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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:

Erection of Discovery Hub, Learning Hub and Hilltop Hub and alterations to visitor centre at Highland Wildlife Park Kincraig Highland PH21 INL

**REFERENCE:** 2021/0208/DET

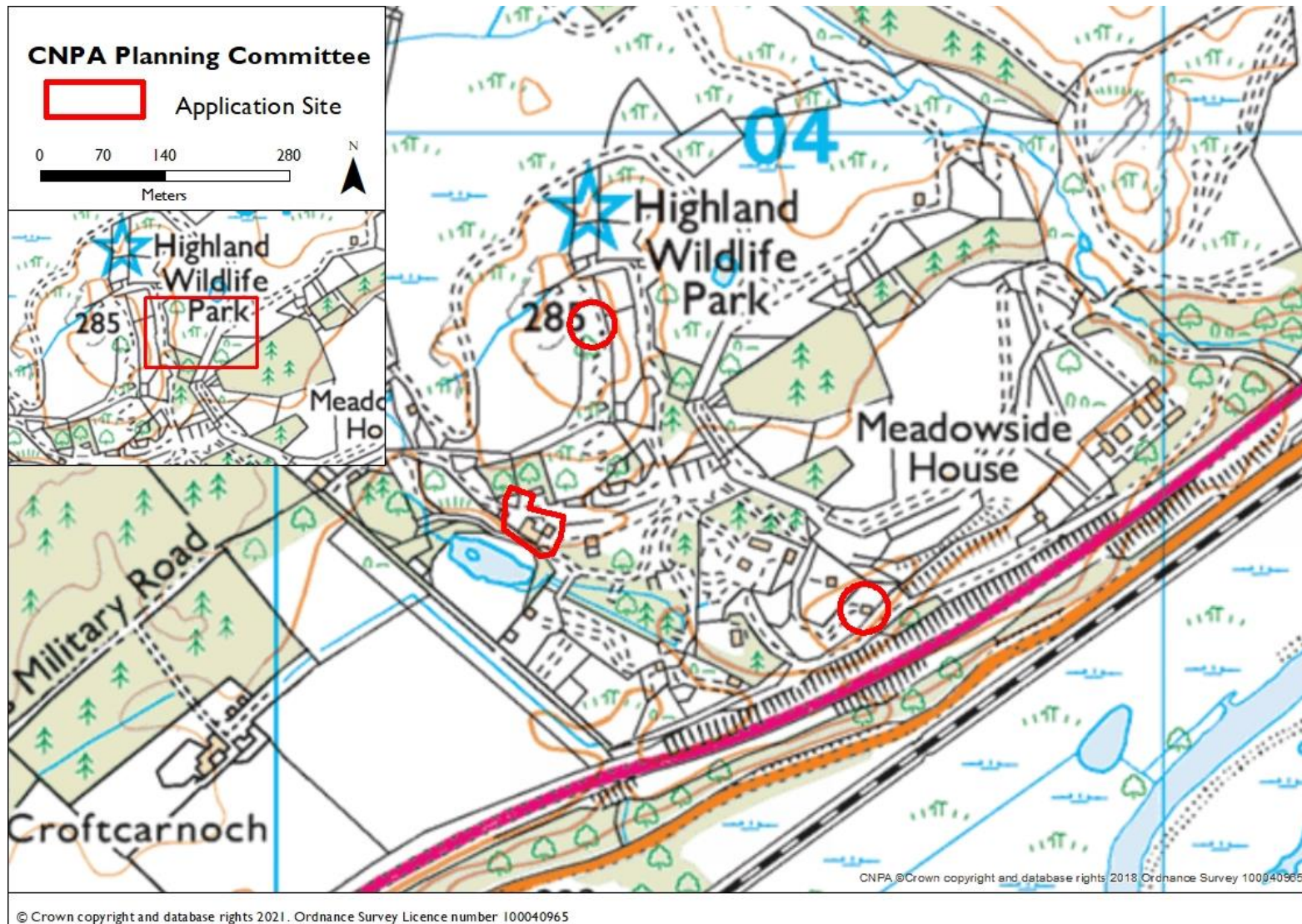
**APPLICANT:** Gemma Mudie, RZSS

**DATE CALLED-IN:** 21 June 2021

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve subject to conditions and developer contribution

**CASE OFFICER:** Stephanie Wade, Planning Officer

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## **SITE DESCRIPTION, PROPOSAL AND HISTORY**

### **Site Description**

1. The application site lies within the Highland Wildlife Park which is located adjacent to the A9 trunk road at approximately 3km south of Kincaig. The Highland Wildlife Park is an established 105 hectare safari park run by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. It is home to a wide range of nature and non-native animal species which visitors can come to see. The Wildlife Park takes its main access from the B9152, via a pass under the A9 which also serves an adjacent quarry and holiday accommodation. The site is largely a mix of grassland, scrub and woodland with a variety of animal enclosures and limited built development (concentrated in the south west). There is a large circular main drive through the reserve covering the north and eastern part of the Wildlife Park in a circuit that connects to the main visitor hub (in the south west) with a café, shop and pedestrian paths connecting different animal enclosures. There is a main surfaced vehicle track which runs through the open reserve part of the Park.

