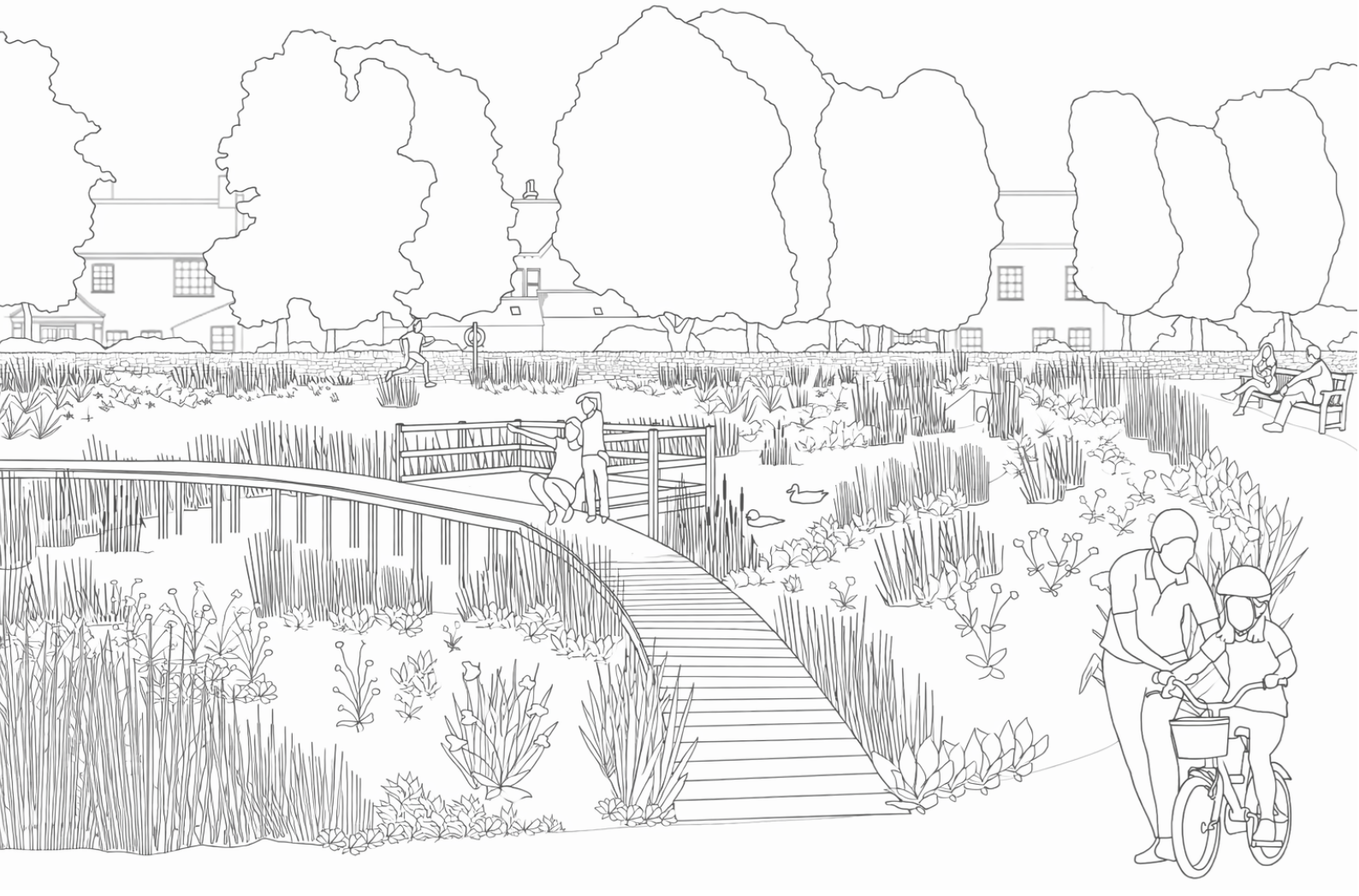
Cairngorms
National Park Authority
Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh

Sustainable places

Schedule 5: Natural heritage

Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan: Evidence Report

March 2026



Schedule 5: Natural heritage

March 2026

Schedule contents

Requirements addressed in this schedule

Table 1 Information required by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended (CNPA003), regarding the issue addressed in this schedule.

Section	Requirement
Section 15(5)(a)	The principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district.
Section 15(5)(f)	Any change which the planning authority think may occur in relation to any of the matters mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (eb).
Section 16(2)(a)	To take into account— i. The National Planning Framework and ii. Any local outcomes improvement plan (within the meaning of section 6 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015) for the part of their district to which the local development plan relates, iii. Any registered local place plan (see schedule 19) that is for the part of their district to which the local development plan relates.
Section 16(2)(b)	Are to have regard to such information and considerations as may be prescribed.
Section 16(2)(c)	May have regard to such other information and considerations as appear to them to be relevant.
Section 16B(3)(a)	The evidence report is to set out the planning authority's view on the matters listed in section 15(5) for land in the part of the authority's district to which the local development plan will relate,
Section 16B(3)(e)	Include such other matters as are prescribed.
Section 16B(4)(c)	The evidence report is also to include a statement on the extent to which the views expressed under paragraphs (a) and (b) have been taken into account in the report.
Section A159(1)	A planning authority are to prepare a forestry and woodland strategy.
Section 264A	In the exercise, with respect to any land in a National Park, of any power under the planning Acts, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of exercising the power consistently with the National Park Plan as adopted under section 12(7)(a) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 (asp 10).

Table 2 Information required by the Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 (CNPA684), regarding the issue addressed in this schedule.

Regulation	Requirement
Regulation 9(2)(c)	The information and considerations are—... any local development plan prepared for an area adjoining the local development plan area,

Links to evidence

International documents

- CNPA002 - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- CNPA213 - Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive)
- CNPA214 - Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (Birds Directive)
- CNPA215 - Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat 1971
- CNPA216 - Council of Europe Resolution (76) 17 on the European Network of Biogenetic Reserves
- CNPA217 - Council of Europe Resolution (79) 9 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning the identification and evaluation card for the protection of natural landscapes
- CNPA239 - Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
- CNPA240 - European Union Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
- CNPA258 - Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services 2019

Legislation

- CNPA003 - Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997
- CNPA004 - National Park (Scotland) Act 2000
- CNPA059 - Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993
- CNPA218 - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- CNPA219 - Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
- CNPA220 - Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011

- CNPA221 - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Variation of Schedules A1 and 1A) (Scotland) Order 2013
- CNPA223 - Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018
- CNPA224 - Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- CNPA226 - The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994
- CNPA227 - Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2019
- CNPA228 - Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2012
- CNPA229 - Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2011
- CNPA230 - The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (No. 2) (Scotland) Regulations 2008
- CNPA231 - Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2008
- CNPA232 - Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2007
- CNPA233 - Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2004
- CNPA234 - updated-scottish-government-policy-protecting-ramsar-sites.pdf
- CNPA235 - The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order and Trees in Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Regulations 2010
- CNPA634 - Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill as passed
- CNPA684 - Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023

National documents

- CNPA007 - National Performance Framework
- CNPA008 - National Planning Framework 4
- CNPA009 - Local development planning guidance 2023
- CNPA060 - Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: climate change plan 2018 – 2032 – update
- CNPA084 - Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling the Nature Emergency in Scotland
- CNPA234 - Updated Scottish Government policy on protecting Ramsar sites 2025
- CNPA236 - Planning Circular 1 2011 Tree Preservation Orders
- CNPA238 - Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Biodiversity
- CNPA241 - Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Post-2020: A Statement of Intent

- CNPA242 - Framework for 30 by 30 in Scotland
- CNPA245 - Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024 – 2029
- CNPA246 - Scottish Biodiversity List 2025
- CNPA247 - Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017 – 2027
- CNPA249 - Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029
- CNPA250 - Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal 2009
- CNPA251 - The UK Forestry Standard 2003
- CNPA252 - Water-Resilient Places: A Policy Framework for Surface Water Management and Blue – Green Infrastructure 2021
- CNPA259 - State of Nature Scotland 2023

Key agency documents

- CNPA222 - NatureScot guidance on the implications of additional protection for hen harrier, red kite and golden eagle under schedules A1 and 1A of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- CNPA225 - NatureScot Standing advice for planning consultations – Badgers
- CNPA244 - Developing with Nature guidance
- CNPA270 - Strathspey Land Management Plan 2021 – 2031
- CNPA289 - Developing Native Woodland Habitat Networks guidance
- CNPA295 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency Planning Advice Note for planning authorities achieving sufficiency of evidence
- CNPA300 - Water Environment Fund Annual Report to Scottish Government 2014 – 2015
- CNPA315 - Analyses of the fates of satellite tracked golden eagles in Scotland 2017
- CNPA316 - A conservation framework for golden eagles: implications for their conservation and management in Scotland 2008
- CNPA320 - NatureScot Research Report 1353 – Site Condition Monitoring of freshwater pearl mussel in the River Dee 2022 – 2023
- CNPA321 - NatureScot standing advice for planning consultations - Freshwater Pearl Mussels
- CNPA323 - NatureScot Research Report 1327 - The creation of a Grassland Fungi Mapping Database for Scotland 2024

National Park Authority documents

- CNPA010 - Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022
- CNPA016 - Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021
- CNPA026 - Local Development Plan interactive map engagement report 2024
- CNPA027 - Cairngorms Youth Action Team Place Standard Tool Engagement 2024

- CNPA058 - Grantown Grammar School Place Standard Tool Engagement 2024
- CNPA097 - Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 3: Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024
- CNPA253 - Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024
- CNPA254 - Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report 2024
- CNPA255 - Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy 2018
- CNPA256 - Supplementary guidance (2025) to the Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy 2018
- CNPA257 - Cairngorms National Park Authority Biodiversity Duty Report
- CNPA274 - An introduction to the Cairngorms Nature Index
- CNPA302 - Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan Monitoring Framework Update August 2024
- CNPA303 - Beaver Dam Capacity and Habitat Suitability: Spey Catchment, Scotland
- CNPA312 - Cairngorms Capercaillie Project progress report 1 January – 31 March 2023
- CNPA313 - Capercaillie Emergency Plan Board paper 5 for decision 28 June 2024
- CNPA314 - Capercaillie Emergency Plan 2024 – 2030 scope (Annex 1 to Board paper 5 28 June 2024)
- CNPA652 - Mountain Biking Recreation Management Plan for Badenoch and Strathspey: 2023 – 2026
- CNPA324 - Waxcap Survey Work 2024: Report to the Cairngorms National Park Authority
- CNPA330 - Identifying a Cairngorms National Park Nature Network 2025
- CNPA333 - National Park Partnership Plan Annual Update 2024
- CNPA528 - Cairngorms 2030
- CNPA681 - Kingussie High School Higher Criminology Students Place Standard Tool Engagement 2024
- CNPA682 - Kingussie High School S1 Geography Students Place Standard Tool Engagement 2024
- CNPA683 - Kingussie High School S3 Geography Students Place Standard Tool Engagement 2024
- CNPA833 - Cairngorms Local Development Plan place standard tool engagement with Kingussie High School Youth Forum 2025
- CNPA834 - Local development plan place standard tool engagement with the Cairngorms National Park Junior Rangers 2025
- CNPA835 - Cairngorms Local Development Plan place standard tool engagement with Aviemore Neurodiversity Support Youth Group 2025
- CNPA969 - Cairngorms National Park – Protected site information
- CNPA1030 - East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership

- CNPA1085 - Cairngorms National Park Peregrine Survey 2024 Report
- CNPA1330 - Updating Capercaillie Core Areas meeting notes and actions
- CNPA1345 - Topic: Natural heritage - engagement version

Local authority documents

- CNPA638 - 2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan
- CNPA1091 - 2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan – Delivery Plan
- CNPA636 - Aberdeenshire Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017 – 2027 (website)
- CNPA637 - Angus Community Plan 2022 – 2030
- CNPA639 - Moray Local Outcomes Improvement Plan v2
- CNPA640 - Perth and Kinross Community Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) 2022 – 2032

Community action plans

- CNPA064 - Blair Atholl Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA065 - Grantown-on-Spey Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA125 - Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA331 - Dulnain Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA127 - Kincraig Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA066 - Kingussie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Catchment partnership documents

- CNPA292 - Dee Catchment Management Plan Summary
- CNPA293 - Dee Catchment Partnership Delivery Plan 2022 – 2027
- CNPA294 - Spey Catchment Management Plan

Data sources

- CNPA067 - CORINE Land Cover data
- CNPA243 - 30 x 30 Dissolved Protected Areas
- CNPA260 - NatureScot SiteLink
- CNPA261 - Protected site condition
- CNPA262 - Special Areas of Conservation
- CNPA263 - Special Protection Areas
- CNPA264 - Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance
- CNPA265 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- CNPA266 - National Nature Reserves
- CNPA267 - Biogenetic Reserves
- CNPA268 - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Reserves
- CNPA269 - National Forest Estate Forest Parks Great Britain
- CNPA271 - Glencharnoch Wood
- CNPA272 - Local Nature Reserves
- CNPA273 - Scotland Land Cover Map 2022 – EUNIS Level 1
- CNPA275 - National Forest Inventory 2023
- CNPA276 - Native Woodland Survey of Scotland
- CNPA277 - Caledonian Pinewood Inventory
- CNPA278 - Ancient Woodland Inventory
- CNPA279 - HabMoS - Mountain Woodland 2023 – wild, relict or remnant
- CNPA281 - HabMoS - Mountain Woodland 2023 – restoration sites
- CNPA282 - Riparian woodland data
- CNPA283 - Forestry Grant Scheme Woodland Creation Claims
- CNPA284 - Forestry Grant Scheme Woodland Creation Options
- CNPA285 - Forestry Grant Scheme Woodland Improvement Grant – Habitats and Species New Natural Regeneration Establishment Claims
- CNPA286 - Tree Preservation Orders
- CNPA287 - Ancient Tree Inventory
- CNPA288 - Woody Linear Features Framework
- CNPA290 - Forest Habitat Networks Scotland 2008
- CNPA291 - Forestry Grant Scheme Eligibility Native Woodland Habitat Network mapping
- CNPA296 - Riparian vegetation planting opportunities (25m)
- CNPA297 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency water classification hub
- CNPA298 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency water environment hub
- CNPA299 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency Environmental data
- CNPA304 - National Biodiversity Network data for Cairngorms National Park
- CNPA305 - Confirmed Raptor Persecution Incidents (Public) – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds data
- CNPA306 - Sensitivity mapping for breeding waders in Britain: towards producing zonal maps to guide wader conservation, forest expansion and other land use changes. Report with specific data for Northumberland and north-east Cumbria
- CNPA307 - Wader zonal map download
- CNPA308 - Wader zonal map interactive map
- CNPA309 - Further declines of Capercaillie Tetrao urogallus in Scotland shown by the 2021 – 2022 winter survey

- CNPA310 - Review of Capercaillie Conservation and Management - Report to the Scientific Advisory Committee 2022
- CNPA311 - Capercaillie Lek Count Report 2024
- CNPA322 - Grassland Fungi Mapping Database for Scotland
- CNPA325 - Ash die back Confirmed Infection Areas
- CNPA326 - Statutory Plant Health Notices
- CNPA327 - Phytophthora Austrocedrae Confirmed Infection Sites
- CNPA317 - A Conservation Framework for Hen Harriers in the United Kingdom 2011
- CNPA318 - The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain
- CNPA651 - Protected species list - occurs in Scotland (A3271735)
- CNPA1331 - Capercaillie core areas and buffer zones 2025 - 2030

Consultation material

- CNPA600 - Natural Heritage - Informal Consultation - NatureScot Comments
- CNPA601 - PCS-20006860 SEPA Additional response to Cairngorms National Park LDP - Natural Heritage
- CNPA602 - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds correspondence - Natural heritage
- CNPA1014 - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds correspondence - Natural Heritage 31 October 2025
- CNPA1080 - Scottish Environment Protection Agency response to Natural heritage early engagement
- CNPA1081 - Scottish Forestry Natural heritage response
- CNPA1340 - Evidence report engagement responses

Summary of evidence

Policy context

National Planning Framework 4

Securing positive effects for biodiversity is at the centre of National Planning Framework 4's strategy (CNPA008). The nature crisis, together with the global climate emergency, underpins its spatial strategy as a whole and its action areas include proposals which protect and enhance the natural environment. The spatial strategy highlights the rich biodiversity of the North region and states that the Cairngorms National Park is a national asset with internationally significant habitats and landscapes.

