apologies were noted.

Agenda Items 2 and 3

Approval of minutes of previous meetings and Matters arising

2. The minutes of the previous meeting on 24 April 2026 held at Cairngorms National Park Authority, Grantown-on-Spey, were approved with no amendments.
3. There were no matters arising.

Agenda Item 4

Declarations of interest

4. Paul Gibb declared a direct interest in item 6 and explained that before he became a CNPA Board member, he had made comments which might be seen as being in support of the Application and would therefore leave the room for this item.
5. There were no further declarations of interest.

Agenda Item 5

Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2025/0229/DET
Erection of agricultural storage shed (retrospective)
At Land 31M SW of No 1 Keepers Cottage, Revack, Grantown-on-Spey
Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

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



7. The Committee were invited to ask the Planning Officer for clarity, and the following points were raised:
 - a) A member asked if the land proposed to be used for the compensatory planting was agricultural ground? Planning Officer confirmed that it was. Member went on to ask where that sat with our policy on avoiding loss of in-bye land to woodland planting. Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer advised it was the proposal put forward for the application, and what was recommended was inclusion of a condition that requests an updated / final compensatory planting proposal, to secure a minimum of 1.65ha compensatory planting.
 - b) A member queried whether the compensatory planting proposal would include semi mature trees? Scott Shanks, Ecological Advice Officer advised that it would be much better using saplings, as older trees take more work to establish.
 - c) A member raised concerns around the remaining ancient woodland surrounding the site, the trees appeared to be top heavy and raised concerns that these may be more likely to come to further damage should there be a storm. Planning Officer confirmed she had not been aware if that had been factored in.
 - d) A member asked if compensatory planting proposed would be adjacent or next to the site or some distance away? Planning Officer advised that it was near the site and has trees on three sides already.
 - e) A member asked when the felling took place? Planning Officer confirmed that the felling took place in November 2024.
 - f) A member asked if the compensatory planting would be given same protection or could it be felled at a later date? Ecological Advice Officer explained that for the compensatory planting part of application, the presumption would be that it is maintained for at least as long as development is in existence, and it would have to go through forestry and woodland recreation scheme to register the woodland.
8. Andrew Patterson (Agent) and Simon Gilmartin (Applicant) were available to answer the Committee's questions.
 - a) A member asked how the Applicant decided to build a substantial building on native ancient woodland without planning permission. The applicant said he didn't know he needed planning permission, being an agricultural shed.



- b) A member asked if the proposed site for the compensatory planting was agricultural ground? The applicant explained it was rough ground being used as horse field. Member asked if there were other options on the estate for compensatory planting? Applicant confirmed that there were, but the site proposed was considered the most appropriate given the proximity of it to the application site.
 - c) A member asked if any consideration had been given to the protected species within the ancient woodland that had been felled? Applicant stated that it was a car park and the trees were in a bad state of disrepair.
 - d) A member asked for more information around the licence for Scots pine and larch felling? Applicant explained that he had a clear fell licence for a windblown section of the Estate, and a thinning licence for the whole Estate.
 - e) A member asked for more information surrounding other potential breaches of planning permission in the wider estate. Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer advised that the application was to be appraised on its own merits. He added that the clear-felling license was not for this application site but the thinning license covered the application site.
9. The Committee were invited to discuss the report. The following points were raised:
- a) A member questioned whether replacing one issue with another eg compensatory planting on agricultural in-bye land would not be appropriate? Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer advised that this was not the intention and that an updated / final compensatory planting scheme would need to be submitted under Condition 4 and this must comply with relevant woodland guidance. He went on to say that the detailed design of the scheme would be carefully reviewed. If necessary, alternative locations for planting would be identified.
 - b) A member queried whether the condition could be strengthened to explicitly state that compensatory planting should not take place on agricultural land. Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer confirmed that additional wording could be considered to reflect this requirement.
 - c) A member queried how it can be ensured that the compensatory planting will be suitable for the proposed ground. Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer advised that the scheme would need to be prepared by a suitably qualified forestry consultant. He provided reassurance that a robust process



would be in place to ensure the suitability and appropriateness of the compensatory planting.