### **Proposal**

2. The drawings and documents associated with this application are listed below and are available on the Cairngorms National Park Authority website unless noted otherwise:

<http://www.eplanningcnpa.co.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=QUSTR7SI0CH00>

<b>Title</b>	<b>Drawing Number</b>	<b>Date on Plan*</b>	<b>Date Received</b>
<b>PLANS</b>			
Plan - Location Plan	2467 AG(0)100	09/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Discovery Hub (Visitor Centre) Floor Plan and Roof Plan as Existing	2467 AG(0)03	02/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Discovery Hub Site Plan as Existing	2467 AG(0)01	07/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Learning Hub Site Plan as Existing	2467 AG(0)11	07/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Hilltop Hub Site Plan as Existing	2467 AG(0)21	07/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Discovery Hub Elevations and Sections as Proposed	2467 AG(0)06 Rev.A	25/11/21	25/11/21
Plan- Elevations and View of the Alterations to the Existing Visitor Centre	2467 AG(0)07	22/11/21	25/11/21

Plan - Learning Hub Elevations and Sections as Proposed	2467 AG(0)14	02/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Hilltop Hub Elevations and Sections as Proposed	2467 AG(0)24	02/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Learning Hub Proposed Plans	2467 AG(0)13	02/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Hilltop Hub Proposed Plans	2467 AG(0)23	02/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Discovery Hub Ground Floor Plan as Proposed	2467 AG(0)04	02/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Discovery Hub Roof Plan as Proposed	2467 AG(0)05	02/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Discovery Hub Site Plan as Proposed	2467 AG(0)02	07/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Learning Hub Site Plan as Proposed	2467 AG(0)12	07/06/21	21/06/21
Plan - Hilltop Hub Site Plan as Proposed	2467 AG(0)22	07/06/21	21/06/21
Plan – Tree Survey Priorities	0117(96)-01 – Tree	01/10/18	02/09/21
Plan – Parking Layout Plan	PP01 Rev.A	11/11/21	12/11/21
<b>SUPPORTING INFORMATION</b>			
Other – Tree Schedule Survey		01/09/18	02/09/21
Other – Design and Access Statement		01/08/21	02/09/21
Other – Landscape Maintenance/ Management Plan		10/12/19	02/09/21
Other – Outline Landscape Specification	1081	10/12/19	02/09/21
Other - Transportation Assessment		01/08/21	02/09/21
Other – Bat Survey Report	21033-002 V.1	20/09/21	21/09/21
Other – Further response to Transport Planning comments		01/08/21	14/10/21
Other – Further response to Transport Planning comments Part 2		15/10/21	15/10/21
Other – Drainage Strategy	E12753/WR De/Doc/52/ 001 P01	22/10/21	25/10/21

Other – A Conservation Action Plan for the Biodiversity and Ecosystems of the Highland Wildlife Park			26/07/21
Other – Economic Impact Assessment		12/10/19	02/09/21
Other - Discovery Hub 07 - Exhibition Gallery Interior			21/06/21
Other - Discovery Hub 06 - Exhibition Gallery View to Entrance			21/06/21
Other - Learning Hub 13 - Interior Classroom View			21/06/21
Other - Learning Hub 14 - Interior Classroom with Folding Wall			21/06/21
Other - Hilltop Hub 25 - Interior Viewing Windows			21/06/21
Other - Discovery Hub 04 - Outdoor Exhibition Area			21/06/21
Other - Discovery Hub 03 - Pine Hoverfly Window			21/06/21
Other - Learning Hub 12 - View from South West			21/06/21
Other - Discovery Hub 05 - Looking Back Through the Exhibition Canopy			21/06/21
Other - Hilltop Hub 22 - View of Hub and Cairn from North East			21/06/21
Other - Hilltop Hub 24 - View of Interior Display			21/06/21
Other - Discovery Hub 02 - View to Main Entrance			21/06/21
Other - Learning Hub 11 - View to Main Entrance			21/06/21
Other - Discovery Hub 01 - View to New Building			21/06/21
Other - Hilltop Hub 23 - View to Viewing Windows from South West			21/06/21
Other - Hilltop Hub 21 - View towards Entrance			21/06/21

\*Where no specific day of month has been provided on the plan, the system defaults to the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.