The priorities for the region state that this part of Scotland 'can continue to make a strong contribution towards meeting our ambition for a net zero and nature positive country by demonstrating how natural assets can be managed and used to secure a more sustainable future'. The key priority for natural heritage and biodiversity is to:

- Protect environmental assets and stimulate investment in natural and engineered solutions to climate change and nature restoration, whilst decarbonising transport and building resilient connections.

The national developments for the region have the potential to impact on natural heritage and biodiversity of the National Park. These are:

- Pumped hydro storage.
- Strategic renewable electricity generation and transmission infrastructure[1].
- Circular economy material management facilities[2].
- National walking, cycling and wheeling network[3].
- Digital fibre network[4].

The implications of these are covered in more detail in other schedules (see footnotes).

Policy 1 Tackling the climate and nature crises states that local development plans must address the global climate emergency and nature crisis by ensuring the spatial strategy will reduce emissions and adapt to current and future risks of climate change by

[1] Pumped hydro, renewable energy generation infrastructure and transmission infrastructure are covered in Schedule 9: Energy.
[2] The circular economy material management facilities are covered in Schedule 10: Zero waste. Aspects of the circular economy will also be covered in Schedule 21: Economic development.
[3] The national walking, cycling and wheeling network is covered in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.
[4] The digital fibre network is covered in in Schedule 20: Digital infrastructure.

promoting nature recovery and restoration in the area. Scottish Government's local development planning guidance (CNPA009) does not set any specific requirements for evidence reports for Policy 1. Instead, it states that the policy's implications for local development plan can be met and addressed through the requirements for policies 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Policy 3 Biodiversity requires that local development plans protect, conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity in line with its mitigation hierarchy (Figure 1). The mitigation hierarchy indicates the order in which the impacts of development should be considered and addressed. These are:

- Avoid – by removing the impact at the outset.
- Minimise – by reducing the impact.
- Restore – by repairing damaged habitats.
- Offset – by compensating for the residual impact that remains, with preference to on-site over off-site measures.

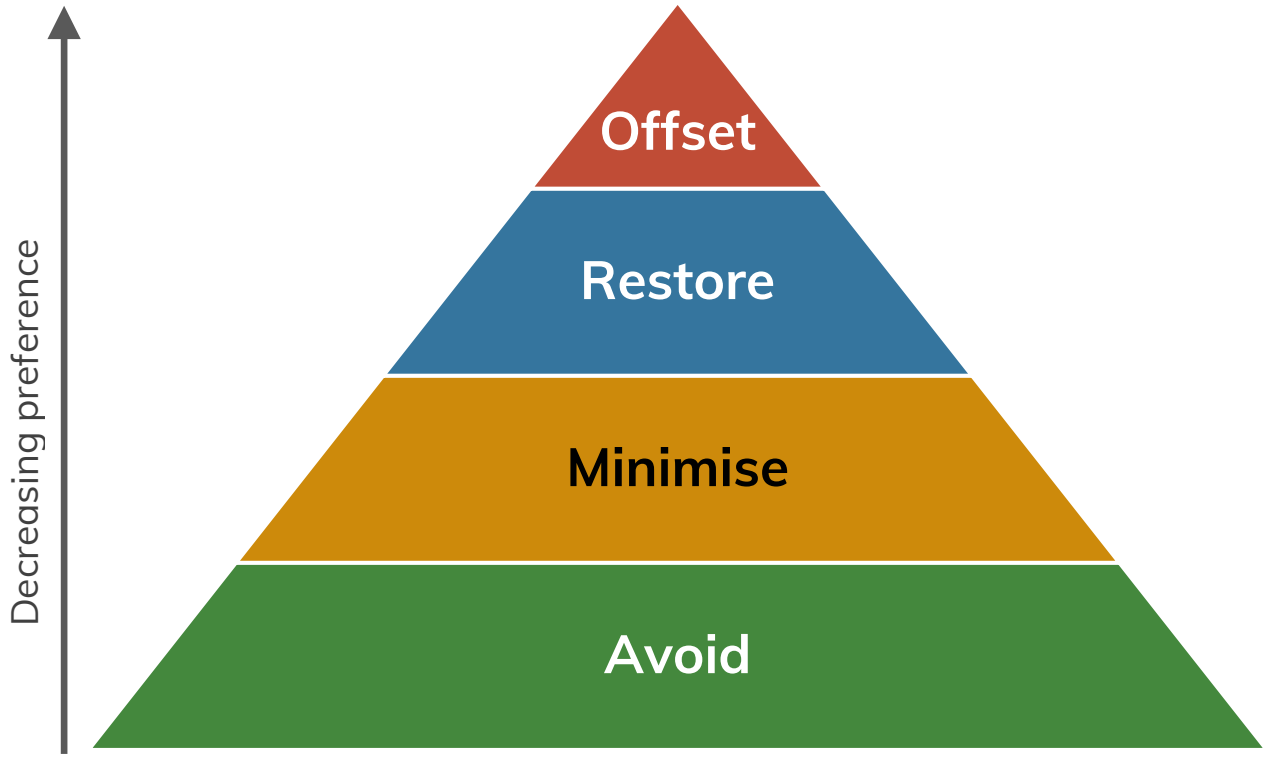


Figure 1 National Planning Framework 4's Mitigation Hierarchy (see page 153 of National Planning Framework 4) (CNPA008).

According to Policy 3, local development plans should also promote nature recovery and nature restoration across the development plan area, including by:

- Facilitating the creation of nature networks and strengthening connections between them to support improved ecological connectivity.
- Restoring degraded habitats or creating new habitats.
- Incorporating measures to increase biodiversity, including populations of priority species.

Policy 4 Natural Places requires local development plans identify and protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally important natural assets. They should consider the objectives of each of the protected sites and safeguard them during the allocation of land for development and their spatial strategies should also better connect nature rich areas by establishing and growing nature networks to help protect and restore the biodiversity, ecosystems and natural processes.

Policy 4 c) also sets out specific requirements for protected site, including National Parks, in the determination of planning applications:

'Development proposals that will affect a National Park, National Scenic Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest or a National Nature Reserve will only be supported where:

iv. The objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the areas will not be compromised; or
v. Any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.

All Ramsar sites are also European sites and / or Sites of Special Scientific Interest and are extended protection under the relevant statutory regimes.'

This principle may also apply to proposed developments outwith the National Park.

Policy 5 Soils states that local development plans should seek to protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally valued soils including land of lesser quality that is culturally or locally important for primary use. All matters relating to soil are covered in Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources.

Policy 6 Forestry, woodland and trees requires local development plans identify and protect existing woodland and look for potential to enhance / expand to avoid habitat fragmentation and improve ecological connectivity. The spatial strategy should identify and set out proposals for forestry, woodlands and trees in the area and the

development, protection and expansion of these will be supported and informed by a forestry and woodland strategy.

These requirements will help implement Policy 6 d), which states that:

'Development proposals on sites which include an area of existing woodland or land identified in the forestry and woodland strategy as being suitable for woodland creation will only be supported where the enhancement and improvement of woodlands and the planting of new trees on the site (in accordance with the forestry and woodland strategy) are integrated into the design.'

Policy 6 b) also identifies that development will not be supported where it results in:

i. Any loss of ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees, or adverse impact on their ecological condition.
ii. Adverse impacts on native woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees of high biodiversity value, or identified for protection in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy.

The Forestry and Woodland Strategy for the National Park is the Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy 2018 (CNPA255). See page 64 for further information.

Policy 20 Blue and green infrastructure which states local development plans should be informed by relevant, up-to-date audits and / or strategies, covering the multiple functions and benefits of blue and green infrastructure[5]. The spatial strategy should identify and protect blue and green infrastructure assets and networks; enhance and expand existing provision including new blue and / or green infrastructure. This may include retrofitting. Priorities for connectivity to other blue and/or green infrastructure assets, including to address cross-boundary needs and opportunities, should also be identified.

Local development plans should encourage the permanent or temporary use of unused or under-used land as green infrastructure[6]. Where this is temporary, this should not prevent future development potential from being realised.

[5] Schedule 16: Blue and green infrastructure provides an audit of blue and green infrastructure in the National Park. There are strong links between the audit and this schedule, as well as Schedule 6: Landscape, Schedule 7: Land use, soil and resources, Schedule 17: Play, recreation an sport, and Schedule 19 Flood risk and water management.
[6] Under-used land as green infrastructure may include previously developed and brownfield land. Matters relating to these are covered in Schedule 7: Land use, soil and resources.

Local development plans should also safeguard access rights and core paths, including active travel routes, and encourage new and enhanced opportunities for access linked to wider networks[7].

Other key policies which link to biodiversity, enhancing nature networks and protecting the natural environment include Policy 2 which deals with climate mitigation and adaptation, Policy 9 which covers brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings, Policy 11 which covers energy, Policy 14 which deals with design, quality and place, and Policy 22 which deals with flood risk and water management.

Policy 8 states that local development plans should consider using green belts, to support their spatial strategy as a settlement management tool to restrict development around towns and cities. It states that green belts will not be necessary for most settlements but may be zoned around settlements where there is a significant danger of unsustainable growth in car-based commuting or suburbanisation of the countryside. Furthermore, it states that green belts should be identified or reviewed as part of the preparation of local development plans and that boundary changes may be made to accommodate planned growth, or to extend, or alter the area covered as green belt. Detailed green belt boundaries should be based on evidence and should be clearly identified in plans.

The Cairngorms Local Development Plan 2021 (CNPA016) does not identify any green belts within the National Park, therefore a review of boundaries is not possible. Based on the settlements identified within the National Park Partnership Plan's spatial strategy (CNPA010)[8], the Park does not consider coalescence, an unsustainable growth in car-based commuting or the suburbanisation of the countryside to be a significant risk. Therefore, the Park Authority does not consider greenbelts to be an appropriate tool for managing development within the National Park and therefore none have been identified within the evidence report.

International documents

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

The conclusion of the 15th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity saw the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (CNPA239). The Global Biodiversity Framework aims to catalyse, enable

[7] Thes matters are covered in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.
[8] See Schedule 1: Plan outcomes for further information on the Partnership Plan's spatial strategy.

and galvanize urgent and transformative action by Governments, and subnational and local authorities, with the involvement of all of society, to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, to achieve the outcomes it sets out in its Vision, Mission, Goals and Targets, and thereby contribute to the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and to those of its Protocols:

- The conservation of biological diversity.
- The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity.
- The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

Its purpose is the full implementation of the three objectives of the Convention in a balanced manner.

The vision of the Global Biodiversity Framework is a world of living in harmony with nature where:

'By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.'

The mission of the Framework for the period up to 2030, towards the 2050 vision is:

'To take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and planet by conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and by ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources, while providing the necessary means of implementation'.

The Global Biodiversity Framework has four long-term goals for 2050:

- Goal A – The integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems are maintained, enhanced, or restored, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050; Human induced extinction of known threatened species is halted, and, by 2050, the extinction rate and risk of all species are reduced tenfold and the abundance of native wild species is increased to healthy and resilient levels; The genetic diversity within populations of wild and domesticated species, is maintained, safeguarding their adaptive potential.
- Goal B – Biodiversity is sustainably used and managed and nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, are valued, maintained and enhanced, with those currently in decline being restored, supporting the achievement

of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations by 2050.

- Goal C – The monetary and non-monetary benefits from the utilization of genetic resources and digital sequence information on genetic resources, and of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, as applicable, are shared fairly and equitably, including, as appropriate with indigenous peoples and local communities, and substantially increased by 2050, while ensuring traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources is appropriately protected, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in accordance with internationally agreed access and benefit-sharing instruments.
- Goal D – Adequate means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to and transfer of technology to fully implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework are secured and equitably accessible to all Parties, especially developing country Parties, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition, progressively closing the biodiversity finance gap of $700 billion per year, and aligning financial flows with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the 2050 Vision for biodiversity.

More than 100 countries have now signed up to the commitment, including the United Kingdom. Scotland's Biodiversity Delivery Framework forms Scotland's local response to the goals and targets set out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Scottish Government reports voluntarily to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity on delivery against these goals and targets.

European Union Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

The European Union's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (CNPA240) is a comprehensive, ambitious and long-term plan to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems. The strategy aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030. The Vision of the Biodiversity Strategy is that:

'By 2050, all of the world's ecosystems are restored, resilient, and adequately protected'

This is supported by the goal to:

'Put Europe's biodiversity on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, the planet, the climate and our economy'

Underpinning the vision and goal are four pillars:

- Protect Nature – Expand protected areas to 30% of the European Union's land and sea and put a third of these areas under strict protection.
- Restore Nature – Restore nature and ensure its sustainable management across all sectors and ecosystems.
- Enable transformative change – Strengthen the European Union's biodiversity governance framework, knowledge, research, financing and investments
- European Union action to support biodiversity globally – Deploy European Union external actions to raise the level of ambition for biodiversity worldwide, reduce the impact of trade and support biodiversity outside Europe.

The Biodiversity Strategy contains a range of specific actions and commitments to deliver the vision goal and pillars. Details of these are provided in the strategy[9] (CNPA240).

While Scotland is no longer part of the European Union, Scottish Government has made a commitment to maintain broad alignment with standards and obligations in the European Union, including the European Union Biodiversity Strategy. These commitments are reflected in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 (CNPA084).

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance

The Convention on Wetlands is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975 (CNPA215). Since then, almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to become 'Contracting Parties, including the United Kingdom. The mission of the Convention is:

'The conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world',

A key commitment of the Convention's Contracting Parties is to identify and place suitable wetlands onto the List of Wetlands of International Importance, also known as the Ramsar List. Scotland has 51 Ramsar sites designated as internationally important wetlands, three of which are in the Cairngorms National Park, namely Muir of Dinnet,

[9] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA240-eu-biodiversity-strategy-for-2030-KH0921133ENN.pdf

The River Spey – Insh Marshes and Cairngorms Lochs (see page 81 for more information).

Scotland's policy approach to Ramsar sites is set out on page 31.

Legislation and national documents

National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000

The National Park has four distinct aims as set out in The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 (CNPA004). As outlined in Schedule 1: Plan outcomes, these will be amended by the Natural Environment Scotland (Scotland) Bill (CNPA634) once enacted. These are, as to be amended by the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill:

- To conserve and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage.
- To promote sustainable management and use of the area's natural resources.
- To promote public understanding and enjoyment of the area's natural and cultural heritage.
- To promote sustainable economic, social and cultural development of the area's communities.

All of the aims are relevant to the matters discussed in this schedule. The aims are all to be pursued collectively. However, if there is conflict between the first aim and any of the others, greater weight is given to the first aim (as set out in Section 9(6) of the 2000 Act).

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (CNPA218) was a fairly simple source of wildlife law in Great Britain when it was enacted but the legal picture is now more complex. Firstly, the Habitats Regulations 1994 (CNPA226) introduced a separate set of rules for those species (and habitats) protected under the Habitats Directive (CNPA213) (see page 28 for further information). Secondly, devolution resulted in changes to the 1981 Act, through the:

- Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (CNPA219)
- Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (CNPA220)
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Variation of Schedules A1 and 1A) (Scotland) Order 2013 (CNPA221)

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (CNPA219) places a statutory duty on all public bodies in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity. Section 1 of the Act states:

'It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions'.

The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (CNPA220) introduced a requirement for all public bodies in Scotland to make a report publicly available on their compliance with the biodiversity duty. Biodiversity duty reports are required every three years. The latest report published by the Cairngorms National Park Authority covers the years 2018 – 2020 (CNPA257). A new report is due to be published later in 2026.

The biodiversity duty is not only about protecting biodiversity through managing specific sites, habitats and species. It also aims to:

- Increase the level of understanding and connection between people and the living environment.
- Promote consideration of all our impacts on the natural world through our actions and decisions, including through procurement and use of resources.
- Encourage staff, partners and customers to engage with, understand and consider biodiversity.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Variation of Schedules A1 and 1A) (Scotland) Order 2013 (CNPA221) affords additional protection to several bird species already in Schedule 1 to the Act. This has implications across a range of activities. The species listed on the Schedules are as follows:

- Schedule A1: White-tailed eagle and golden eagle.
- Schedule 1A: White-tailed eagle, golden eagle, hen harrier and red kite.

Prior to the Order only white-tailed eagle was listed on any of the Schedules.