- d) A member raised a concern over the loss of ancient woodland, describing it as a significant and sensitive issue. It was strongly emphasised that compensatory planting should be substantial and, where possible, located adjacent to existing ancient woodland to help offset the loss.
- e) A member asked about the proposed compensatory planting ratio. Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer confirmed that, given the presumption against loss of ancient woodland, in line with guidance for cases where removal is considered acceptable the proposal provides an area of compensatory planting which exceeds the area of woodland removed, with approximately five times the area lost to be replanted.
- f) A member noted concern over the loss of ancient woodland and the potential precedent this may set, it was felt there is limited recourse and concern that approval could be seen as enabling such loss.
- g) A member asked the Ecological Advice Officer for a description of the site from his point of view. Ecological Advice Officer advised that the current proposal for compensatory planting was in an area adjacent to capercaillie woodland and other priority species in the area, thus has the potential to extend their habitat. He said it was a good location and could deliver multiple benefits for biodiversity.
- h) Members expressed their disappointment at the retrospective nature of the application.

10. The Convener proposed to defer the application to allow for the applicant to submit an updated detailed compensatory planting plan, addressing concerns about loss of agricultural land if possible. This was seconded by Eleanor Mackintosh.

11. The Committee **deferred** the application.

12. Action Point arising: None

Edward Swales and Paul Gibb left the room at 11.28am.

The meeting paused for a comfort break and reconvened at 11.38am.



Agenda Item 6

Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2026/0014/DET

Change of use of putting green to form 12 motorhome pitches and associated works including formation of vehicular access

At Ballater Golf Club, Victoria Road, Ballater, AB35 5QX

Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

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

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

- a) Member noted the outcome of today's decision, if the application is approved, would be notified to Scottish Ministers for their potential call-in.
- b) A member asked about the potential precedent of approving the proposal. Peter Ferguson, Harper McLeod LLP advised that in planning terms, there was no formal concept of precedent and decisions do not bind future cases.
- c) A member asked if recommended Condition 3(e) could be strengthened to require a secure key holding system for any absences from site, not just longer term absences. This would enable vehicles to be relocated at short notice where owners are absent, which is important given the rapid response nature of flooding in the River Dee. Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer agreed that the condition could be amended to incorporate this change.
- d) A member queried whether the applicant had given any consideration to an alternative site? And if so, what were the options? Planning Officer advised that we can only assess the application as it stands and that that question may be better posed to the applicant.
- e) A query was raised about whether planning policies should provide greater clarity on the definition of motorhomes and what is permitted on such sites. Planning Officer advised that for this development, use would be restricted to self-contained motorhomes or campervans with onboard facilities. Each pitch was intended for a single vehicle only, with no allowance for separate units such as caravans, tents, or cars. She added that day-to-day enforcement would be managed by the site operator; however, a planning condition would ensure the restriction to motorhomes and campervans only.



- f) A question was raised regarding Condition 7 and whether the proposed LED lighting could be programmable to dim at night to reduce impact on neighbouring properties. Planning Officer noted that while this was not currently specified, final details of the electrical and lighting scheme were to be secured by condition. She added that the Landscape Advisor had no concerns, considering the lighting to be low level, but further detail could be sought to ensure minimal impact.
- g) A member queried the impact of the development on Ballater's character and availability of green space. Planning Officer advised that the site is not designated as protected green space. She explained that the development is limited, includes landscaping resulting in minimal and environmental impact. She added that it was considered that the proposal would not significantly affect the character or amenity of Ballater, with other protected green spaces remaining within the village.
- h) A member asked where waste would be disposed of. Planning Officer advised there was provision for a public waste disposal site on site.
- i) A member proposed a site visit to the application site. There was no seconder.