3. This application for planning permission proposes the erection of a Discovery Hub building, Learning Hub building and a Hilltop Hub building with alterations to the existing visitor centre. The proposal is sought to improve the existing visitor facilities at the site to create expanded facilities for disabled visitors and family groups. The proposal would continue to be served by the existing access junction onto the B9152 and no changes are proposed to the existing number of parking spaces on site, although a reorganisation of the main car park to include a hard and soft landscaping scheme to form an appropriate setting to the new building, improve the appearance and amenity of the main car park and to enhance the biodiversity of the existing site area is proposed.
4. The three buildings are proposed to be erected throughout the site and are described, individually in more detail below:

### **Discovery Hub and alterations to the existing visitor centre**

5. The proposed Discovery Hub building is to be erected to the western elevation of the existing visitor centre complex and spans over the existing internal vehicular track in a northerly direction to encompass land currently used as the Crane enclosure. The building takes form from a structure of mono-pitched roofs with elements open to the air and other enclosed sections. The building is proposed to contain the interactive exhibition and the Pine Hover-fly display and conservation facility. With the covered section of the building, an outdoor exhibition space is proposed which links across to a new entrance to the existing visitor centre. The enclosed elevations of the Discovery Hub are proposed with a natural stone base with vertical timber cladding for the upper sections of the elevations.
6. The roof structure is proposed as a dark green zinc, standing seam roof. The extension of the structure over the vehicular road is proposed to form a gateway feature and steps down to protect the outdoor exhibition area which has local stone and a timber floor. The height of the roof structure over the road has been designed to accommodate emergency service vehicle heights. Regarding the existing visitor centre, alterations include the erection of small extensions on the north elevation to create a new entrance lobby; on the east elevation to create a shop store and on the southern elevation to expand the existing restaurant area with an L-shaped conservatory extension, in the space where the covered outdoor seating area previously occupied. The materials will generally tie in with the existing building and the shallower roofs to the south are proposed with a dark grey Sarnafil single ply membrane roof to keep the extensions low key. No water or foul drainage facilities are proposed to be installed within the Discovery Hub as these facilities are already provided within the existing, adjoining buildings.

### **The Learning Hub**

7. The proposed Learning Hub is to be erected within the southern area on the Park in place of the existing single storey, Education Bothy. The building is proposed with a larger footprint than that existing, to contain offices, a small meeting area and a large multi-purpose classroom which can be divided into smaller temporary spaces. The structure takes form from a single storey, curved building under a mono-pitched roof. The elevations are proposed as natural stone with timber cladding above and the roof

is proposed to be sedum. A raised decked area is proposed to be added to the south-eastern elevation to create a viewing area and will have a glass balustrade. Regarding drainage measures, the building is proposed to have composting toilets and water free urinals. Grey water is proposed to be collected, filtered and processed alongside the rainwater catchment.

### The Hilltop Hub

8. The proposed Hilltop Hub is to be erected within the central area of the Park on the knoll, to the north of the Discovery Hub. The area is accessed via the footpath network and would replace the existing covered seating structure. The proposed building would take form of a single storey, reverse “S”, to be erected on the knoll and adjacent to the existing cairn. The building is proposed to provide a covered viewpoint area, day-time observation and listening facility. The curved form provide seating around the existing cairn. Like the other Hubs, the building is proposed to be clad with timber cladding, under a sedum, mono-pitched roof. Excess rainwater is proposed to be diverted to French drains leading into adjacent meadows.
9. The application is supported by the following information:
  - a) **Design and Access Statement and Visualisations:** Provides a written description of the proposal together with its accessibility and design rationale. The document states that the proposed improvements will create an inclusive amenity and facility for visitors with a refurbished and enlarged Restaurant and Shop, and 3 bespoke Hubs comprising a fully interactive interpretive space, teaching facility and a wildlife monitoring hub. Various visualisations of the proposed works have been provided to provide a visual aid to the proposal.
  - b) **Ecological Information:** A Bat Survey was undertaken on the buildings at the Visitor Centre and at the Education Bothy. Bats were recorded roosting at both buildings in low numbers and categorised as non-breeding roosts. A license supported by a Species Protection Plan is recommended to allow the works to take place. A Conservation Action Plan for the Biodiversity and Ecosystems of the Highland Wildlife Park has also been submitted which covers the full survey undertaken of the Wildlife Park in terms of biodiversity and habitat and its conservation management programme.
  - c) **Tree Information:** A Tree schedule has been submitted alongside a Tree Survey Plan. The Design and Access Statement also includes information on proposed works to trees. The Document confirms that for the erection of the Discovery Hub, five trees are proposed to be removed. Out of the five trees, four are of good condition with a projected life of 10-20 years and one is already scheduled to removal. The document confirms that compensatory planting will take place elsewhere on site for their removal.
  - d) **Transport Assessment:** includes information on how the site is proposed to utilise the existing access arrangements with no changes proposed to the current access onto the road. The report confirms that although trip numbers are predicted to increase over time in reference to the Wildlife Park’s overall visitor growth predictions, this is not directly related to the proposed development which

is not considered to provide an attraction in itself to attract more visitors, instead it will support the Park as a whole experience for visitors. The document also references the existing public transport links to the site and pedestrian/cycle access routes.