NatureScot has published guidance on the implications of additional protection for hen harrier, red Kite and golden eagle arising from the Order. This can be accessed, here (CNPA222):

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA222-Wildlife-and-Countryside-Act-1981-Variation-of-Schedules-A1-and-1A-Scotland-Order-2013.pdf

Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (CNPA218) details a large number of offences in relation to the killing and taking of wild birds, other animals and plants.

Schedules attached to the Act categorise species. The level of protection given to a species depends on the schedule it's listed on. The main schedules are:

- 1 Birds which are protected by special penalties.
- 1A Birds which are protected from harassment.
- A1 Protected nests and nest sites: birds.
- 2 Birds which may be killed or taken.
- 3 Birds which may be sold.
- 4 Birds which must be registered and ringed if kept in captivity.
- 5 Animals which are protected.
- 6 Animals which may not be killed or taken by certain methods.
- 8 Plants which are protected.

NatureScot and the other country agencies must review Schedules 5 and 8 every five years. NatureScot's list table of all of Scotland's protected species, which details the legislation under which each is protected and was last updated in 2022, is available here (CNPA651):

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA651-Protected-species-list-occurs-in-Scotland-A3271735.xlsx

Table 3 lists those species protected by the Act, as amended, and occur in the Cairngorms National Park that may be affected by development, either through disturbance, habitat loss or wildlife crime. It is the view of the Park Authority that Schedule 3 and Schedule 4 are not of relevance to the local development plan. This data reflects records held by the National Biodiversity Network Gateway as of 3 March 2025 (CNPA304).

Table 3 Species protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 that occur in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304 and CNPA651).

Taxon	Current taxon name	Common name	Schedule listing
Bird	Anser anser	Greylag goose	Schedule 1 (Part I in Outer Hebrides, Caithness & Sutherland and Wester Ross only)
Bird	Tyto alba	Barn owl	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Phoenicurus ochruros	Black redstart	Schedule 1 (Part I)

Taxon	Current taxon name	Common name	Schedule listing
Bird	Podiceps nigricollis	Black-necked grebe	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Limosa limosa	Black-tailed godwit	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Gavia arctica	Black-throated diver	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Luscinia svecica	Bluethroat	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Fringilla montifringilla	Brambling	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Tetrao urogallus	Capercaillie	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Melanitta nigra	Common scoter	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Parus cristatus	Crested tit	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Loxia spp.	Crossbills (all species)	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Charadrius morinellus	Dotterel	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Turdus pilaris	Fieldfare	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Aquila chrysaetos	Golden eagle	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Accipter gentilis	Goshawk	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Gavia immer	Great Northern diver	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Tringa ochropus	Green sandpiper	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Tringa nebularia	Greenshank	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Falco rusticolus	Gyr falcon	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Circus spp.	Harriers (all species)	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Circus cyaneus	Hen harrier	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Falco subbuteo	Hobby	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Pernis apivorus	Honey buzzard	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Upupa epops	Hoopoe	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Alcedo atthis	Kingfisher	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Calcarius lapponicus	Lapland bunting	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Charadrius dubius	Little ringed plover	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Sterna albifrons	Little tern[10]	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Clangula hyemalis	Long-tailed duck	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Circus aeruginosus	Marsh harrier	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Falco columbarius	Merlin	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Circus pygargus	Montagu's harrier	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Pandion haliaetus	Osprey	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Falco perigrinus	Peregrine falcon	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Calidris maritima	Purple sandpiper	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Coturnix coturnix	Quail	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Milvus milvus	Red kite	Schedule 1 (Part I)

[10] Only one record.

Taxon	Current taxon name	Common name	Schedule listing
Bird	Lanius collurio	Red-backed shrike[11]	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Phalaropus lobatus	Red-necked phalarope	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Gavia stellata	Red-throated diver	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Aythya marila	Scaup	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Eremophila alpestris	Shore lark[12]	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Podiceps auritus	Slavonian grebe	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Plectrophenax nivalis	Snow bunting	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Nyctea scandiaca	Snowy owl	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Porzana porzana	Spotted crake	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Calidris temminckii	Temminck's stint[13]	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Melanitta fusca	Velvet scoter	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Numenius phaeopus	Whimbrel	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Haliaeetus albicilla	White-tailed eagle	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Cygnus cygnus	Whooper swan	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Tringa glareola	Wood sandpiper	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Jynx torquilla	Wryneck	Schedule 1 (Part I)
Bird	Anser anser	Greylag goose	Schedule 1 (Part II in Outer Hebrides, Caithness & Sutherland and Wester Ross only)
Bird	Bucephala clangula	Goldeneye	Schedule 1 (Part II)
Bird	Anas acuta	Pintail	Schedule 1 (Part II)
Bird	Aquila chrysaetos	Golden eagle	Schedule 1A
Bird	Circus cyaneus	Hen harrier	Schedule 1A
Bird	Milvus milvus	Red kite	Schedule 1A
Bird	Haliaeetus albicilla	White-tailed eagle	Schedule 1A
Bird	Branta canadensis	Canada goose	Schedule 2
Bird	Pluvialis apricaria	Golden plover	Schedule 2
Bird	Bucephala clangula	Goldeneye	Schedule 2
Bird	Anser anser	Greylag goose	Schedule 2
Bird	Anas platyrynchos	Mallard	Schedule 2
Bird	Gallinula chloropus	Moorhen	Schedule 2
Bird	Anser brachyrhynchus	Pink-footed goose	Schedule 2

[11] Only one record.
[12] Only one record.
[13] Unconfirmed record.

Taxon	Current taxon name	Common name	Schedule listing
Bird	Anas acuta	Pintail	Schedule 2
Bird	Aythya ferina	Pochard	Schedule 2
Bird	Anas clypeata	Shoveler	Schedule 2
Bird	Anas crecca	Teal	Schedule 2
Bird	Aythya fuligula	Tufted duck	Schedule 2
Bird	Anser albifrons	White-fronted goose	Schedule 2
Bird	Anas penelope	Wigeon	Schedule 2
Bird	Scolopax rusticola	Woodcock	Schedule 2
Bird	Gallinago gallinago	Common snipe	Schedule 2
Bird	Fulica atra	Coot	Schedule 2
Annelid worm	Hirudo medicinalis	Medicinal leech	Schedule 5
Mammal	Lepus timidus	Mountain hare	Schedule 5
Mammal	Martes martes	Pine marten	Schedule 5
Mammal	Sciurus vulgaris	Red squirrel	Schedule 5
Mollusc	Margaritifera margaritifera	Freshwater pearl mussel	Schedule 5
Butterfly	Euphydryas aurinia	Marsh fritillary	Schedule 5
Reptile	Vipera berus	Adder	Schedule 5 1, 4
Reptile	Anguis fragilis	Slow worm	Schedule 5 1, 4
Reptile	Zootoca vivipara	Viviparous lizard	Schedule 5 1, 4
Mammal	Arvicola terrestris	Water vole	Schedule 5 3
Butterfly	Carterocephalus palaemon	Chequered skipper	Schedule 5 4
Amphibian	Rana temporaria	Common frog	Schedule 5 4
Amphibian	Bufo bufo	Common toad	Schedule 5 4
Butterfly	Erebia epiphron	Mountain ringlet	Schedule 5 4
Butterfly	Aricia artaxerxes	Northern brown argus	Schedule 5 4
Amphibian	Triturus helveticus	Palmate newt	Schedule 5 4
Butterfly	Boloria euphrosyne	Pearl-bordered fritillary	Schedule 5 4
Butterfly	Cupido minimus	Small blue	Schedule 5 4
Amphibian	Triturus vulgaris	Smooth newt	Schedule 5 4
Mammal	Meles meles	Badger	Schedule 6
Mammal	Erinaceus europaeus	Hedgehog	Schedule 6
Mammal	Sciurus vulgaris	Red squirrel	Schedule 6
Mammal	Sorex spp.	Shrews (all species)	Schedule 6

Taxon	Current taxon name	Common name	Schedule listing
Vascular Plant	Lychnis alpina	Alpine catchfly	Schedule 8
Moss	Mielichhoferia mielichhoferi	Alpine copper-moss	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Erigeron borealis	Alpine fleabane	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Gentiana nivalis	Alpine gentian	Schedule 8
Lichen	Pertusaria bryontha	Alpine moss-pertusaria	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Arabis alpina	Alpine rock-cress	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Cicerbita alpina	Alpine sow-thistle	Schedule 8
Lichen	Alectoria ochroleuca	Alpine sulphur-tresses	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Woodsia alpina	Alpine woodsia	Schedule 8
Lichen	Nephroma arcticum	Arctic kidney-lichen	Schedule 8
Moss	Sphagnum balticum	Baltic bog-moss	Schedule 8
Moss	Saelania glaucescens	Blue dew-moss	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Phyllodoce caerulea	Blue heath	Schedule 8
Moss	Orthotrichum obtusifolium	Blunt-leaved bristle-moss	Schedule 8
Moss	Grimmia unicolor	Blunt-leaved grimmia	Schedule 8
Lichen	Fuscopannaria ignobilis	Caledonian pannaria	Schedule 8
Lichen	Heterodermia propagulifera	Collaroid rosette-lichen	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Cystopteris dickieana	Dickie's bladder fern	Schedule 8
Lichen	Gyalecta ulmi	Elm gyalecta	Schedule 8
Lichen	Bryoria furcellata	Forked hair-lichen	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Rhinanthus angustifolius	Greater yellow-rattle	Schedule 8
Moss	Buxbaumia viridis	Green shield-moss	Schedule 8

Taxon	Current taxon name	Common name	Schedule listing
Vascular Plant	Dactylorhiza traunsteineroides ssp. lapponica	Lapland marsh-orchid	Schedule 8
Moss	Anomodon longifolius	Long-leaved anomodon	Schedule 8
Moss	Bryum neodamense	Long-leaved thread-moss	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Woodsia ilvensis	Oblong woodsia	Schedule 8
Lichen	Caloplaca luteoalba	Orange-fruited elm-lichen	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Crassula aquatica	Pigmyweed	Schedule 8
Liverwort	Gymnomitrion apiculatum	Pointed frostwort	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Homogyne alpina	Purple colts-foot	Schedule 8
Lichen	Collema dichotomum	River jelly-lichen	Schedule 8
Moss	Hamatocaulis (Drepanocladus) vernicosus	Slender green feather-moss	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Alyssum alyssoides	Small Alison	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Saxifraga cespitosa	Tufted saxifrage	Schedule 8
Lichen	Cladonia trassii	Upright mountain-cladonia	Schedule 8
Moss	Hypnum vaucheri	Vaucher's feather-moss	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Polygonatum verticillatum	Whorled Solomon's-seal	Schedule 8
Vascular Plant	Hyacinthoides non-scripta	Bluebell	Schedule 8 4
Bird	Aquila chrysaetos	Golden eagle	Schedule A1
Bird	Haliaeetus albicilla	White-tailed eagle	Schedule A1

This schedule covers the duties relating to internationally protected habitats and species under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (CNPA226) (see page 28).

Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Both badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (CNPA224) as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. They are listed under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Offences relevant to development works include:

- Wilfully injuring or killing a badger.
- Disturbing a badger while it is in a sett.
- Intentionally or recklessly damaging or destroying any part of a badger sett, or obstructing access to a sett.

National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008) requires that any potential impacts of a development proposal on legally protected species are fully considered prior to the determination of any planning application. Most badger survey techniques, including bait marking, don't require a license. However, a developer may need a license if planned development works could interfere with a badger sett.

The Proposed Plan will need to consider the presence of badgers in the assessment of land suitable for development allocations, following the actions set out within the mitigation hierarchy in NatureScot's standing advice for consultations on badgers, updated August 2024[14] (CNPA225).

Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993

The Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993 (CNPA059), as amended by the Crofting Reform etc Act 2007, Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, and Crofting (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2013, forms the legislative framework that governs the use of croft land in Scotland. The act sets out the definition for crofts and crofters and sets out duties crofters must meet to occupy croft land, including duties relating to residency, maintenance, cultivation and use.

Further information about crofting is set out within Schedule 9: Land use, soil and resources.

[14] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA225-NatureScot-Standing-advice-for-planning-consultations-%E2%80%93-Badgers.pdf

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994

In Scotland, the Habitats Directive (CNPA213) and Birds Directive (CNPA214) are translated into specific legal obligations by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (CNPA226). This piece of legislation is usually known as the Habitats Regulations.

The Habitats Regulations cover the requirements for:

- Protecting sites that are internationally important for threatened habitats and species – i.e. Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas.
- A legal framework for species requiring strict protection – i.e. European protected species.

The Habitats Regulations have been amended in Scotland, most recently in 2019 as a result of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. They include:

- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2019 (CNPA227).
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (CNPA228).
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (CNPA229).
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (No. 2) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 (CNPA230).
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2008 (CNPA231).
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2007 (CNPA232).
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (CNPA233).

These amendments mean that the Park Authority and its partners must continue to apply the requirements of the Habitats (CNPA213) and Birds Directives (CNPA214) to how European sites are designated and protected.

Annex I of the Habitats Directive (CNPA213) lists core areas for habitat types that signatories must designate, protect and manage. Table 4 provides a list of all Annex I habitats that occur in the Cairngorms National Park and for which Special Areas of Conservation are designated. Further information on the condition of qualifying features of Special Areas of Conservation is provided on page 74 of this paper.

Table 4 Habitats (listed on Annex I) of the Habitats Directive which occur in the Cairngorms National Park and for which Special Areas of Conservation are designated (CNPA213).

Scientific name	Common name
Active raised bogs	Active raised bogs
Alkaline fens	Base-rich fens
Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion alvae)	Alder woodland on floodplains
Alpine and Boreal heaths	Alpine and subalpine heaths
Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands	Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands
Alpine pioneer formations of the Caricion bicoloris-atrofuscae	High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage
Blanket bogs	Blanket bog
Bog woodland	Bog woodland
Buxbaumia viridis	Green shield-moss
Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae	Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals
Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (Thlaspietea rotundifolii)	Base-rich scree
Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks
Caledonian forest	Caledonian forest
Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	Degraded raised bog
Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	Depressions on peat substrates
Drepanocladus (Hamatocaulis) vernicosus	Slender green feather-moss
European dry heaths	Dry heaths
Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels	Tall herb communities
Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands	Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands
Lampetra fluviatilis	River lamprey
Lampetra planeri	Brook lamprey
Lutra lutra	Otter

Scientific name	Common name
Margaritifera margaritifera	Freshwater pearl mussel
Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds	Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds
Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix	Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath
Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles	Western acidic oak woodland
Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorellete uniflorae and / or of the IsoëtoNanojuncetea	Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels
Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)	Hard-water springs depositing lime
Petromyzon marinus	Sea lamprey
Salmo salar	Atlantic salmon
Saxifraga hirculus	Marsh saxifrage
Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia)	Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone
Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands	Montane acid grasslands
Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation	Plants in crevices on acid rocks
Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani)	Acidic scree
Species-rich Nardus grassland, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in continental Europe)	Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas
Sub-Arctic *Salix* spp. scrub	Mountain willow scrub
Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines	Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes
Transition mires and quaking bogs	Very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface
Triturus cristatus	Great crested newt[15]
Vertigo genesii	Round-mouthed whorl snail

[15] Great crested newt are present within the Cairngorms National Park, however there are no records within any Special Areas of Conservation.

Scientific name	Common name
Vertigo geyeri	Geyer's whorl snail

Schedule 2 and Schedule 4 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (CNPA226) list the animal and plant species protected by Annex II of the Habitats Directive (CNPA213). Schedule 3 lists animal species that may not be taken or killed in certain ways. Only some of the species listed on these schedules occur in the Scotland or the Cairngorms National Park. Table 5, Table 6,
Table 7 list the Schedule 2, 3 and 4 species that occur within Scotland.

Table 5 Habitat Regulations 1994 (as amended in Scotland) Schedule 2 - protected species of animal that occur in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA213).

Taxon	Current taxon name	Common name	Occurs in Scotland	Breeds in Scotland
Mammal	Plecotus auritus	Bat - Brown long-eared	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Pipistrellus pipistrellus	Bat - Common pipistrelle	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Myotis daubentonii	Bat - Daubenton's	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Nyctalus leisleri	Bat - Leisler's	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Pipistrellus nathusii	Bat - Nathusius' pipistrelle	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Myotis nattereri	Bat - Natterer's	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Nyctalus noctula	Bat - Noctule	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Pipistrellus pygmaeus	Bat - Soprano pipistrelle	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Vespertilionidae spp.	Bats - All typical species	Yes	Yes
Amphibian	Triturus cristatus	Great crested newt	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Lutra lutra	Otter	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Felis silvestris	Wildcat	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Castor fiber	Beaver	Yes	Yes

Table 6 Habitat Regulations 1994 (as amended in Scotland) Schedule 3 - animals listed on Annex V of the Habitats and Species Directive whose natural range includes Great Britain and occur in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA213).