15. The Applicant, Neil Duncan and the Agent, Alister Bean addressed the Committee.

16. The Committee were invited to ask questions for clarity. The following points were raised:

- a) A member raised concerns about potential overlooking of neighbouring properties. Neil Duncan acknowledged that the site is currently more open following recent tree removal but explained that the proposal includes new boundary hedging, which is intended to improve privacy. He added that mature beech hedging could be established relatively quickly to provide effective screening.
- b) A member asked how privacy and noise would be managed, particularly in the interim before new screening was established. Neil Duncan noted that existing features, including mature trees and a boundary wall, already provide some screening and noise mitigation. He also highlighted that the site will operate under strict noise controls, including no noise after 10pm, consistent with the nearby caravan park.
- c) Concern was raised about how the site would be managed to ensure that only suitable campervans with onboard facilities use the site. Neil Duncan



advised that online booking would be required, clearly setting out vehicle specifications, and that any vehicle arriving that does not meet these requirements would be asked to leave. He explained that site oversight would be supported by a volunteer warden system, with strong backing from golf club members, helping to manage and enforce site rules.

- d) A member asked if the Golf Club would have to apply for a caravan site license. Alistair Bean confirmed they will have to apply for a caravan license.
- e) Question was raised about whether alternative locations within the golf club's land were considered. The applicant confirmed that a range of options were explored in consultation with members. Alternative ideas included siting campervans elsewhere on the course; however, these were ruled out due to access issues and safety concerns (eg stray golf balls). The current proposal was selected following member input and assessment of the most viable option for the club.

17. Angus Davidson (Objector) addressed the Committee.

18. The Committee were invited to ask the speaker for clarity. The following points were raised:

- a) None.

19. The Planning Officer was invited to come back on points raised during speakers' presentations.

- a) None.

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

- a) Concerns were raised about risks to life due to the strong objections from SEPA and the Council's Flood Risk Team.
- b) A view was expressed that, while there is sympathy for the golf club's position, it would be inappropriate to disregard clear professional advice identifying a risk to life, and that there is insufficient justification to support the application at this time.
- c) It was acknowledged that the proposal may have some impact on neighbouring properties, though the extent is uncertain. The application was recognised as delivering significant community and economic benefits in an area with limited facilities. It was noted that the proposal aligns with other relevant National Park planning policies. While flood risk is clearly identified, a



robust mitigation plan has been put forward. On balance, support was expressed for the officer's recommendation to approve, subject to conditions.

- d) Support was expressed despite acknowledging concerns about flood risk and objections, noting confidence in the mitigation plan, recognition of demand for facilities in Ballater, and the proposal's economic benefits and strong backing from the golf club and its members.
- e) Support was also expressed on the basis that a managed site is preferable to unmanaged motorhome parking elsewhere, with additional controls likely through licensing and proposed mitigation measures, making this a finely balanced but acceptable proposal.
- f) It was also noted that, while there are significant concerns around flood risk, reassurance was taken from the role of Scottish Ministers in reviewing the decision, alongside improvements to neighbour privacy, leading to support for the application on balance.
- g) A member emphasised that the committee should focus on the application before them and prioritise health and safety, noting strong concerns from SEPA and the Council, and concluding that, despite understanding the golf club's position, the site is not appropriate for this development.
- h) A member asked who would be responsible for issuing and acting on flood warnings. The Planning Officer advised that SEPA and the Met Office provide three- to five-day forecasts. If a flood warning is issued, the emergency services are notified and the local resilience group would inform the golf club who would then oversee the response, supported by an emergency evacuation plan. Neil Duncan added that, on receipt of a flood warning, the Fire and Rescue Commander, who is also currently the golf club's head greenkeeper, would notify the community council, caravan park and golf club. He explained that a responsibility matrix is in place for the evacuation procedure, with responsibility resting with him as Chair, the Vice President, three other committee members and the club's Operations Manager. He provided reassurance that named individuals would be responsible for triggering and managing evacuation procedures.
- i) A member asked if the operations manager was a paid member of staff. Nail Duncan confirmed that this was correct.
- j) Bill Lobban proposed an amendment to the Planning Officer's recommendation to refuse this application on the basis of flood risk as



indicated by SEPA and Aberdeenshire council. This was seconded by Derek Ross.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.55 pm to allow for members to work up the amendment with the lawyer, Peter Ferguson, Harper McLeod LLP.