- e) **Economic Impact Assessment:** outlines the overall of the operation costs of the Park at present together with the planned development projects, of which this planning application forms part of. The Assessment gives a performance overview of the Park with visits figures over the last five years being quoted. The Assessment notes that excluding the Hamish the polar bear “effect”, recent visitor number trends have not fully reflected the growth in visitors that Scotland and the Cairngorms National Park have achieved in recent years and this can be attributed largely to the lack of investment in recent years in the Park’s infrastructure whilst competing attractions have been introduced or improved. An additional 20.4 FTE jobs would be created at the attraction following the implementation of this development. It is concluded that the development will help to support the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Economic Strategy.
- f) **Drainage Information:** A Drainage Strategy has been submitted, confirms that the existing site’s foul drainage is drained to a septic tank and surface water arrangements drain to watercourse and the ground. For the proposed surface water arrangements, the Discovery Hub is proposed to be served by a series of water butts to collect roof runoff which will be reused throughout the site. An overflow to the nearby lochan will be put in place in the event of exceeding storm event. The proposed discharge flow rate will be restricted to the greenfield runoff rate and attenuation will be provided for a 200 year storm plus 40% allowance for climate change. A filter trench system is proposed for the treatment and storage of water for the development. The Learning Hub is proposed to have its surface water reused, by using a rainwater harvesting system with the tank sized to provide attenuation for a 200 year storm event. The Hilltop Hub is proposed to contain surface water within the site using a soakaway system. The soakaway system is proposed with the same discharge flow rate as the other sections and will be treatment prior to infiltration.

10. Plans of the proposal are included within **Appendix I**.

## History

- 11. There have been a number of small planning applications at the Highland Wildlife Park including erecting a polytunnel (09/00032/FULBS), installing a small pedestrian access (14/02893/FUL), extending the kitchen building at the café (14/02789/FUL) and constructing a road and car park (16/04258/FUL). More recent permissions for the site include application 2020/0177/DET for the “Construction of enclosures, siting of storage container, and erection of fencing” which gained permission in August 2020 and determined by the CNPA. Earlier this year Highland Council granted planning permission for the “Siting of 3 portable building” (20/04379/FUL) and for the “erection of wild cat quarantine enclosures” (21/02997/FUL).



## DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

### Policies

<b>National Policy</b>	Scottish Planning Policy 2014	
<b>Strategic Policy</b>	Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2017 - 2022	
<b>Local Plan Policy</b>	Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan (2021) Those policies relevant to the assessment of this application are marked with a cross	
POLICY 1	NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT	
POLICY 2	SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH	<b>X</b>
POLICY 3	DESIGN AND PLACEMAKING	<b>X</b>
POLICY 4	NATURAL HERITAGE	<b>X</b>
POLICY 5	LANDSCAPE	<b>X</b>
POLICY 6	THE SITING AND DESIGN OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT	
POLICY 7	RENEWABLE ENERGY	
POLICY 8	OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION	
POLICY 9	CULTURAL HERITAGE	
POLICY 10	RESOURCES	<b>X</b>
POLICY 11	DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS	<b>X</b>

12. All new development proposals require to be assessed in relation to policies contained in the adopted Local Development Plan. The full wording of policies can be found at:

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CNPA-LDP-2021-web.pdf>

### Planning Guidance

13. Supplementary guidance also forms part of the Local Development Plan and provides more details about how to comply with the policies. Guidance that is relevant to this application is marked with a cross.

Policy 1	New Housing Development Non-Statutory Guidance (2015)	
Policy 2	Supporting Economic Growth Non-Statutory Guidance	<b>X</b>
Policy 3	Sustainable Design Non-Statutory Guidance (2015)	<b>X</b>
Policy 4	Natural Heritage Supplementary Guidance	<b>X</b>
Policy 5	Landscape Non-Statutory Guidance	<b>X</b>
Policy 7	Renewable Energy Supplementary Guidance	
Policy 8	Sport and Recreation Non-Statutory Guidance	
Policy 9	Cultural Heritage Non-Statutory Guidance	
Policy 10	Resources Non-Statutory Guidance	<b>X</b>
Policy 11	Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance (2015)	<b>X</b>

## CONSULTATIONS

### Summary of the main issues raised by consultees

14. **Scottish Water** has no objection to this planning application however this does not confirm that the proposal can currently be serviced and advises that the proposal would be fed by water from the Aviemore Water Treatment works, but there is no public waste water infrastructure within the vicinity of the proposal.
15. **Highland Council Flood Risk Management Team** originally had a holding objection to the application due to the request for further drainage information to be submitted in the form of a drainage impact assessment. This was required to demonstrate that the drainage of the proposals would not increase the flood risk to others or any pluvial flows would be suitably controlled.
16. Following submission of additional information, the Team have removed their objection noting that the submitted information outlines drainage for the new and altered structures as well as during the construction phase with drainage calculations provided for key elements. The Team welcomes the proposals to collect rainwater (in varying amounts at several locations) for re-use throughout the park, which would appear to enhance the park's overall sustainability.
17. **Highland Council Transport Planning Team** also had a holding objection until further information was submitted to allow the Team to review the impact the proposal would have on the road network and road safety. Following the submission of this documentation, and given the urgency of the development due to funding deadlines, The Transport Planning Team confirm removal of their objection subject to conditions covering: the provision of an Event Management Plan, provision of footways/waiting areas built to an adoptable standard within the adopted road verge to serve the bus stops; cycle parking for visitors; works to clear vegetation to improve the existing visibility splays and junction improvements at the access to the site and the B9152. A financial contribution is also sought for the provision of realtime information display at the bus stop with a financial contribution for its continued maintenance.
18. **Highland Council Contaminated Land Officer** has no objections.
19. **Highland Council Environmental Health Officer** was consulted but provided no comments on the scheme.
20. **CNPA Landscape Officer** considers that the proposal would relate to the local landscape character and SLQs of the National Park and would therefore not result in any significant adverse landscape and visual effects. The Officer has the following comments on each element:
  - a) **Discovery Hub and existing centre:** the proposal would generally have a positive landscape effect by creating a clear public entrance to the park and providing some cohesion to the existing mix of buildings. Some structures will be large and the zinc roofs will be prominent locally, but these should appear to fit with the steep slope and existing trees behind (to the north).