Taxon	Current taxon name	Common name	Occurs in Scotland	Breeds in Scotland
Fish	Alosa alosa	Allis shad	Yes	Yes
Fish	Salmo salar (only in fresh water)	Atlantic salmon	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Lepus timidus	Mountain hare	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Martes martes	Pine marten	Yes	Yes
Mammal	Mustela putorius (otherwise known as Putorius putorius)	Polecat	Yes	No
Fish	Lampetra fluviatilis	River lamprey	Yes	Yes

Table 7 Habitat Regulations 1994 (as amended in Scotland) Schedule 4 - protected species of plant that occur in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA213).

Taxon	Current taxon name	Common name	Occurs in Scotland	Breeds in Scotland
Vascular Plant	Saxifraga hirculus	Yellow marsh saxifrage	Yes	Yes

The Proposed Plan will need to take account of these habitats and species in the preparation of its spatial strategy and assessment of allocations. Listed species present on European sites will also need to be considered through the Habitats Regulations Appraisal process in consultation with NatureScot.

Updated Scottish Government policy on protecting Ramsar sites 2025

Prior to the publication of the updated policy position in July 2025 (CNPA234), in Scotland, statutory protection of natural heritage sites was delivered primarily through designation either as a Site of Special Scientific Interest or as a Special Area of Conservation / Special Protection Area (European site) under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (CNPA219) and The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (Habitats Regulations) (CNPA226) respectively. Ramsar sites were therefore not afforded the same level of protection as these designations. However, from 9 July 2025, as a matter of policy, the Scottish Government considers that listed Ramsar sites in Scotland should be treated as if they were European sites for the purposes of land use change decision making.

This policy position is designed to reflect the requirements set out in National Planning Framework 4, as part of Policy 4c (Natural Places) (CNPA008), which states that, 'All Ramsar sites are also European sites and / or Sites of Special Scientific Interest and are extended protection under the relevant statutory regimes.'

Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Biodiversity

In December 20025, Scottish Government published planning guidance on biodiversity (CNPA238) to clarify understanding of National Planning Framework 4's Policy 3 (CNPA008).

Concerning local development plans, the draft guidance reiterates that local development plans should encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis, in order to reflect the significant weight that this carries within National Planning Framework 4.

It states that opportunities to promote nature recovery and nature restoration could include by facilitating the creation of nature networks; restoring degraded habitats or creating new habitats; and by incorporating measures to increase biodiversity, including populations and priority species.

It states that the Evidence Report stage of the local development plan preparation process is an opportunity to identify priority species and habitats within the plan area. Local areas of importance for biodiversity may also be identified.

The draft guidance highlights how local biodiversity action plans offer an ideal opportunity to link local development plan spatial strategies to agreed local priorities for protecting and enhancing local ecosystems, habitats and species. Within the context of the National Park, this is the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (see page 63) (CNPA253).

It states that the local development plan preparation process offers an opportunity to take a more strategic, place-based and cross-sectoral approach to nature. In this approach wildlife sites, corridors, and stepping stones, landscape features, watercourses, and green and blue spaces are identified and come together to form integrated nature networks, supporting ecological connectivity. The spatial strategy can help to prevent fragmentation or isolation of habitats and identify opportunities to restore and enhance links which have been broken, including as part of wider green networks and active travel routes.

The draft guidance also highlights the role Strategic Environment Assessment plays in the local development plan preparation process.

On biodiversity enhancement, the draft guidance sets out a number of core principles to help secure biodiversity enhancement and other wider policy objectives. These are applicable to development of all types and scale. The principles are:

- Apply the mitigation hierarchy, as defined in National Planning Framework 4 (see page 12).
- Consider biodiversity from the outset.
- Provide synergies and connectivity for nature.
- Integrate nature to deliver multiple benefits.
- Prioritise on-site enhancement before off-site delivery.
- Take a place-based and inclusive approach.
- Ensure long term enhancement is secured.
- Additionality

These principles are applicable at both a planning application and development plan scale.

Securing a green recovery on a path to net zero: climate change plan 2018 – 2032 – update

The document provides an update to the 2018 Climate Change Plan (CNPA060). Since that Plan Scottish Government have set new ambitious targets to end its contribution to climate change by 2045. Scottish Government have committed to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030 (compared with 1990) and to net zero by 2045. As Scotland emerged from COVID-19 the Government identified an opportunity to rebuild the economy in a way that delivers a greener, fairer and more equal society. This Plan sets out the Governments approach to delivering a green recovery and sets out a pathway to deliver its climate change targets. In line with the 2018 plan, the focus is on the period up to 2032.

The Plan update recognises that there is evidence both on a global and a local scale that we are now in the midst of a global crisis in terms of biodiversity loss. Biodiversity loss reduces the complexity and resilience of ecosystems, weakening their ability to provide the benefits to people which we rely on and ultimately risking collapse. Actions to restore biodiversity are intrinsically linked to many of the policies and proposals within the Plan update.

The Plan update sets out Scottish Government's commitment to deploying nature-based solutions at scale and in a sustainable and managed way. It highlights work undertaken on peatland restoration and woodland creation as prime examples. Increased peatland restoration and woodland creation has been recommended by the Government's Committee on Climate Change, and, when accounting for local ecological and social sensitivities, can bring benefits for carbon sequestration, biodiversity and natural flood risk management and job creation. Nature-based solutions will form a key part of the Government's overall coordinated approach, which aims to bring together climate change, biodiversity, infrastructure, planning, land use, marine and economic strategies.

It sets out a number of outcomes, that are supported by policies and proposals, relating to biodiversity. These are organised according to the chapters of the update. As they are not specific to biodiversity, the information relating to these are covered under the relevant policy areas of the Evidence Report:

- Electricity – covered in the Schedule 9: Energy.
- Buildings –covered in various schedules, including Schedule 7: Historic and cultural heritage, Schedule 8: Land use, land use, soil and resources, Schedule 15: Heating and cooling, Schedule 14: Education and Schedule 18: Health and safety.
- Transport – covered in the Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.
- Industry –in the Schedule 21: Economic development.
- Waste and the circular economy – covered in Schedule 10: Zero waste.
- Land use, land use change and forestry – covered in Schedule 5: Natural heritage and Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources.
- Agriculture – covered in Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources.
- Negative emissions technologies – to be covered in Schedule 4: Climate change and Schedule 9: Energy.

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Post-2020: A Statement of Intent

Published in December 2020, this high-level Statement of Intent (CNPA241):

- Signals Scottish Government's ambitions for Scotland, in tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.
- Signals Scottish Government's action in the international arena and our desire to continue working with friends across Europe and the world.
- Sets out how Scottish Government will translate those ambitions into Scotland's post-2020 biodiversity strategy (Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 (CNPA084)) and delivery plan (CNPA085).
- Confirms continuity, and enhancement where possible, of delivery under our existing biodiversity strategy until it is replaced.
- Signals some of Scottish Government's priorities, including:

- Endorsing the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, which was launched at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2020.
- Extending the area protected for nature in Scotland to at least 30% of its land area by 2030 and commissioning advice on whether it was possible to go even further than this.
- Highlighting the need to facilitate the creation of new, locally driven projects – such as Cairngorms Connect – which aim to improve ecological connectivity across Scotland.
- Developing ambitious new proposals to secure positive effects for biodiversity through development. These proposals are now set in National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008).

Scotland's Biodiversity Delivery Framework

Scotland's Biodiversity Delivery Framework (CNPA084) has been developed through engagement with a range of stakeholders, including land managers, environmental organisations, local authorities and other partners. The Framework comprises five elements:

- A high-level Strategy setting out a 2045 Vision for biodiversity in Scotland, a set of Outcomes which articulates what 'success looks like' and a set of Priority Actions.
- A Natural Environment Bill which will contain provisions to put in place statutory targets for nature restoration that cover land and sea and a framework for setting, monitoring, enforcing and reporting on those targets.
- A series of five-year rolling Delivery Plans which will set out in detail the range of actions needed to deliver the outcomes and vision set out within the biodiversity strategy. The delivery plans will incorporate a fundamental programme of mainstreaming biodiversity across Government.
- An Investment Plan which will set out Scottish Government's assessment of the investment required to deliver a nature positive future and the actions needed to mobilise public, private and philanthropic finance.
- A Reporting Framework. The Scottish Government is required to report to Parliament every three years on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Biodiversity in Scotland.

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling the Nature Emergency in Scotland

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (CNPA084) sets out actions for addressing the twin crises; Global Climate Emergency and Nature Emergency. These priorities seek to halt the loss of biodiversity and help Scotland reach the goal of 'Nature Positive' by 2030

and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the county by 2045. The Strategy's vision is that:

'By 2045, Scotland will have restored and regenerated biodiversity across our land, freshwater and seas.

Our natural environment, our habitats, ecosystems and species, will be diverse, thriving, resilient and adapting to climate change.

Regenerated biodiversity will drive a sustainable economy and support thriving communities, and people will play their part in the stewardship of nature for future generations'

This vision encapsulates three core ideas:

- That urgent action is needed at scale across our land and seascapes.
- That we are looking to the future – regenerating biodiversity and building resilience to climate change.
- That people and communities are central to a nature positive future.

Underneath the 2045 term vision sits a key milestone of halting biodiversity loss by 2030, in line with the Leaders' Pledge for Nature. This milestone is designed to enable Scottish Government to assess whether Scotland is on track to achieving the longer term vision.

This Strategy identifies the following six objectives which have shaped the development of actions to deliver Scotland's high-level goals, continuing progress towards halting the loss of biodiversity and being nature positive by 2030:

1. Accelerate restoration and regeneration.
2. Protect nature on land and at sea, across and beyond protected areas.
3. Embed nature-friendly farming, fishing and forestry.
4. Protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats.
5. Invest in nature.
6. Take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss.

These objectives are aligned to, and consider, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) drivers of biodiversity loss, within the Scottish context.

Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2024 – 2030

Five year Delivery Plans will set out in detail the actions needed to deliver the 2045 term vision and its outcomes. The first Plan 2024 – 2030 (CNPA085) was published in conjunction with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Priority actions are described under the six objectives set out in the Biodiversity Strategy (CNPA084).

The most significant actions to realise Objective 1: Accelerate restoration and regeneration are:

- Introduce Statutory Nature Restoration Targets.
- Introduce a programme of Ecosystem restoration including:
  - Using spatial evidence to identify and facilitate six exemplar large scale landscape restoration partnership projects with significant woodland components by 2025 and establish management structures, with restoration work progressing by 2030.
  - Implement Scotland's strategic approach for Scotland's rainforest which aims to improve its condition and health so that it can regenerate and expand whilst providing benefits to communities.
  - Continue our Peatland ACTION programme investing £250 million over 10 years to restore 250,000 hectares of degraded peat by 2030.
- Develop and implement the Scottish Plan for Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Surveillance, Prevention and Control.
- Increase resilience in coastal and marine systems by reducing key pressures and safeguard space for coastal habitat change.
- Substantially reduce deer densities across our landscapes in parallel with ensuring sustainable management of grazing by sheep to improve overall ecosystem health.
- Enhance water and air quality and undertake water management measures to enhance biodiversity and reduce negative impacts.
- Ensure grouse moor management sustains healthy biodiversity.

The most significant actions to realise Objective 2: Protect nature on land and at sea, across and beyond protected areas are:

- Ensure that at least 30% of land and sea is protected and effectively managed to support nature in good health by 2030 (30 by 30).
- Strengthen the role of National Parks and ensure they act as exemplars of biodiversity protection and recovery whilst continuing to support local communities.
- Fulfil the potential of National Nature Reserves for nature recovery.
- Expand and enhance Nature Networks and ecological connectivity.

- Champion new planning and development measures for protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
- Enhance biodiversity in Scotland's green and blue spaces.

The most significant actions to realise Objective 3: Embed nature-friendly farming, fishing and forestry are:

- Ensure increased uptake of high diversity, nature-rich, high-soil carbon, low-intensity farming methods while sustaining high-quality food production.
- Introduce an agricultural support framework which delivers for nature restoration and biodiversity alongside climate and food production outcomes.
- Ensure that forests and woodlands deliver increased biodiversity and habitat connectivity alongside timber and carbon outcomes.
- Implement further fisheries measures in vulnerable marine ecosystems and Priority Marine Features outside of Marine Protected Areas.
- Implement the policies in Scotland's Fisheries Management Strategy to deliver sustainable fisheries, using best available scientific advice, and minimising adverse impacts on non-target species and habitats.
- Implement Scotland's vision for sustainable aquaculture to minimise negative impacts on biodiversity.

The most significant actions to realise Objective 4: Protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats are:

- Revise the Scottish Biodiversity List of species and habitats that Ministers consider to be of principal importance for biodiversity conservation in Scotland.
- Develop effective species recovery, reintroduction and reinforcement programmes.
- Manage existing and emerging pressures to improve the conservation status of seabirds, marine mammals, elasmobranchs and wild salmon.

The most significant actions to realise Objective 5: Invest in nature are:

- Promote our natural capital market framework.
- Publish a Biodiversity Investment Plan for Scotland by the end of 2024.
- Public funding streams that contribute to nature restoration will be designed in a way that they can be matched or blended with private finance or investment.
- Provide direction on, and investment in, green skills and local economic opportunities supporting nature-based education, nature restoration skills and volunteering.

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The most significant actions to realise Objective 5: Take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss are:

- Engage and strengthen the connection between people and communities and nature.

- Embed biodiversity and nature in curriculum development.
- Mainstream and integrate biodiversity policy across government and address unsustainable supply and demand to reduce biodiversity impacts.
- Address unsustainable supply and demand to reduce biodiversity impacts.

A full set of actions are set out in Annex 1 of the Delivery Plan[16] (CNPA085).

Framework for 30 by 30 in Scotland

30 by 30, also known as 30x30, is Scottish Government's commitment to protect at least 30% of Scotland's land and sea for nature by 2030 (CNPA242). This reflects the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework's (CNPA239) global target to protect 30% of the planet for nature by 2030. This aligns with the European Union's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (CNPA240) which commits to legally protect a minimum of 30% of the European Union's land area.

The Scottish Government 2020 Statement of Intent on Biodiversity (CNPA241) outlined the commitment to protect at least 30% of Scotland's land and sea for nature by 2030 and commissioned NatureScot to develop and publish a National Framework and Implementation Plan for terrestrial delivery of 30 by 30 in Scotland. This commission covers the delivery of 30 by 30 on land (including freshwater and coastal sites) and does not cover marine. This project has been developed alongside that of Nature Networks and is key in the delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and contributing to the wider Environmental Strategy. Effective delivery of this target will significantly contribute towards tackling the nature and climate emergency.

The framework sets out the vision for 2030:

'By 2030 at least 30% of Scotland's land will be protected or conserved for biodiversity, delivering for people and climate. Sites showcase the best in nature restoration, protection and in mitigating and adapting to climate change. They help protect the rare and vulnerable, as well as delivering diverse, complex, and resilient ecosystems that provide important services that benefit everyone far into the future. These 30 by 30 sites are integrated into the wider landscape, acting as the beating, nature-rich hearts of Scotland's Nature Network and beyond.'

[16] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA085-scottish-biodiversity-delivery-plan-2024-2030.pdf

The core purpose of 30 by 30 is to help halt the decline in biodiversity in Scotland, not simply move the needle from our current position of 18.2% to having 30% of land under some form of area-based conservation. This is an issue of extent and effectiveness. As such, land will only contribute if it is considered as being of particular importance for biodiversity, ecosystem function and services and if we can be assured, as a protected area or 'other effective area-based conservation measure' (OECM), that it will continue to be so in the long-term.

The framework considers the following sites as contributing to the current 18.2% land-coverage in Scotland:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (inclusion of those for geological features on a case by case basis).
- Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation (collectively known as European sites).
- Ramsar sites.
- National Nature Reserves.