Gavin Miles joined the meeting at 12.55 pm.

Dr Hannah Grist left the meeting at 1.00pm.

The meeting reconvened at 1.07pm.

21. Bill Lobban proposed an amendment to refuse the application as it is contrary to NPF4 policy 22 and to the LDP policy 10, and the application does not fall within any of the exceptions of the aforementioned policies, and despite the proposed mitigation and its compliance with other policies, it is the advice of SEPA and Aberdeenshire Council's flood team that the application should be refused. This was seconded by Derek Ross.

22. The Committee proceeded to a vote. The results were as follows:



	ORIGINAL MOTION (Officer's Recommendation)	AMENDMENT	ABSTAIN
Geva Blackett	✓		
Sandy Bremner	✓		
Jackie Brierton	✓		
Peter Cosgrove	✓		
Kenny Deans	✓		
Russell Jones	✓		
Bill Lobban		✓	
Steve Micklewright		✓	
Lauren MacCallum	✓		
Eleanor Mackintosh		✓	
Ian McLaren	✓		
Fiona McLean	✓		
Ann Ross		✓	
Derek Ross		✓	
Michael Williamson	✓		
Total	10	5	0

23. The Committee approved the application as per the officer's recommendation and for the application being notified to Scottish Ministers due to an outstanding objection by a government agency (SEPA) in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Notification of Applications) (Scotland) Direction 2009.

24. Action Point arising: None

Geva Blackett left the meeting at 1.11pm

Paul Gibb returned to the meeting at 1.11pm



Agenda Item 7

Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2026/0098/DET

Section 42 application to vary condition 8 of 2023/0267/DET – Erection of a distillery, 3No. Warehouses, access, parking, offices, boreholes

At U220 250M Southeast of Spey Dam, Laggan

Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions

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

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

- a) None raised.

27. The Applicant John McDonaugh and the Agent David Campbell were available to answer questions.

28. The Committee were invited to discuss the report. The following point was raised:

- a) Praise given to the applicants for the application and comment made that it would be good for the area.

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

30. Action Point arising: None

Agenda Item 8

Application for Detailed Planning Permission 2026/0060/DET

Install additional mountain biking downhill run on the existing buzzard lift (shown as trail 4)

At The Lecht Ski Centre, Corgarff, Strathdon, Aberdeenshire, AB36 8YP

Recommendation: Approve Subject to Conditions

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

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

- a) Concern raised that the last MTB tracks at the site took 10 years to blend in, and reassurance sought that this would not be the case this time. Planning Officer advised the Environmental Clerk of Works would be on site and would



need to keep close eye on it. In addition, our Enforcement Officer, would also keep a close eye on the development.

- b) With reference to paragraph 2 of the report, where reference to Special Protection Area (SPA) is made, this should be amended to Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Planning Officer apologised and agreed to correct it.

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

- a) A member commented that the application was about sustaining a well known business in area and helping it to thrive.
- b) A member expressed support for the application noting that they would want to see the business diversify.

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

31. Action Point arising:

- i. **At para 28b – References to Ladder Hills SPA to be corrected to Ladder Hills SAC in the officer's report.**

Agenda Item 9

AOCB

32. David Berry, Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer gave the following update on the Local Development Plan (LDP):

- a) Call for sites and ideas would be closing today, Friday 12 June 2026, thereafter the team would begin assessing submissions
- b) Outcome of Evidence Report 'gatecheck' was still awaited - DPEA target date was 7 July 2026. A further update would be brought to the next meeting.

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

Date of next meeting

34. The public business of the meeting concluded at 1.36pm

35. Date of next meeting 28 August 2026