- b) **Hill Top Hub:** This element would create a new wildlife viewing structure similar in scale and function to the others within the wildlife park. It would however, be much larger than the existing shelter on site and seem more imposing upon the small knoll on which it would be sited. In addition, its reverse “s” form would contrast to the point feature of the existing knoll and cairn and divide views to either the west or east rather than encouraging 360 degree views. Nonetheless, these effects would only be localised and there are other locations across the wildlife park from which the surrounding landscape can be viewed.
  - c) **Learning Hub:** The proposal would be much larger than the existing building although it would appear fairly discrete within the wider landscape due to being located on the edge of the strath, fitting within a patchy pattern of open spaces, and trees and relating in form to the horizontal emphasis of the adjacent, wide strath floor. The proposed viewing deck would extend above an existing steep slope that comprises mixed native trees, shrubs and grasses, and which provides a spatial and visual buffer between the site and the A9 and other viewpoints to the east. The proposed viewing deck structure and under-shadow could be prominent from the east if this buffer is compromised and thus it will be important to confirm the following: how the steep slope and its trees will be protected during the proposed construction works; what vegetation will be retained, planted or reinstated immediately adjacent to and under the viewing deck; and how the vegetation on the slope will be managed in the future.
- 21. The officer requests planning conditions to confirm: the external materials for the buildings; details of the sedum roof species and management; a final landscaping plan with all soft and hard landscaping detailed; construction method statement.
  - 22. **CNPA Ecology Officer** has no objections to the scheme. The Officer considers that the proposal will not negatively impact on the existing ecology of the areas where the development is proposed, which are areas of short mown grass, existing hard standing and include the area which is now the Eurasian Crane enclosure. A Conservation Plan for the Biodiversity and Ecosystems of the Highland Wildlife Park has been produced and demonstrates the value of the overall site for species and habitats. The areas to be developed will be landscaped to fit within the programme for enhancement and education and this is welcomed. The Officer welcomes the surface water drainage proposals but notes the opportunity to use a rain garden instead of a French drain at the Hilltop Hub. The Officer requests the submission of a Bat Species Protection Plan, and further information on hard and soft landscaping.
  - 23. **Kincraig Community Council** have not provided any specific comments on the scheme.

## REPRESENTATIONS

- 24. The application was advertised when first submitted and no letters of public representation were received.

## APPRAISAL

25. The main planning considerations are: the principle of development; the impact upon landscape, siting and design; the environmental impacts; amenity impacts; access and sustainable transport issues; servicing impacts; and developer contributions.

### Principle of Development

26. The development looks to extend the visitor facilities at an existing visitor/tourist attraction and as such, **Policy 2.3: Other Tourism and Leisure Development** applies. The policy supports development which enhances formal tourism and leisure based business facilities and attractions where:
- a) It has no adverse environmental or amenity impacts on the site or neighbouring areas; and
  - b) It makes a positive contribution to the experience of visitors; and
  - c) It supports or contributes to a year round economy.
27. The Highland Wildlife Park is a well-established visitor attraction within the National Park which has been operating since 1972. The Park is operated by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and is open to the public, throughout the entire year. The development as outlined within this application is proposed to expand the existing visitor facilities and provide a new gateway to the Cairngorms highlighting the conservation work of the RZSS in the local area including their ongoing protection and conservation work for endangered species. The development would therefore make a positive contribution to the experience of visitors. An additional 20.4 FTE jobs would be created at the attraction following the implementation of this development. The proposal would help to support the year round operation of the attraction and as such, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable, in compliance with **Policy 2: Economic Growth**, subject to the consideration of the other material planning considerations as outlined below.