National Parks are recognised as a category of protected area under International Union for Conservation of Nature guidelines on categorisation of protected areas. However, in their current form in Scotland they do not meet the criteria as laid out in Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, with large proportions either not constituting 'important for biodiversity' or not effectively managed or conserved for nature. As such, the area within Scotland's National Parks under some form of protected area designation (as listed above), is included in the working baseline of 18.2%, however National Parks in their entirety are not.

There is a clear aspiration for National Parks to be exemplars of land management in Scotland and therefore for more of their area to meet the criteria for Scotland's 30 by 30 sites. This work will be taken forward simultaneously via Scottish Government's work to establish a new National Park(s).

Similarly National Scenic Areas do not meet the criteria set out in the 30 by 30 target and therefore do not count towards the 18.2%.

Currently 29% of the Cairngorms National Park is under management for ecosystem restoration. The Park Authority has set its own aspirations for increasing this percentage, with the National Park Partnership Plan 2022 (CNPA010) setting a target of at least 50% of the National Park to be managed principally for ecosystem restoration by 2045. See page 62 for further information.

Other sites that are of local importance for biodiversity (e.g. Local Nature Reserves and Local Nature Conservation Sites) along with areas being restored for nature or connecting and contributing towards Nature Networks, are not automatically included as contributing to the 30+% as many do not fully meet the criteria, primarily with regards to management. Individual sites within these categories may be included in future, and others may, via small changes to their current arrangements, be able to be included either as Protected Areas or, Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures have not been identified yet.

Around 52% (2,361 km^2) of the Cairngorms National Park's land is designated as a protected site that meets the 30 by 30 criteria (Figure 2) (CNPA243). The National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027 takes a different approach to ecological restoration, seeking to have at least 50% of the National Park managed principally for ecosystem restoration by 2045.

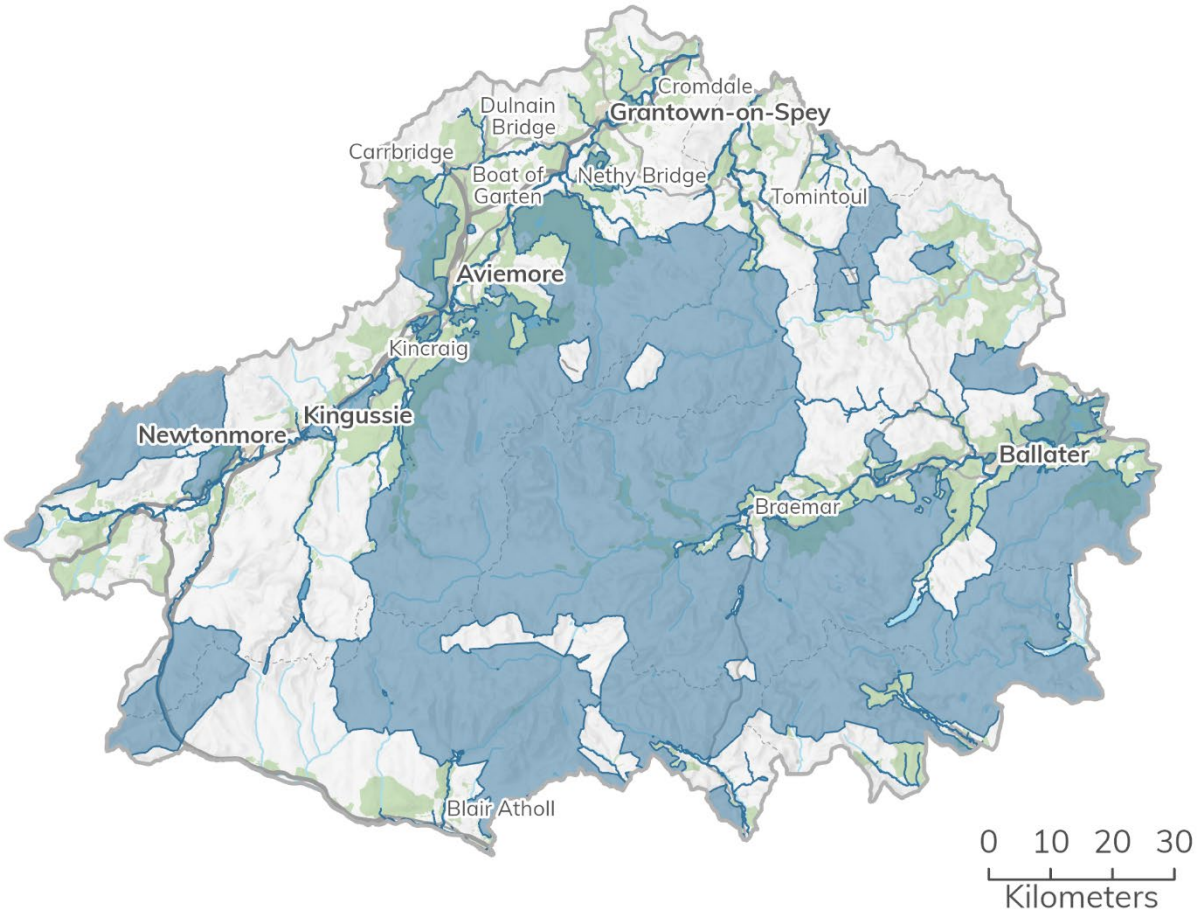

Figure 2 30 by 30 sites within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA243). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © NatureScot 2026.

Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024 – 2029

The Scottish National Adaptation Plan (CNPA245) sets out actions to build Scotland's resilience to climate change. The Adaptation Plan sets out a long term vision and defines Scotland's priorities for action over the years 2024 – 2029.

Scottish Government's vision is for a resilient, inclusive and well-adapted Scotland as the climate continues to change. The Plan contains five outcomes, of which Outcome one: Nature Connects (NC) is of direct relevance for this paper. This outcome states that '...efforts to address the risks posed by climate change, and to ensure a just transition, must have nature at their centre'. This is not only because climate change is degrading our natural environment, which must be protected and restored in its own right, and also for its value as 'natural capital'. But also because nature is one of the best tools we have to adapt to the changing climate and to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Outcome one is supported by six objectives, which are summarised here:

Objective: Nature-based solutions (NC1)
Action to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change is delivered through nature-based solutions including street trees, parks, raingardens, green roofs, improved walking, wheeling and cycling and water ways. Water resource planning to support drought and flooding resilience, improve water quality and quantity, and protect biodiversity is a key part of improving nature-based solutions. Actions include investment in blue and green infrastructure.

Objective: Landscape scale approaches (NC2)
Working for climate resilience at a landscape scale involves land management. It involves bringing together interested actors working at a large scale, often around a catchment, estuary or other recognisable landscape unit. This is a scale at which natural systems tend to work best and where there is often most opportunity to deliver real and lasting benefits. In this way, it is possible to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits that are more difficult to achieve by managing small sites individually.

Collaborating across landscapes means land managers (public, private or third sector) can achieve greater success than working in isolation. Scotland's soils are at increasing risk from the impacts of climate change, including flooding and drought. As soils are found across different landscapes performing multiple ecosystem functions, a landscape scale approach to improving soil condition and quality is needed.

Objective: Development planning (NC3)
Development planning (including local development plans and associated delivery programmes) takes current and future climate risks into account and is a key lever in enabling places to adapt. The Adaptation Plan highlights the adoption of National Planning Framework 4 as a key driver for change and the current work local planning authorities are undertaking to prepare new local development plans.

Objective: Nature Networks (NC4)
Nature Networks are highlighted as an effective tool for improving nature restoration, biodiversity, climate resilience and mitigating climate change, by improving ecological connectivity between habitats. Such connected ecosystems are inherently more resilient, and offer a place for nature to adapt and thrive. The creation of improved areas for nature will also help to overcome rural / urban boundaries, connect green and blue space, and promote a myriad of health and social benefits.

Objective: Marine ecosystems and the blue economy (NC5)
This objective relates to marine and coastal environments. The Cairngorms National Park does not contain any of these and therefore the objective is not summarised here.

Objective: Natural Carbon Stores and Sinks (NC6)
Scotland's natural carbon stores can be broadly categorised into peatland, forestry and woodland, and blue carbon habitats, such as saltmarsh and seabed sedimentary carbon. Protecting, managing and restoring our natural carbon stores is crucial as part of our just transition to net zero – both for their carbon sequestration and storage potential, and for their multiple co-benefits such as flood resilience and improved biodiversity.

Scottish Biodiversity List 2025
The Scottish Biodiversity List (CNPA246) is a list of animals, plants and habitats that Scottish Ministers consider to be of principal importance for biodiversity conservation in Scotland.

By identifying the species and habitats that are of the highest priority for biodiversity conservation, the list helps public bodies carry out their biodiversity duty (see page 19), but it is also a useful resource for anyone interested in nature conservation in Scotland.

Table 8 provides a summary of the fifty terrestrial habitats identified on the Scottish Biodiversity List that may be present in the Cairngorms National Park. Table 9 provides a summary of the 161 species that may be present within the Cairngorms National Park.

In summary, the Proposed Plan will need to take account of these habitats and species in the preparation of its spatial strategy and site assessment process.

Table 8 Terrestrial habitats on the Scottish Biodiversity List that may be present within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA246).

Common name	Component EUNIS habitat(s)	Habitat Group
Arable field margins	Arable land and market gardens	Grasslands and open
Hedgerows and road verges	Species-rich hedgerows of native species	Grasslands and open

Common name	Component EUNIS habitat(s)	Habitat Group
Lowland calcareous species-rich grasslands	Perennial calcareous grassland and basic steppes	Grasslands and open
Lowland neutral species-rich grassland	Permanent mesotrophic pastures and aftermath-grazed meadows	Grasslands and open
Lowland species-rich grasslands	Perennial calcareous grassland and basic steppes,	Grasslands and open
Lowland species-rich grasslands	Permanent mesotrophic pastures and aftermath-grazed meadows,	Grasslands and open
Lowland species-rich grasslands	Closed non-Mediterranean dry acid and neutral grassland	Grasslands and open
Species-rich fen-meadows and rush-pastures, in the farmed landscape	Moist or wet eutrophic and mesotrophic grassland	Grasslands and open
Upland Hay Meadows	Low and medium altitude hay meadows	Grasslands and open
Alpine and sub-alpine heath	Boreo-alpine and arctic heaths	Upland
Base-rich fens and calcareous spring mires	Base-rich fens and calcareous spring mires,	Upland
Base-rich fens and calcareous spring mires	British dioecious-yellow sedge fens,	Upland
Base-rich fens and calcareous spring mires	Hard water spring mires,	Upland
Base-rich fens and calcareous spring mires	British mica flushes	Upland
Dryas octopetala mats	Dryas octopetala mats	Upland
Inland cliffs, rock pavements and outcrops	Lowland northern- and middle-European siliceous cliffs,	Upland
Inland cliffs, rock pavements and outcrops	Almost bare rock pavements, including limestone pavements,	Upland
Inland cliffs, rock pavements and outcrops	Basic and ultra-basic inland cliffs	Upland
Juniperus communis scrub	Juniperus communis scrub	Upland
Montane grassland	Acid alpine and subalpine grassland; calcareous alpine and subalpine grassland	Upland
Montane willow scrub	Subarctic and alpine dwarf willow scrub	Upland
Moss and lichen dominated mountain summits, ridges	Moss and lichen dominated mountain summits, ridges and exposed slopes	Upland

Common name	Component EUNIS habitat(s)	Habitat Group
and exposed slopes including liverwort heath		
Screes	Temperate-montane calcareous and ultra basic screes,	Upland
Screes	Temperate-montane acid siliceous screes	Upland
Species-rich dry heath	Dry heaths	Upland
Tall herb communities	Subalpine moist or wet tall-herb and fern stands	Upland
Tall herb communities	moist or wet tall-herb and fern fringes and meadows	Upland
Upland grasslands	Low and medium altitude hay meadows,	Upland
Upland grasslands	Acid alpine and subalpine grassland; calcareous alpine and subalpine grassland	Upland
Upland grasslands	Subalpine moist or wet tall-herb and fern stands	Upland
Upland grasslands	moist or wet tall-herb and fern fringes and meadows	Upland
Upland scrub	Juniperus communis scrub, subarctic and alpine dwarf willow scrub	Upland
Wet heath	Wet heaths	Upland
Native, species-rich, connected urban habitats	Habitat complexes	Urban
Lowland rivers	Permanent non-tidal, smooth-flowing water courses	Wetland
Naturally low-nutrient lochs, ponds and pools	Permanent oligotrophic lakes, ponds and pools	Wetland
Naturally moderate and low nutrient lochs, ponds and pools	Permanent oligotrophic lakes, ponds and pools,	Wetland
Naturally moderate and low nutrient lochs, ponds and pools	Permanent mesotrophic lakes, ponds and pools	Wetland
Naturally moderate nutrient lochs, ponds and pools	Permanent mesotrophic lakes, ponds and pools	Wetland
Naturally nutrient-rich lochs, ponds and pools	Naturally nutrient-rich lochs, ponds and pools	Wetland
Raised and blanket bogs	Raised and blanket bogs	Wetland
Temporary ponds and pools	Temporary lakes, ponds and pools	Wetland

Common name	Component EUNIS habitat(s)	Habitat Group
Upland streams	Permanent non-tidal, fast, turbulent watercourses	Wetland
Valley mires	Valley mires, poor fens and transition mires	Wetland
Ancient birch woods	Non-riverine woodland with Betula, Populus tremula or Sorbus *aucuparia*	Woodland
Bog woodland	Boreal bog conifer woodland,	Woodland
Bog woodland	Mixed swamp woodland	Woodland
Caledonian Forest	Pinus sylvestris woodland south of the taiga	Woodland
Lowland Broadleaved Woodland	Meso- and eutrophic Quercus, Carpinus, Fraxinus, Acer, Tilia, Ulmus and related woodland	Woodland
Riparian woodland with alder, birch, aspen or willow	Riparian and gallery woodland, with dominant Alnus, Betula, Populus or Salix	Woodland

Table 9 Species on the Scottish Biodiversity List that may be present within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA246).

Common name	Scientific name	Taxonomic group	Geographic Domain
Common toad	Bufo bufo	Amphibian	Terrestrial and freshwater
Great crested newt	Triturus cristatus	Amphibian	Terrestrial and freshwater
Black grouse	Lyrurus tetrix	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Black-headed gull	Chroicocephalus ridibundus	Bird	All
Black-throated diver	Gavia arctica	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Capercaillie	Tetrao urogallus	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Common goldeneye	Bucephala clangula	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Common gull	Larus canus	Bird	All
Common kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Common redshank	Tringa totanus	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Common scoter	Melanitta nigra	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Common tern	Sterna hirundo	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters

Common name	Scientific name	Taxonomic group	Geographic Domain
Dotterel	Charadrius morinellus	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Eurasian curlew	Numenius arquata	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Eurasian oystercatcher	Haematopus ostralegus	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Eurasian wigeon	Marcea penelope	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Golden eagle	Aquila chrysaetos	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Golden plover	Pluvialis apricaria	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Great black-backed gull	Larus marinus	Bird	All
Great cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Great northern diver	Gavia immer	Bird	Territorial waters
Grey partridge	Perdix perdix	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Hen harrier	Circus cyaneus	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Herring gull	Larus argentatus	Bird	All
Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Lesser black-backed gull	Larus fuscus	Bird	All
Merlin	Falco columbarius	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Peregrine falcon	Falco peregrinus	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Purple sandpiper	Calidris maritima	Bird	Territorial waters
Red-breasted merganser	Mergus serrator	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Red-throated diver	Gavia stellata	Bird	Territorial waters
Ring ouzel	Turdus torquatus	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Ringed plover	Charadrius hiaticula	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Sanderling	Calidris alba	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Scottish crossbill	Loxia scotica	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Skylark	Alauda arvensis	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Slavonian grebe	Podiceps auritus	Bird	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Snipe	Gallinago gallinago	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Spotted flycatcher	Muscicapa striata	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Swift	Apus apus	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater

