For decision

Title: **Local Development Plan – Development Plan Scheme 2026**

Prepared by: **Dan Harris, Planning Manager**

Purpose

This paper seeks approval of the Development Plan Scheme 2026, as set out in Annex 1.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

a) Approve the Development Plan Scheme 2026.

Strategic context

1. The Development Plan Scheme is an important part of the Local Development Plan (LDP) preparation process. It outlines the timetable for producing the next LDP and includes a participation statement which explains how and when stakeholders will be involved in its production.

2. The Park Authority is required to update its Development Plan Scheme every year. The initial Development Plan Scheme for the next LDP was approved by the Board on 23 June 2023, and the last annual update was approved on 28 November 2025. The Development Plan Scheme 2026, as set out in Annex 1, represents the third annual update to the initial Development Plan Scheme.

Scope of the Development Plan Scheme

3. The key components of the Development Plan Scheme are its timetable and participation statement.

4. The timetable outlines the key stages of the LDP preparation process, identifying the years and months in which each stage is expected to take place. In line with

relevant guidance, the timetable presents this information in the format of financial year quarters.

5. The participation statement outlines when consultation on the LDP is expected to take place, with whom and its likely form, and the steps to be undertaken to involve the public at large. The Park Authority sought the views of Community Councils / Associations and young people, via the Cairngorms Youth Action Team, on the content of the participation statement when the initial Development Plan Scheme was prepared in 2023. There are no changes to the content of the participation statement in the Development Plan Scheme 2026. However, the timescales for undertaking some of the consultation activities have been amended to reflect the updated timetable for preparing the LDP.

Updates to the LDP timetable

6. The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 state that if the timetable included in an updated Development Plan Scheme differs from the timetable in the previous version, the planning authority must identify the changes and the reasons for them.

7. The Development Plan Scheme 2026 contains amendments to the timetable in the previous Development Plan Scheme. The main reason for these changes is a greater volume of work, and therefore more time taken, to produce the Evidence Report than was previously anticipated. This additional work was undertaken in response to feedback from key stakeholders and based on the experiences of other local planning authorities at the Evidence Report 'gatecheck' stage. The additional time taken to produce the Evidence Report and successfully pass the 'gatecheck' assessment has had knock-on implications for the timing of subsequent stages of plan production.

8. The timescales for publishing the LDP have also been updated to take account of the timetable for preparation of the next National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP). The consultation on the draft Partnership Plan is currently underway, as approved by the Board on 13 October 2026. The Partnership Plan sets the strategic context for the LDP, and it is therefore important that consultation on the LDP takes place after the consultation on and the adoption of the Partnership Plan.

9. Scottish Ministers have indicated that they expect all planning authorities to have a new LDP in place by around May 2028. The updated timetable continues to meet this expectation.

Strategic policy consideration

10. The Park Authority has a statutory duty to adopt and publish the Development Plan Scheme. The Development Plan Scheme 2026 set out in Annex 1 has been prepared in accordance with Scottish Government's Local Development Planning Guidance, which was published in May 2023.

Strategic risk management

11. While no risk is posed by the adoption of the Development Plan Scheme itself, there are risks to the LDP's timetable for preparation. Notably, the timescales for the examination of the Proposed LDP are outside the direct control of the Park Authority.

12. Any significant delay to the timetable is likely to present a risk to the ability to meet Scottish Ministers' expectations of having a new LDP in place by around May 2028. An internal programme board is in place to co-ordinate the development of the Partnership Plan and the LDP. This will monitor and manage the above risks insofar as it is possible. The Board will be kept up to date on the progress of the LDP's preparation, and the Development Plan Scheme will continue to be updated annually.

Success measures

13. Adoption of the new LDP by the Park Authority Board and its subsequent delivery.

Next steps

14. Once the Development Plan Scheme 2026 is approved by the Board, copies of it will be:
    a) Published on the Park Authority's website.
    b) Placed in each public library and local authority office in the National Park.
    c) Emailed to each Community Council and Community Association in the National Park.

d) Emailed to Scottish Ministers.

Supporting information

15. Annex 1 – Proposed Development Plan Scheme 2026

Dan Harris
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danharris@cairngorms.co.uk