### Landscape Impacts, Siting and Design

28. **Policy 5: Landscape** of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 presumes against development which does not conserve and enhance the landscape character and special qualities of the National Park and in particular the setting of the proposed development.
29. The proposal includes the erection of three new hub buildings to replace existing built infrastructure on site together with alterations to the existing visitor centre. The proposal lies within the Insh Marshes landscape character area for which includes extensive wetland, marsh and pools extending across the floor of the wide stretch of Strathspey, framed by wide terraces and side slopes that are largely covered by semi-natural woodland interspersed with some open farmland.
30. CNPA Landscape Officer considers that the proposal would relate to the local landscape character and SLQs of the National Park and would therefore not result in any significant adverse landscape and visual effects. The design and materials palette of

the proposed structures are considered to be appropriate to the area for their intended purpose subject to planning conditions to confirm the final finish of the external building materials together with details of the sedum roof species and management scheme. The proposed Discovery Hub would have a positive landscape effect creating a clear public entrance to the Park and will provide some cohesion to the existing mix of buildings. The siting of the buildings are considered to have localised landscape effects which would be seen in context of the existing infrastructure of the Wildlife Park. Although outline landscaping details have been provided, it is recommended that a final landscaping plan with all soft and hard landscaping detailed together with a construction method statement are conditioned to ensure the finer details of the scheme are appropriate and mitigation being undertaken by way of additional planting and existing vegetation protection during construction works. Subject to the inclusion of the stated planning conditions, the proposal is considered to comply with Policy 5: Landscape of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

## Environmental Impacts

31. **Policy 4: Natural Heritage** of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 seeks to ensure that there is no adverse impact upon designated areas, protected species or biodiversity whilst **Policy 10: Resources** sets out the need to fully consider impacts on flooding and water resources.
32. The connectivity of the proposal to any European sites has been reviewed with regards to the River Spey SAC, Insh Marshes SAC and the Insh Marshes SPA which are all situated to the south of the proposed development with the A9 and scrub habitat between. As there is no connectivity, a Habitats Regulations Appraisal has not been required on this occasion.
33. Regarding protected species and habitats, the CNPA Ecology Officer has no objections to the scheme and notes that the proposal would not have a negative impact on any protected species or habitats in or around the site. The Officer does require the submission of a Bat Species Protection Plan, refined landscaping plan and clarification on surface drainage proposals by way of planning condition. The Officer welcomes the biodiversity enhancement for CNAP species through the creation of new wildflower habitat in the Hilltop and Learning Hub areas creating more ecological connectivity to existing areas.
34. A total of five trees are scheduled for removal to make way for the Discovery Hub building and a planning condition is recommended to ensure compensatory planting takes place elsewhere within the site.
35. The proposal will enhance the site for biodiversity on the local scale and subject to the inclusion of the planning conditions, the proposal accords with Policy 4: Natural Heritage of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.
36. Regarding other environmental matters, it is confirmed that the site lies outwith any indicated areas of fluvial or coastal flooding during a 1 in 200 year return period storm event, although the site lies within localised areas of pluvial flooding during a 1 in 200

year return period storm event. The Highland Council Flood Risk Management Team has no objection to the grounds of flood risk to the Discovery Hub, Hilltop Hub and to the Learning Hub. The Team also confirm that the drainage proposals would not increase flood risk to others. The Highland Council Contaminated Land Officer has no comment on the application. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy 10: Resources of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

## **Amenity**

37. **Policy 3: Design and Placemaking** of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 seeks to ensure that new development protects amenity currently enjoyed by neighbouring occupants to development sites. The proposed additional buildings are located at an appropriate distance to the nearest residential dwellings, within the established key infrastructure areas of the Park. On this basis the proposal is not considered to give rise to any adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring land uses in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

## **Access and Sustainable Transport Issues and Servicing**

38. **Policy 3: Design and Placemaking** of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 states that all new development must include an appropriate means of access, egress and space for off street parking. The proposal as presented, includes no changes to the current vehicular access arrangements nor the number of parking spaces on site, although a slight reconfiguration of the main car park is proposed.
39. The Highland Council Transport Planning Team have reviewed the submitted information and seek improvements to the junction and bus infrastructure on the B9152 to mitigate the potential increase in traffic arising from the proposal and general visitor growth of the Park to bring the existing infrastructure to an appropriate standard. The land on which the improvement works are to take place on, adjacent to the B9153, are part of the Transport Scotland A9 dualling compulsory purchase area, with improvements to the access and road drainage measures are outlined within that scheme. It is therefore recommended that planning conditions are attached to confirm the details of the junction improvements to ensure that the interim works do not prejudice any future A9 dualling junction improvements. Regarding the bus infrastructure improvements, a financial contribution is sought for the provision and ongoing maintenance of a real-time information display at the bus.
40. Policy 3: Design and Placemaking also sets out that new development should be designed to maintain and maximise all opportunities for responsible outdoor access including links into the existing path network. In this regard, improvements are recommended by planning condition for the provision of footways/waiting area to serve the bus stops and cycle parking for visitors to be installed. Subject these conditions being imposed and the contribution towards the bus infrastructure, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan in regard to road safety improvements and outdoor active travel improvements.

41. **Policy 10: Resources** of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 sets out the need for new development to be satisfactorily serviced and without harm to resources or the environment. The Highland Council Flood Risk Management Team has no objection to the drainage proposals and although the surface water measures proposed could be further enhanced to provide higher biodiversity gain, the CNPA Ecology Officer welcomes the surface drainage as submitted.
42. On this overall basis the proposal is considered to comply with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking and Policy 10: Resources of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 with regards to its servicing.