Common name	Scientific name	Taxonomic group	Geographic Domain
Twite	Linaria flavirostris	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Whinchat	Saxicola rubetra	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
White-tailed eagle	Haliaeetus albicilla	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Wood warbler	Phylloscopus sibilatrix	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Woodcock	Scolopax rusticola	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Yellowhammer	Emberiza citrinella	Bird	Terrestrial and freshwater
Arctic charr	Salvelinus alpinus	Fish	Terrestrial and freshwater
Atlantic salmon	Salmo salar	Fish	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Brook lamprey	Lampetra planeri	Fish	Terrestrial and freshwater
European eel	Anguilla anguilla	Fish	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
River lamprey	Lampetra fluviatilis	Fish	Territorial waters
Sea lamprey	Petromyzon marinus	Fish	Territorial waters
Sea trout	Salmo trutta	Fish	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Dark purple earthtongue	Microglossum atropurpureum	Fungi	Terrestrial and freshwater
Marsh honey fungus	Desarmillaria ectypa	Fungi	Terrestrial and freshwater
Grey waxcap	Cuphophyllus lacmus	Fungi	Terrestrial and freshwater
Singed waxcap	Hygrocybe turunda	Fungi	Terrestrial and freshwater
Star earthtongue	Geoglossum starbaeckii	Fungi	Terrestrial and freshwater
Tooth fungi assemblage	Hydnellum aurantiacum, H. caeruleum, H. cumulatum, H. ferrugineum, H. gracilipes, H. scabrosum, H. spongiosipes, Phellodon confluens, P. fuligineoalbus, P. melaleucus, P. niger, P. tomentosus, Sarcodon squamosus	Fungi	Terrestrial and freshwater
Violet coral	Clavaria zollingeri	Fungi	Terrestrial and freshwater

Common name	Scientific name	Taxonomic group	Geographic Domain
Mealy meadowcap	Pseudotricholoma metapodium	Fungi	Terrestrial and freshwater
Aspen hoverfly	Hammerschmidtia ferruginea	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Bearberry moth assemblage	Coranarta cordigera, Macaria carbonaria, Coleophora arctostaphyli	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Blood red long horned beetle	Anastrangalia sanguinolenta	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Bog pool dragonfly assemblage	Aeshna caerulea, A. juncea, Leucorrinia dubia, Somatochlora arctica, Sympetrum danae	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Caledonian pinewood spider assemblage	Robertus scoticus, Haplodrassus soerenseni, Philodromus margaritatus, P. emarginatus.	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Dark-bordered beauty	Epione vespertaria	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Dingy skipper	Erynnis tages	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Five spot ladybird	Coccinella quinquepunctata	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Narrow headed ant	Formica exsecta	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Grayling	Hipparchia semele	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Kentish glory	Endromis versicola	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Large heath	Coenonympha tullia	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Northern brown argus	Aricia artaxerxes	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Northern Damselfly	Coenagrion hastulatum	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Northern February red stonefly	Brachyptera putata	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Pearl-bordered fritillary	Boloria euphrosyne	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater

Common name	Scientific name	Taxonomic group	Geographic Domain
Peat bog spider assemblage	Centromerus levitarsis, Erigone welchi, Heliophanus dampfi, Maro lepidus, M. sublestus, Semljicola caliginosus	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Pine hoverfly	Blera fallax	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Small blue	Cupido minimus	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Small pearl-bordered fritillary	Boloria selene	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Small Scabious mining bee	Andrena marginata	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Vertigo snail assemblage	Vertigo angustior, V. geyeri, V. genesii	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Window winged sedge	Hagenella clathrata	Invertebrate	Terrestrial and freshwater
Elm lichen	Gyalecta ulmi	Lichen	Terrestrial and freshwater
Holly lichen	Pyrenula dermatodes	Lichen	Terrestrial and freshwater
Marine ciliated lichen	Anaptychia mamillata	Lichen	Terrestrial and freshwater
Matt felt lichen	Peltigera malacea	Lichen	Terrestrial and freshwater
Orange fruited elm lichen	Caloplaca luteoalba	Lichen	Terrestrial and freshwater
Specklebelly lichen	Pseudocyphellaria intricata	Lichen	Terrestrial and freshwater
-	Xerotrema megalospora	Lichen	Terrestrial and freshwater
Caledonian Pannaria	Fuscopannaria ignobilis	Lichen	Terrestrial and freshwater
Brown long-eared bat	Plecotus auritus	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Common pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pipistrellus	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Daubenton's bat	Myotis daubentonii	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Eurasian beaver	Castor fiber	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Eurasian otter	Lutra lutra	Mammal	Terrestrial, freshwater and territorial waters
Hedgehog	Erinaceus europaeus	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Mountain hare	Lepus timidus	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater

Common name	Scientific name	Taxonomic group	Geographic Domain
Nathusius' pipistrelle	Pipistrellus nathusii	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Red squirrel	Sciurus vulgaris	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Scottish wildcat	Felis silvestris silvestris	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Soprano pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pygmaeus	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Water vole	Arvicola amphibius	Mammal	Terrestrial and freshwater
Freshwater pearl mussel	Margaritifera margaritifera	Mollusc	Terrestrial and freshwater
Baltic bog-moss	Sphagnum balticum	Moss	Terrestrial and freshwater
Adder	Vipera berus	Reptile	Terrestrial and freshwater
Alpine blue-sowthistle	Cicerbita alpina	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Alpine gentian	Gentiana nivalis	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Alpine milk-vetch	Astragalus alpinus	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Alpine pearlwort	Sagina saginoides	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Ash	Fraxinus excelsior	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Aspen	Populus tremula	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Common juniper	Juniperus communis	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Crab apple	Malus sylvestris	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Hawkweed – Scottish endemic species	Hieracium – Scottish endemic species	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Intermediate wintergreen	Pyrola media	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Lady's mantle - Scottish endemic species	Alchemilla - Scottish endemic species	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Montane willow species	Salix species	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Mountain sandwort	Sabulina rubella	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater

Common name	Scientific name	Taxonomic group	Geographic Domain
Oblong woodsia	Woodsia ilvensis	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
One-flowered Wintergreen	Moneses uniflora	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Pillwort	Pilularia globulifera	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Purple oxytropis	Oxytropis halleri	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Rock whitebeam	Sorbus rupicola	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Slender naiad	Najas flexilis	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Small cow-wheat	Melampyrum sylvaticum	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Tufted saxifrage	Saxifraga cespitosa	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Twinflower	Linnaea borealis	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Whorled Solomon's-seal	Polygonatum verticillatum	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Wood Bitter-vetch	Vicia orobus	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Wych elm	Ulmus glabra	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Yellow marsh saxifrage	Saxifraga hirculus	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater
Yellow oxytropis	Oxytropis campestris	Vascular plant	Terrestrial and freshwater

Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017 – 2027

Pollinators are an integral part of our biodiversity. If we lose the pollination services provided by insects such as bees and flies, we risk damaging not only plants and animals but agricultural yields, our economy and our wellbeing. However, many of our pollinators are under threat. Current pressures include land-use changes, land management, pesticides, pollution, invasive non-native species, diseases and climate change.

The Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017 – 2027 (CNPA247) sets out Scotland's response to these threats. Identifying the issues, it sets out what needs to be done and, through the Implementation Plan, a phased plan to deliver a healthy future for our pollinators.

The aim of the Strategy is:

'To address the causes of decline in populations, diversity and range of our pollinator species, and to help them thrive into the future.'

Its objectives are:

1. To make Scotland more pollinator-friendly, halting and reversing the decline in native pollinator populations.
2. To improve our understanding of pollinators and their pollination service.
3. To manage the commercial use of pollinators to benefit native pollinators.
4. To raise awareness and encourage action across sectors.
5. To monitor and evaluate whether pollinators are thriving.

The outcomes are that by 2027:

- Action to support pollinators will be firmly embedded in relevant strategies, policies and practices across Government and the public sector.
- Our understanding of pollinator ecology, status and trends is improved to allow policies and practices to be informed by the best evidence.
- Regulation of honey bee and bumble bee importation will minimise the risks of introducing new pests and diseases.
- Local bee-based industries will be better supported.
- We will have a wide understanding of the value of Scotland's pollinating insects and strong public support to restore populations and habitats, monitor populations and research pollinator biodiversity.
- There will be a strong network of good-quality pollinator habitats in place.
- It can be demonstrated that Scotland's pollinators are thriving.

The resulting Strategy includes action for everyone, from Government and its agencies to conservation groups, farmers, landowners, managers, gardeners, agricultural business, commercial business and members of the public. It aims to secure an essential ecological service and encompasses land use, climate change, agriculture, biodiversity and forestry policy and practice.

The Park Authority is currently preparing its own Cairngorms Pollinator Strategy, which will help support the delivery of the Scottish strategy's objectives and outcomes. The Cairngorms strategy is being prepared in line with the delivery of the next Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (see page 63 for more information on the Action Plan) (CNPA253).

The Proposed Plan may support these strategies through it support for nature networks.

Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029

Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029 (CNPA249) has been prepared in line with the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 (CNPA 223) and set out a 10-year framework for managing Scotland's commitment to expanding and restoring our woodlands and forests.

The existing commitment for forestry in Scotland includes:

- 21% (of the total area) increase in forest and woodland cover by 2032.
- Increase in use of Scottish wood products in construction by 3.0 million m^3 by 2031 / 2032.
- Increase the amount of native woodland in good condition.
- Create 3000 – 5000 ha of new native woodland per year.
- Restore approximately 10,000ha of new native woodland into satisfactory condition.
- Ensure protected sites are under good conservation management.

The Strategy contains a 50-year vision for forestry in Scotland:

'In 2070, Scotland will have more forests and woodlands, sustainably managed and better integrated with other land uses. These will provide a more resilient, adaptable resource, with greater natural capital value, that supports a strong economy, a thriving environment, and healthy and flourishing communities.'

This vision is supported by three objectives that must be delivered in the 10-years of the Strategy:

- Increase the contribution of forests and woodlands to Scotland's sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
- Improve the resilience of Scotland's forests and woodlands and increase their contribution to a healthy and high-quality environment.
- Increase the use of Scotland's forest and woodland resources to enable more people to improve their health, well-being and life chances.

In the Cairngorms National Park, the vision and objectives of the Strategy are supported by the National Park Partnership Plan and Cairngorms Forest Strategy 2018 (see page 64) (CNPA255).

Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal 2009

The Policy (CNPA250) provides direction for decisions on woodland removal in Scotland, which it defines as 'the permanent removal of woodland for the purposes of conversion to another type of land use'.

Woodland removal can be at a local, regional or national level, deliberate or accidental, and can take place quickly or over time scales measured in decades. It does not include the removal of trees associated with the internal re-design of woodlands to meet the UK Forestry Standard (see page 58).

Principal aims of this policy is to:

- To provide a strategic framework for appropriate woodland removal.
- To support the maintenance and expansion of forest cover in Scotland.
- To contribute towards achieving an appropriate balance between forested and non-forested land in Scotland.
- To support climate change mitigation and adaptation in Scotland.
- To provide a sound basis for Scotland's participation in the global debate and actions on deforestation.
- To develop a clear understanding of the nature and extent of future woodland removal in Scotland

Its guiding principles are:

- There is a strong presumption in favour of protecting Scotland's woodland resources.
- Woodland removal should be allowed only where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits. In appropriate cases a proposal for compensatory planting may form part of this balance.
- Approval for woodland removal should be conditional on the undertaking of actions to ensure full delivery of the defined additional public benefits.
- Planning conditions and agreements are used to mitigate the environmental impacts arising from development and Forestry Commission Scotland will also encourage their application to development-related woodland removal.
- Where felling is permitted but woodland removal is not supported, conditions conducive to woodland regeneration should be maintained through adherence to good forestry practice as defined in the UK Forestry Standard.

The policy also sets out criteria for determining the acceptability of woodland removal. Woodland removal, without a requirement for compensatory planting, is most likely to be appropriate where it would contribute significantly to:

- Enhancing priority habitats and their connectivity.
- Enhancing populations of priority species.
- Enhancing nationally important landscapes, designated historic environments and geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Improving conservation of water or soil resources. Or
- Public safety.

Woodland removal, with compensatory planting, is most likely to be appropriate where it would contribute significantly to:

- Helping Scotland mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Enhancing sustainable economic growth or rural / community development.
- Supporting Scotland as a tourist destination.
- Encouraging recreational activities and public enjoyment of the outdoor environment.
- Reducing natural threats to forests or other land. Or
- Increasing the social, economic or environmental quality of Scotland's woodland cover.

Together with National Planning Framework 4, it sets a strong presumption against the removal of woodland.

UK Forestry Standard 2023

The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) (CNPA251) is the technical standard for sustainable forest management in the UK. It sets out the approach of the four governments of the UK, and defines the requirements and provides guidance for foresters on how to practise sustainable forest management in the UK. In this way, it provides a basis for operating grant schemes and official controls and support for regulatory processes. It also provides the foundation for a number of voluntary certification and quality assurance schemes used in the UK, and for assessing compliance with environmental management standards.

The UK Forestry Standard is based on sustainable forest management criteria agreed internationally, implemented in a way that is appropriate to the UK. It is intended to be used by professional foresters such as forest owners, managers and practitioners, regulators and advisers. It will also be of interest to other land managers and stakeholders.

Sustainable forest management is the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way and at a rate that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity and vitality, and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems. Central to sustainable forest management in the UK is the concept of achieving a balanced set of objectives. It is vital that all parties involved in applying the UK Forestry Standard understand the importance of achieving a balance of objectives. The landowner, forest manager and interested stakeholders all have a role in determining the most appropriate balance of objectives for the local circumstances.

From a local development plan perspective, it provides helpful context for considering proposals that may have implications for the management of forests and woodlands within and overlapping the National Park boundary.

Water-Resilient Places: A Policy Framework for Surface Water Management and Blue – Green Infrastructure

Water Resilient Places (CNPA252) focuses on addressing challenges presented by the current climate emergency, namely tackling surface water flooding. The framework focuses on actions to deliver surface water management and flood resilience in Scotland. Given the complexity of surface water management, the aim is to switch from the current position, where a few organisations are tasked with dealing with water issues to the position where the issues are supported by a broader range of organisations. The framework has identified six key elements which are required to deliver water resilient places:

- Decision makers in all sectors contribute to water resilience.
- Integrated flood risk management and drainage approach.
- Blue-green infrastructure - first approach and retrofit.
- Co-ordination of policy, standards, advice and support.
- Strategic drainage partnerships for towns and cities.
- Finance.

Key agency documents

Developing with Nature guidance

NatureScot provides guidance (CNPA244) on securing positive effects for biodiversity from local development to support National Planning Framework 4's policy 3(c) (CNPA008). The considerations are in general too detailed for consideration in the

preparation of the Proposed Plan, however, it does provide information on how the principles for biodiversity enhancement that are set out in Scottish Government's draft planning guidance (see page 33) may be secured, which may be applicable. These will be dependent on the nature of the proposed development and are too comprehensive to summarise in this schedule. The guidance may be accessed on NatureScot's website (CNPA244):

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA244-Developing-with-Nature-guidance.pdf

National Park Authority documents

Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027

One of the Cairngorms National Park's aims is to 'to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area'. This is supported in the National Park Partnership Plan (CNPA010) overarching outcome of:

- A carbon negative and biodiversity rich National Park with better functioning, better connected and more resilient ecosystems.

The outcome is supported by a number of objectives, of which the following are relevant to this topic.

Outcome A1. Net zero aims to ensure the Cairngorms National Park reaches net zero as soon as possible and contributes all it can to helping Scotland meet its net zero commitments. While it is not supported by any specific actions relating to natural heritage or biodiversity, the Partnership Plan recognises the important role nature-based solutions play in reaching net zero as part of a just transition.

Outcome A2. Woodland Expansion aims to increase the amount of woodland in the National Park to support larger, more natural woodlands, expanding in places up to a natural treeline, providing connections across river catchments and around the central core of the mountains. It sets a target that by 2045, a minimum of 35,000 ha of new woodland cover will be created, which:

- Includes a minimum of 80% native woodland.
- Includes a minimum of 10,000 ha of natural regeneration without planting.
- Results in no wholesale conversion of enclosed, in-bye agricultural land to forestry.
- Minimises the amount of fencing in the National Park by favouring establishment through herbivore management and removing redundant fences.

Outcome A3. Peatland Restoration aims to restore and manage peatland within the National Park to reduce carbon emissions and improve biodiversity. It sets out targets for:

- A minimum of 38,000 ha peatland is under restoration management by 2045.
- 80% of all drains are restored by 2035.
- All erosion features are restored by 2050.

Outcome A5. Moorland management aims to increase the sustainability of moorland management in the National Park to ensure greater species and structural diversity in moorland areas. Its target is for a measurable and sustained increase in the home range, occupation and breeding success of golden eagle, hen harrier, merlin and peregrine across the National Park.