### **Developer Contributions**

43. **Policy 11: Developer Obligations** of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 states that where development creates a need to increase or improve public services, facilities or infrastructure, or mitigate adverse effects, the developer will be required to make a fair and reasonable contribution in cash or in kind towards additional costs or requirements.
44. The applicant has indicated their agreement to provide a developer contribution for the public transport infrastructure improvements at the bus stops serving the site by upfront payment. The development would not give rise to any other impact upon services or facilities on this occasion. Subject to the payment of the required developer contribution, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy 11: Developer Obligations of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

### **Other Issues Raised in Consultations and Representations**

45. All matters raised by consultees have been addressed above. No comments have been received from the Community Council on this occasion.

### **CONCLUSION**

46. The proposal for the upgrading of the existing site infrastructure at the Highland Wildlife Park will help to improve visitor experience whilst supporting the contribution this tourist attraction provides to the local economy. The proposal will enhance the site for biodiversity on the local scale but importantly through the creation of new educational exhibits such as the Pine hoverfly enclosure will significantly increase conservation communication about the importance of our Cairngorms Species and Habits in accordance with Local Development Plan Policies.
47. Any remaining points of detail that have not been sufficiently addressed will be resolved through the imposition of suitable conditions. Subject to these recommended conditions and the payment of the developer contribution, the proposed development is considered to comply with the policies contained within the adopted Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 and approval is therefore recommended.

## RECOMMENDATION

**That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to APPROVE the Erection of Discovery Hub, Learning Hub and Hilltop Hub and alterations to visitor centre at Highland Wildlife Park Kincraig Highland PH21 1NL subject to:**

- 1) Conclusion of an appropriate agreement or upfront payment regarding developer contribution in respect of sustainable travel improvements; and**
- 2) The following conditions:**

*Those conditions listed below in bold text are suspensive conditions, which require to be discharged prior to implementation of the development.*

### Conditions

1. **No development shall commence on site until a junction improvement scheme together with an implementation schedule have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority in consultation with the Highland Council Transport Planning Team. The scheme shall include:**
  - a) **Measures to prevent surface water from the access road flowing onto the B9152;**
  - b) **Kerbing on the radii at the junction to prevent damage to verges that should extend for a suitable distance along the B9152;**
  - c) **Positive drainage measures to prevent ponding at the edges of the B9152 in the vicinity of the junction with the access;**
  - d) **Works to clear vegetation to provide visibility splays of 2.4 metres by 215 metres.**

**The works shall thereafter be undertaken in strict accordance with the approved details and in accordance with the approved implementation schedule.**

**Reason:** In in the interests of road safety improvements to the existing road infrastructure in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

2. **No development shall commence on site until details of the arrangements for the provision of bus stop real-time information display have been submitted to and agreed in writing or confirmation that a developer contribution for this provision has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highland Council Transport Planning Team. The development shall not be brought into use until the approved details have been implemented.**



**Reason:** To be consistent with the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy to ensure that the development promotes sustainable transport methods in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

3. **No development shall commence on site until details of the installation of footways/waiting areas built to adoptable standards and within the adoptable road verge to serve the bus stops have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority in consultation with the Highland Council Transport Planning Team. The works shall thereafter be completed in strict accordance with the approved details and fully implemented prior to the first use of the buildings, hereby permitted.**

**Reason:** To ensure the development provides a safe access / waiting area throughout its delivery and to ensure that the increase in traffic arising from the growth the visitor attraction is mitigated against in the interests of road safety in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

4. **No development shall commence until an Event Management Plan has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority in consultation with the Highland Council Transport Planning Team. The plan should include:**
- a) **Roles and responsibilities;**
  - b) **Stewarding of queues;**
  - c) **Communication procedures - internal and external;**
  - d) **Signage;**
  - e) **Emergency vehicle access;**
  - f) **Access for pedestrians and cyclists;**
  - g) **Access for quarry and other users of the access road;**
  - h) **Number of traffic lanes to accommodate traffic volumes;**
  - i) **Capacity of queue lengths.**

**The development shall thereafter proceed in accordance with the approved Event Management Plan.**

**Reason:** To ensure that any extreme peaks of visitor traffic in the future is adequately managed within the site to prevent vehicles backing up onto the B9152 in the interests of road safety and in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

5. **No development shall commence on site until a Construction Method Statement (CMS) and programme of works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The CMS shall include, but not be limited to:**
- a) **The approach to site preparation, soils management, restoration and reinstatement;**
  - b) **Construction stage SUDs;**

- c) **Reference the bat species protection plans and how it will be adhered to during construction;**
- d) **Provide details of vegetation protection during the construction of the Education Hub decking area;**
- e) **Reference to the tree protection plan and measures;**
- f) **Construction pollution prevention measures;**
- g) **Programme of works.**

**The construction of the development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.**

**Reason:** The works are to be undertaken in an environmentally sensitive area. It is therefore necessary for a Construction Method Statement to be agreed prior to the commencement of any works to ensure that work on site proceeds without damage to the environment in accordance with Policy 4: Natural Heritage and Policy 10: Resources of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

6. **No development shall commence on site until a tree protection plan has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority. Thereafter the tree protection measures shall be installed on site in accordance with the approved tree protection plan and maintained in accordance with those details for the duration of construction.**