Outcome A8. Framing commits the Park Authority and its partners to work with farms in the National Park to reduce their carbon footprint, conserve soil carbon, encourage sustainable production and deliver increased biodiversity on in-bye land. Its target is for carbon and biodiversity plans to be in place for farms across the National Park by 2028.

This paper focuses on the habitats and species of peatlands, moorlands and farmland. Matters relating to peatlands, erosion, moorland management and farming are also covered in Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources.

Outcome A9. Freshwater systems, aims to restore and connect rivers to thriving wetlands and floodplains as part of a wider restoration of the National Parks freshwater systems, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Its target is that 70% of the National Park's rivers are in good ecological condition by 2045, with ecological structure, function and productivity not deviating significantly from a near-natural system

condition. Matters relating to water management are to be covered in Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management.

Outcome A10. Ecological network aims to connect habitats and ecosystems across all different types of land use in the National Park to create an ecological network, which will bring wider landscape, biodiversity and people benefits. Its target is to establish a framework for an ecological network across the National Park by 2025. This outcome supports National Planning Framework 4's (CNPA008) requirements to support nature networks. The Park Authority's proposed approach to this is covered on page 193.

Outcome A11. Ecological restoration aims to improve ecosystem functionality and resilience across the National Park by increasing the area of land managed principally for ecological restoration. Its aim is for at least 50% of the National Park to be managed principally for ecosystem restoration by 2045. The local development plan may support this aim through its spatial strategy and its support for nature networks.

Outcome A12. Cairngorms Nature Index aims to develop a more complete understanding of the National Park's species, habitats and ecosystems, and help monitor long-term progress through a dedicated Cairngorms Nature Index (CNPA274). The Park Authority will use this data to better target resources and action in the National Park, and to understand the impact that its policies and projects, including the local development plan, are having to ensure that the Park Authority and its partners are able to meet the 2030 and 2045 targets for biodiversity. Further information on the Cairngorms Nature Index is provided on page 100.

Outcome A13. Species Recovery aims to ensure species thrive in the National Park with key assemblages across the Cairngorms within the semi-natural landscape. Its target is for priority species, as identified by the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNPA253), progress along the Species Recovery Curve (see Figure 55) from research to developing solutions to sustainable management. The local development plan should help deliver this target through the safeguarding of priority habitats and species.

Outcome A14. Green investment, which aims to use private green investment in the National Park to fund nature's recovery and share the benefits between communities, landowners, workers and wider society. Its target is for the Cairngorms National Park attracts an increasing amount of green finance per annum for projects that deliver multiple benefits (carbon, biodiversity, flood mitigation, community).

The local development plan has the potential to support all of these outcomes through its support for nature networks. The proposed approach to nature networks in the National Park is covered on page 193. Outcome A9. Freshwater systems may also be supported by ensuring that development does not negatively impact water quality. The Habitats Regulations Appraisal will be a key too in ensuring that damage does not occur.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024

The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNPA253) is a partnership that builds on the pervious Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2003 – 2013 and Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013 – 2018. It contains three overarching aims:

- Support landscape scale conservation and collaboration to deliver ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management, balancing environmental, social and economic factors.
- Deliver focused action to improve the conservation status of threatened or declining species.
- Engaging, inspiring and encouraging local communities and communities of interest to value and care for nature, be proud of the conservation work in the Cairngorms and want to do something to protect and enhance their natural heritage.

The these aims seek to deliver a number of objectives. Landscape scale conservation objectives are:

- Bigger, more natural woodlands, expanding up to a natural treeline, providing connections across catchments and around the central core of the mountains.
- More natural, dynamic rivers connected to functioning wetlands and floodplains.
- Restored peatlands stopping the loss of carbon, improving water quality and helping alleviate flooding.
- More sustainably managed moorlands with more structural and species diversity and pockets and strips of trees and shrubs on moorland edges, steep slopes, in gullies and around woodland remnants.
- More habitat suitable for breeding waders as part of agricultural systems.
- Wildlife-rich grassland and woodland on productive, profitable farms.

The objective for focused action for priority species objectives is:

- Getting species back on a sustainable footing, where they are no longer reliant on targeted action, but have been recovered within a robust and resilient network of habitats.

The priority species identified in the Action Plan are listed in Table 14.

The objectives for engaging people are:

- Raising awareness and understanding of land management and clearly demonstrating the benefits that conservation brings for people as well as wildlife.
- More engagement with nature: more people involved in decision making, getting out and enjoying it and helping to look after it

Work is underway to develop the next Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. It will be published in April 2026.

Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy 2018

Section A159 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended (CNPA003), requires that planning authorities prepare a forestry and woodland strategy.

The Cairngorms Forest Strategy (CNPA255) was adopted in 2018 and is a key document in the delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan. It provides strategic direction on future forest management and the restoration of woodlands in the Cairngorms National Park over the next two decades. Specifically, the Forest Strategy will:

- Help to deliver the forest related elements of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2017 – 2022 (CNPA010).
- Encourage new woodland creation that complements other land uses and the landscapes of the Cairngorms National Park.
- Identify key issues and opportunities affecting forests, woodlands and trees in the Cairngorms National Park and provide policy guidance.
- Assist in the appraisal of funding applications for woodland creation.
- Promote awareness of the value of encouraging more woodland creation in the Cairngorms National Park and encourage greater collaboration between agencies, the forest industry, landowners, land managers and communities.

The Strategy contains ten strategic objectives:

- Promote the creation of new woodlands that complement other land use
- Enhance the condition of existing forests
- Restore lost or vulnerable forest ecosystems
- Encourage natural regeneration of native forests
- Promote the creation and enhancement of productive forests
- Protect forests from disease and invasive species
- Increase employment in the forestry sector

- Encourage innovation in the use and marketing of native forest products
- Promote access and active enjoyment of forests
- Promote community involvement in forest management.

The Strategy identifies significant potential for woodland expansion in the National Park. The Strategy recognises that the National Park hosts a wide range of other open habitats important for the wildlife they support, the jobs they provide and the wider ecosystem services they deliver. These include farmland and moorlands providing habitat for wading birds; peatlands, essential for storing carbon; and species-rich grasslands all hosting a broad diversity of flora and fauna. If carried out sensitively, new woodland creation and management will complement and not conflict with these other important land uses.

The Park Authority wish to strengthen and further develop a forest habitat network across the Cairngorms, including between river catchments. This would allow a wide range of woodland species to disperse, recolonise and migrate more easily, while delivering a range of wider benefits such as locally sourced timber and other wood products, improved 'natural flood management', water quality improvements and carbon sequestration. The Park Authority and its partners need to do this with care to minimise the potential risks of the spread of disease, invasive species and wildfire.

Supplementary guidance (2025) to the Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy 2018

Since the Forest Strategy (CNPA255) was published in 2018, a new National Park Partnership Plan (2022 – 2027) (CNPA010) has been published, national land use policy has evolved, and some common issues and learning have emerged. The supplementary guidance (CNPA256) to the strategy updates policy guidance in light of these changes, and to aid the development and assessment of forestry applications. It contains guidance on:

- Forest habitat networks – natural regeneration.
- Integration with agricultural land.
- Integration with peatlands.
- Deer management.
- Deer fencing.
- Wildfire.
- Productive woodland.
- Consultation and community engagement.

Cairngorms 2030

The Cairngorms 2030 (CNPA528) is a National Heritage Lottery Fund programme that encompasses 20 long-term projects designed to bring about transformational change in the Cairngorms, benefitting people's health and wellbeing, delivering on climate change and enhancing nature across the National Park.

In relation to natural heritage the restoring and enhancing landscapes projects are of relevance. These are designed to deliver a number of Partnership Plan Outcomes (CNPA010), with the following core aims:

- Expanding woodland cover by 1,000 hectares.
- Restoring 3,500 hectares of the Park's peatland.
- Exploring net zero farming with a group of six trial farms.
- Reducing flooding risk in the most at-risk communities.
- Securing additional green private finance for the benefit of nature and communities.

The projects are as follows.

Climate resilient catchments

This project aims to increase climate change resilience to reduce flood risk and ensure that rivers continue to deliver for the people and wildlife that depend upon them.

Cairngorms future farming

This project will help farmers in the Cairngorms National Park achieve lower carbon emissions and greater biodiversity on their farms without impacting their financial 'bottom line'. The project builds on work being undertaken around Scotland on reducing carbon emissions in farming but applies them to the specific circumstances of the Cairngorms. This is important to ensure that farms here can achieve carbon neutrality, improve their profitability and climate change resilience, while protecting and restoring the natural environment.

Nature recovery

This project will work with specific communities of land managers and landowners, to co-develop strategies for land management that increases the biodiversity and ecological health of their land while also considering Highland cultural heritage, traditions, and employment.

Green finance and community wealth building

The Cairngorms National Park has significant potential for peatland restoration, woodland expansion, flood management, low carbon farming, biodiversity offsetting

and many other potential nature-based solutions. Working with the Palladium Group, National Parks Partnership, public bodies and local land managers, this project will look to pilot an approach that blends sources of public and private finance to deliver our net zero and biodiversity targets, whilst also providing long-term benefits (and income) for land managers, investors and local communities.

Landscape and communities

We know the landscape of the Cairngorms will change over time, particularly due to the climate emergency and our collective effort to achieve net zero by 2045. There are, however, many different options for landscape change to achieve net zero, and we need to ensure that communities are engaged with the selection of those options which protect and enhance the special landscape qualities which they most value. This project will explore how communities perceive, experience and value the landscape of the National Park, identify special landscape qualities and their relative importance, and establish community preferences for different options for landscape change[17].

Peatland restoration

Our deep peatlands – the great carbon stores of the National Park – currently release thousands of tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere and our water courses each year as around 90% are in poor condition. This project will seek to repair around 3,500 ha of these damaged areas and deliver significant ecological benefits through restoration. That's over 2½ football pitches of restored peatland per day over a five-year period[18].

Woodland expansion

Woodland expansion is recognised as one of the best methods of sequestering carbon from the atmosphere. The woodland expansion programme will be a major carbon sink in the Cairngorms landscape, helping absorb and store large amounts of CO_2 and contributing to our net zero targets. Through this project we will add 1,000 ha of new or expanded woodland, or around five football pitches of new woodland per week over a five-year period.

[17] Further information on this project and its implications for the Proposed Plan is covered in the Schedule 6: Landscape.
[18] Further information on this project and its implications for the Proposed Plan is covered in Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources.

Local authority documents

Local outcome improvement plans

Local outcome improvement plans outline key priorities for each community board area that have been identified through a range of engagement processes and are based on the needs of local communities. They set out an approach to working with and empowering our local communities, enabling them to contribute to, influence and shape locally identified actions around the priorities to achieve improved outcomes for their areas. The five local authorities which overlap the Cairngorms National Park all have individual local outcome improvement plans (in some cases referred to as community plans).

While the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (CNPA010) is the source of the vision for the local development plan (as explained in Schedule 1: Plan outcomes) the local development plan may support the delivery of the vision and priorities of local outcome improvement plans. A summary of issues relating to this schedule for each local authority are set out below.

Aberdeenshire Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2017 – 2027

The Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership's Local outcomes improvement plan (CPNA636) sets a 10 year vision. One of two current priorities agreed in September 2024 is place based community planning. While there are no local place plans registered covering any areas in the National Park, the Proposed Plan will have regard to the community action plans.

Angus Community Plan 2022 – 2030

The Angus Partnership's community plan (CPNA637) has a vision for 2030 that Angus is a great place to live, work and visit. 'Caring for our Place' is one of three priorities to achieve the vision. Under this priority, the plan commits to protect and enhance the natural and built environment.

2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan

Natural heritage issues are not considered in the Highland outcome improvement plan (CNPA638).

2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan Delivery Plan

The Highland outcome improvement plan delivery plan (CNPA1091) introduces cross-cutting themes to deliver the three priorities (people, place, prosperity). Under the 'whole family and community-based approaches' cross-cutting theme, the delivery plan states

that the partnership will 'explore opportunities to maximise natural capital through the built environment lens'. A stated deliverable is to 'apply a natural capital approach by mapping and quantifying natural capital assets to identify existing provision of benefits and mapping where there is demand for more benefits from nature to identify opportunities which have multiple benefits for both people and nature'. A measure of success will be 'the utilisation of the natural capital tool being developed by NatureScot will support action planning and decision making locally'.

Moray Local Outcome Improvement Plan v2 (2016 – 2026)

Natural heritage issues are not considered in the Moray Planning Partnership's local outcome improvement plan (CNPA639).

Perth and Kinross Community Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) 2022 – 2032

Natural heritage issues are not considered in the Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership's community plan (CNPA640).

Community action plans

Many communities within the National Park are involved in preparing community action plans. These are important documents that set out the aspirations of the local communities and will continue to be taken into account in the preparation of the Proposed Plan. The following action plans identified issues and / or priorities relating to natural heritage.

Blair Atholl Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA064) contains priority to 'allow nature to thrive', by improving biodiversity at various locations and awareness raising. The listed actions are:

- More wildflower planting
- Install community bird feeders at key locations
- Village 'Open Gardens' week
- Illustrated information boards on local wildlife
- Estates to maintain access to walks
- Develop community garden / wildflower meadow at park
- Local wildlife group – offering talks to increase awareness
- Tourism Management Strategy to protect environment

Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Under the priority to improve the villages visual appearance, the Action Plan (CNPA125) aims to plant more trees, shrubs and flowers in the village and replace damaged young trees along the main road,

Dulnain Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA331) contains a priority to promote biodiversity in the village and woodlands. The listed actions are:

- Plant different types of native trees in underused open land – without obscuring the views
- Plant more wildflowers to attract insects
- Allow some grass to grow long in summer months to allow variety of flowers to bloom e.g. at eastern end of park
- More bird boxes in the village

Grantown-on-Spey Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA065) contains a priority to 'improve the town's biodiversity'. The listed suggested actions are:

- Pollinator planting in public gardens / wildflower planting in Square around trees.
- Start small by clearing up litter and weeds in and around town.
- Plant more tree.
- Promotion of recycling and waste reduction to encourage the circular economy.
- Maintenance of Kylintra Meadow.
- Make more of community garden at townhouse.
- Improve look of park area / revive community orchard opposite Craiglynne Hotel – new seats, picnic tables and tidy up.
- Dredge the skating pond.
- Recognise Grantown-on-Spey as a 'swift-friendly town' – protect nesting sites and add new boxes in appropriate places.
- Manage trees in Square and replace with native species if needed.
- Wildflower meadow in Grant Park.
- Wildflowers on roundabouts / also remove non-native trees.

Kincraig Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA 127) contains a priority for the provision of community owned green spaces to improve biodiversity. The listed actions are:

- Allotments
- Community orchard and community garden

- Green gym
- Wildflower areas / hedges

Kingussie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA066) contains two priorities that relate to natural heritage:

- Protect access to local green spaces
- Continue improvement work on Gynack Gardens.

Both of these priorities involve the management of areas in which natural assets exist (i.e. Tom Baraidh Woods and Gynack Gardens) and the listed actions are:

- Work with local estates and landowners to encourage conservation and expansion of native woodland and explore options to bring land into public/community ownership.
- Manage local wildlife and conservation projects including swift-friendly Kingussie, wildflower planting, and a local wildlife group.
- Work with local crofters and landowners to create community food growing enterprise to grow vegetables for local people, make local supply chains,
- Work with local landowners, Kingussie Community Development Company, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Insh Marshes and Cairngorms Connect.
- Plant fruit trees at Gynack Gardens for community orchard.
- Plant more native plants and those suited to Highland climate at Gynack Gardens.
- Create a wildlife corner with bee hotel, wildflowers etc. at Gynack Gardens.

Baseline natural heritage matters

This schedule summarises a number of matters relating to the natural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park, including protected sites, priority habitats, and priority species, including capercaillie.

There are links between this policy area and:

- Schedule 1: Plan outcomes
- Schedule 3: Site assessment methodology
- Schedule 4: Climate change
- Schedule 6: Landscape
- Schedule 7: Historic and cultural heritage
- Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources
- Schedule 11: Sustainable transport
- Schedule 13: Housing
- Schedule 16: Blue and green infrastructure

- Schedule 17: Play, recreation and sport
- Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management
- Schedule 21: Economic development
- Schedule 23: Tourism.