**Reason:** To ensure that trees adjacent to the developments, which contribute to the landscape character and biodiversity of the area are appropriately protected during construction works in accordance with Policy 4: Natural Heritage and Policy 5: Landscape of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

7. **No development shall commence until a Species Protection Plan for bats has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The Plan shall detail works undertaken to meet license requirements for destruction of roosts and also mitigation measures. The proposal shall thereafter be implemented in strict accordance with the approved Species Protection Plan.**

**Reason:** In order to ensure there is no adverse impact upon the European Protected Species of bats which have suitable foraging habitat within the area. Mitigation measures by way of the species protection plan are required in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking and Policy 4: Natural Heritage of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

8. **No development shall commence until a Landscape Plan and Maintenance programme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The documents shall include:**

- a) **Technical details of plants, planting operation, ground preparation and after care;**
- b) **Details of all hard and soft landscaping;**
- c) **Long term management of the landscaping maintenance of the site;**
- d) **Technical details for the compensatory wood planting including species, density, planting locations, fencing/ tubing protection measures, planting operations and maintenance.**

**The Landscape Plan shall be implemented in full, by a suitably qualified landscape consultant, during the first planting season, following commencement of construction work on site, or as otherwise agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority, and shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved maintenance programme.**

**Reason:** In accordance with the consultation comments received by the CNPA Landscape Officer, a landscaping scheme is required in accordance with Policy 4: Natural Heritage and Policy 5: Landscape of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan to ensure that the development delivers a richer set of micro habitats to aid biodiversity and to provide the required compensatory planting for the tree loss.

9. **No development shall commence on site, until the visibility splays, measuring 4.5m by 160m to be formed on either side of the junction of the vehicular access with the public access. The visibility splays so formed shall thereafter be kept free of all permanent obstructions above adjacent carriageway level.**

**Reason:** To ensure acceptable infrastructure at the development access in the interests of road safety and in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

10. No development shall commence on the construction of any building until samples of the proposed finishes have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be constructed in accordance with the approved details and maintained in accordance thereafter.

**Reason:** To ensure the development complements and enhances the landscape in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking and Policy 5: Landscape of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

11. Prior to its installation, details of the sedum roof covering shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority. The details shall include species mix and maintenance schedule. The development shall thereafter be constructed in accordance with the approved details and maintained in accordance thereafter.

**Reason:** To ensure the development complements and enhances the landscape in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking and Policy 5: Landscape of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

12. Prior to its installation, details of the cycle parking for visitors including their location, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority, acting as Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highland Council Transport Planning Team. The approved cycle parking shall be implemented in full prior to the first use of the new buildings.

**Reason:** In order to ensure adequate active travel infrastructure is provided on site to support active travel in accordance with Policy 3: Design and Placemaking of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

13. No lighting shall be installed on site until details (position, type and intensity) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Cairngorms National Park Authority acting as Planning Authority. The lighting, if being provided, shall be installed and operated in strict accordance with the approved plans.

**Reason:** To ensure that the development does not adversely affect European Protected Species including the commuter bats in accordance with Policy 4: Natural Heritage of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021.

## **Informatives**

1. The development hereby approved must commence within 3 years of the date of this decision notice. If development has not commenced within this period then this planning permission will lapse.
2. The person undertaking the development is required to give the Planning Authority prior written notification of the date which it is intended to commence the development. Attached to this decision notice is a Notice of Initiation of Development for completion and submission. Submission of this information assists the Cairngorms National Park Authority Monitoring and Enforcement Officer in monitoring active work within the area to ensure compliance with the approved details and to identify and correct any potential problems, as they arise, rather than later when it may be more difficult and more costly to rectify. Failure to give notice would constitute a breach of planning control which may result in enforcement action being taken.
3. Following completion of the development, a notification of completion shall, as soon as practicable, be given to the Planning Authority. Attached to this decision notice is a Notice of Completion of Development for completion and submission. Submission of this form will assist the Cairngorms National Park Authority Monitoring and Enforcement Officer in making a final inspection and checking compliance with the approved drawings and conditions. If the development hereby approved is to be carried out in phases, then a notice of completion should be submitted at the completion of each phase.
4. You are advised that should any work commence within the bird breeding season, (April to September) then pre-construction surveys for breeding birds must be undertaken.
5. Construction work (including the loading/unloading of delivery vehicles, plant or other machinery) should not take place outwith the hours of 0800 hours to 1900 hours Mondays to Fridays, 0800 hours to 1300 hours on Saturdays or at any time on Bank Holidays to minimise disturbance to residents in the area.

The map on the first page of this report has been produced to aid in the statutory process of dealing with planning applications. The map is to help identify the site and its surroundings and to aid Planning Officers, Committee Members and the Public in the determination of the proposal. Maps shown in the Planning Committee Report can only be used for the purposes of the Planning Committee. Any other use risks infringing Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Maps produced within this Planning Committee Report can only be reproduced with the express permission of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and other Copyright holders. This permission must be granted in advance.