Overview

Nature and its vital contributions to people, which together embody biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are deteriorating worldwide, with human actions threatening more species with global extinction now than ever before. For terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, land-use change has had the largest relative negative impact on nature since 1970, followed by the direct exploitation, in particular overexploitation, of animals, plants and other organisms, mainly via harvesting, logging, hunting and fishing. Climate change is a direct driver that is increasingly exacerbating the impact of other drivers on nature and human well-being[19].

Scotland ranks amongst those countries where habitats and species have been most depleted by human impacts through history. The State of Nature Report 2023 (CNPA259) states that declines in biodiversity may be driven by the intensive use of our land for agriculture and forestry, overgrazing and the use of our seas for fishing. These impacts are exacerbated by climate change, pollution, inappropriate development, invasive non-natives and disease.

As stated in National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008), the Cairngorms National Park is a national asset with internationally significant habitats and landscapes. The National Park covers less than two per cent of the UK landmass but is home to 25% of its rare animal, insect, lichen, fungi and insect species. Habitats are rich and varied from, montane alpine habitats high on the Cairngorms plateaux; freshwater and riparian habitats of the renowned salmon rivers the Spey, Dee, Tay and South Esk; peatland habitats important for storing carbon; Caledonian pine woodlands, home of the rare capercaillie; to stands of aspen in Strathspey supporting rare insects and fungi. The foundations for ecosystem restoration, for habitats to reach their full ecological potential on a grand scale, are impressive.

[19] For further information on the global context, see https://zenodo.org/records/6417333/files/202206_IPBES%20GLOBAL%20REPORT_FULL_DIGITAL_MARCH%202022.pdf?download=1 (CNPA258)

Protected sites

Protected sites help to ensure that their natural features of special interest remain in good health for all to enjoy, now and in the future. International directives and treaties, domestic legislation and policy, or local needs and interests may call for the designation of sites.

Many organisations have roles in protected areas, including the National Park Authority. NatureScot directly manages some, advises on the management of others and monitors the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and international sites, such as Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. Monitoring the condition of these protected sites helps us to maintain their value. Where serious issues are uncovered, NatureScot, Scottish Ministers or courts may use various orders to compel conservation efforts.

The Park Authority has a duty to ensure that the local development plan does not have any adverse effects on international sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Therefore, during the preparation of the Proposed Plan, a Habitats Regulation Appraisal must be undertaken in accordance with The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. If the appraisal indicates that adverse effects are possible, then the Park Authority will need to undertake an 'Appropriate Assessment' of the implications for any designations in view of the site's conservation objectives, in order to avoid any adverse impacts, before the plan can be adopted. If an appropriate assessment is required, the Park Authority must consult NatureScot.

This schedule provides a summary of the protected sites within and overlapping the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA260). A key element of this is an appraisal of the site's qualifying features and identifying those with features that are in unfavourable condition (Figure 3). Information on protected sites has been extracted from the following Scotland Environment dashboard and is up-to-date as of the dashboard's update on 11 September 2024 (CNPA261):

- https://informatics.sepa.org.uk/ProtectedNatureSites/

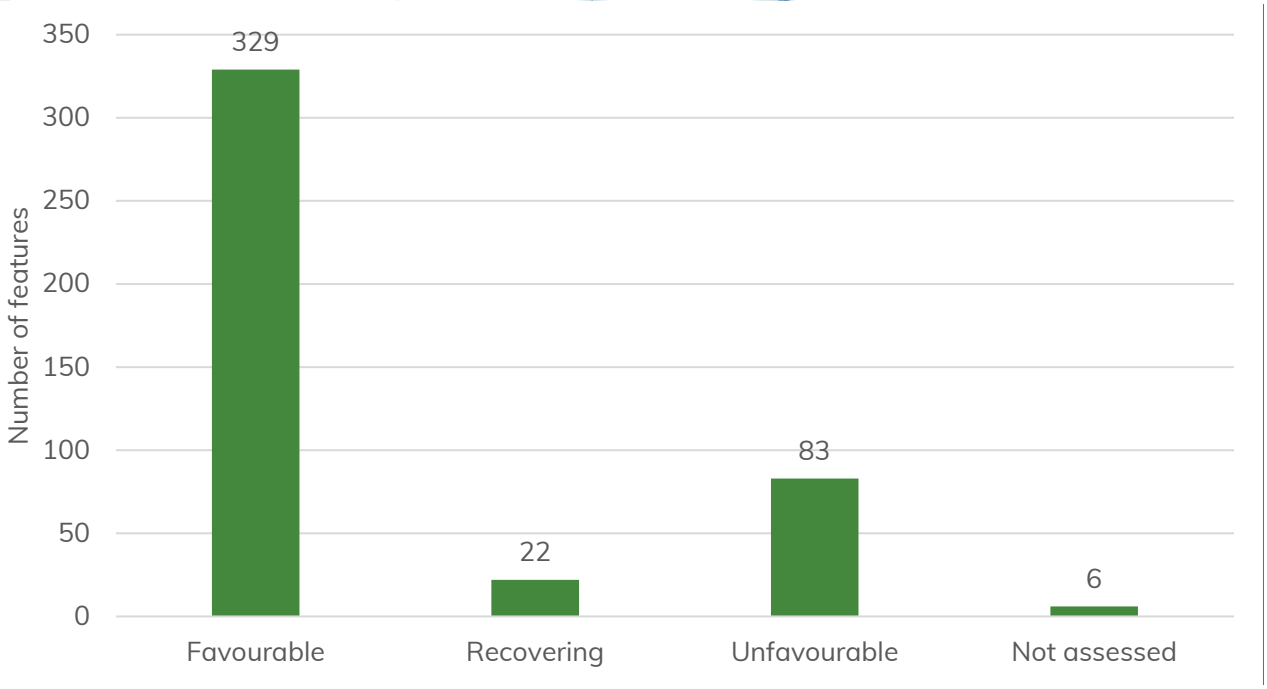

Figure 3 Condition of qualifying features of Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary as of 11 September 2024 (Source: NatureScot) (CNPA261).

Information on the protected sites considered in this paper is contained within the following supporting document (CNPA969):

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/CNPA969-Cairngorms-National-Park-protected-site-information.pdf

International designations

Almost half of the Cairngorms National Park is designated as European sites comprising of Special Areas of Conservation (CNPA262) and Special Protection Areas (CNPA263). These areas are designated to meet the needs of European Union directives and policies[20]. There are also three Ramsar sites within the National Park, which are classified under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (CNPA264).

Special Areas of Conservation

There are 23 Special Areas of Conservation (Figure 4), which are designated to protect one or more special habitats and / or species. Combined, they cover around 1,600 km^2 of the National Park's area (CNPA262). There has been a slight increase in the number of

[20] See page 15 for information on how European legislation has been transposed into domestic legislation.

features assessed to be in favourable condition, from 71 in 2010 to 99 in 2024 (Figure 5 and Figure 6) (CNPA261). There has also been a decrease in features assessed as unfavourable, from 59 in 2010 to 26 in 2024. Unfavourable features include habitats such as blanket bog, bog woodland, dry heaths and wet heathland with cross-leaved heath. Monadhliath is the only Special Area of Conservation with no features in favourable condition, with its single qualifying feature of blanket bog having been most recently assessed in 2020.

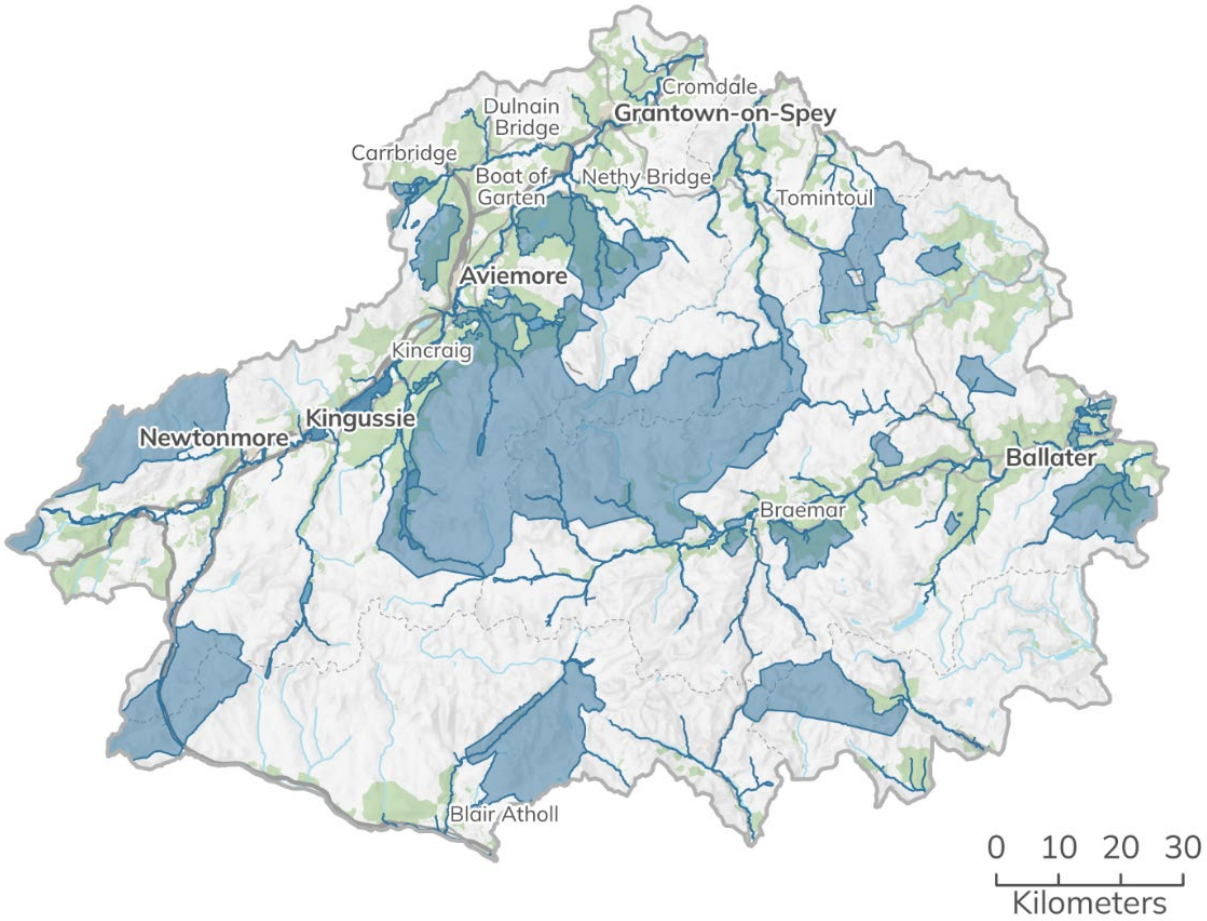

Figure 4 Special Areas of Conservation within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA262). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

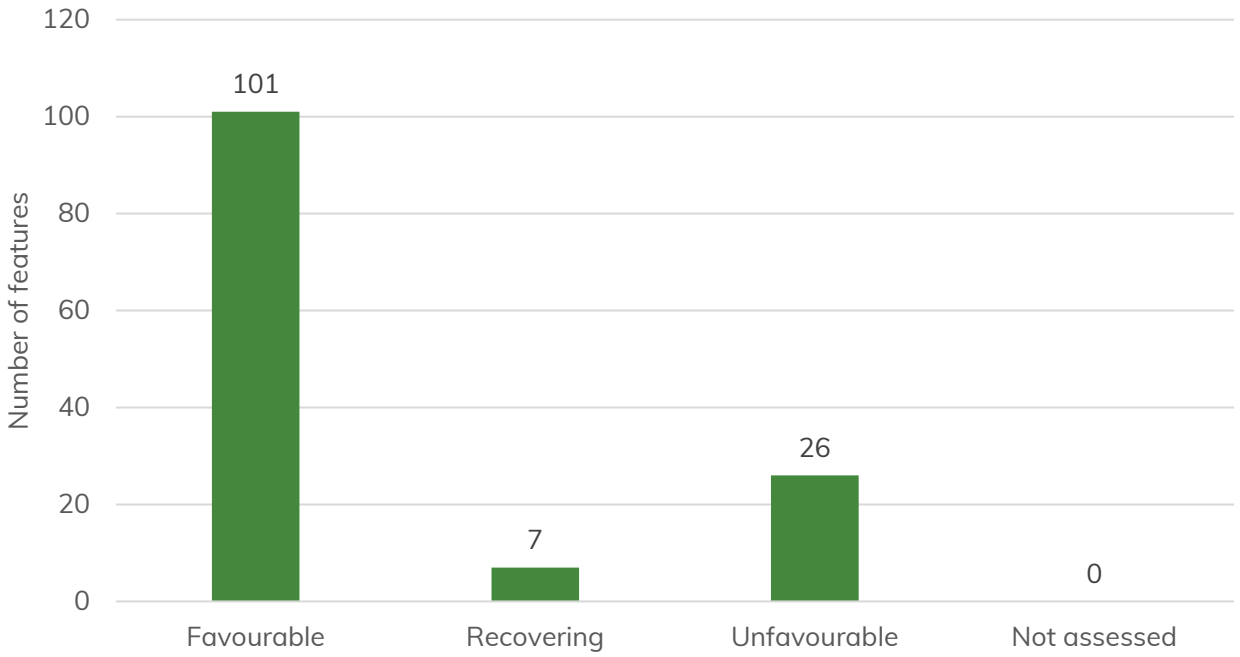

Figure 5 Condition of qualifying features of Special Areas of Conservation within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary as of 11 September 2024 (Source: NatureScot) (CNPA261).

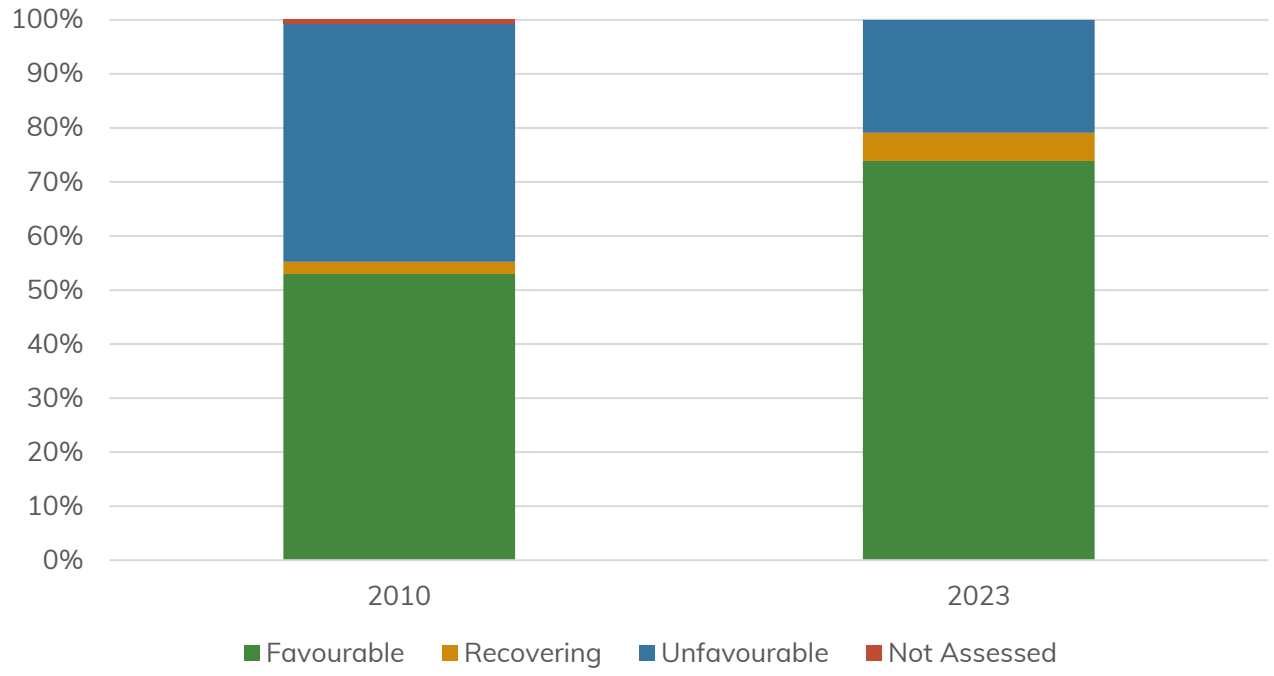

Figure 6 Comparison between the condition of qualifying features of Special Areas of Conservation within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary in 2010 and 2023 (CNPA261). Data accurate as of 11 September 2024 (Source: NatureScot).

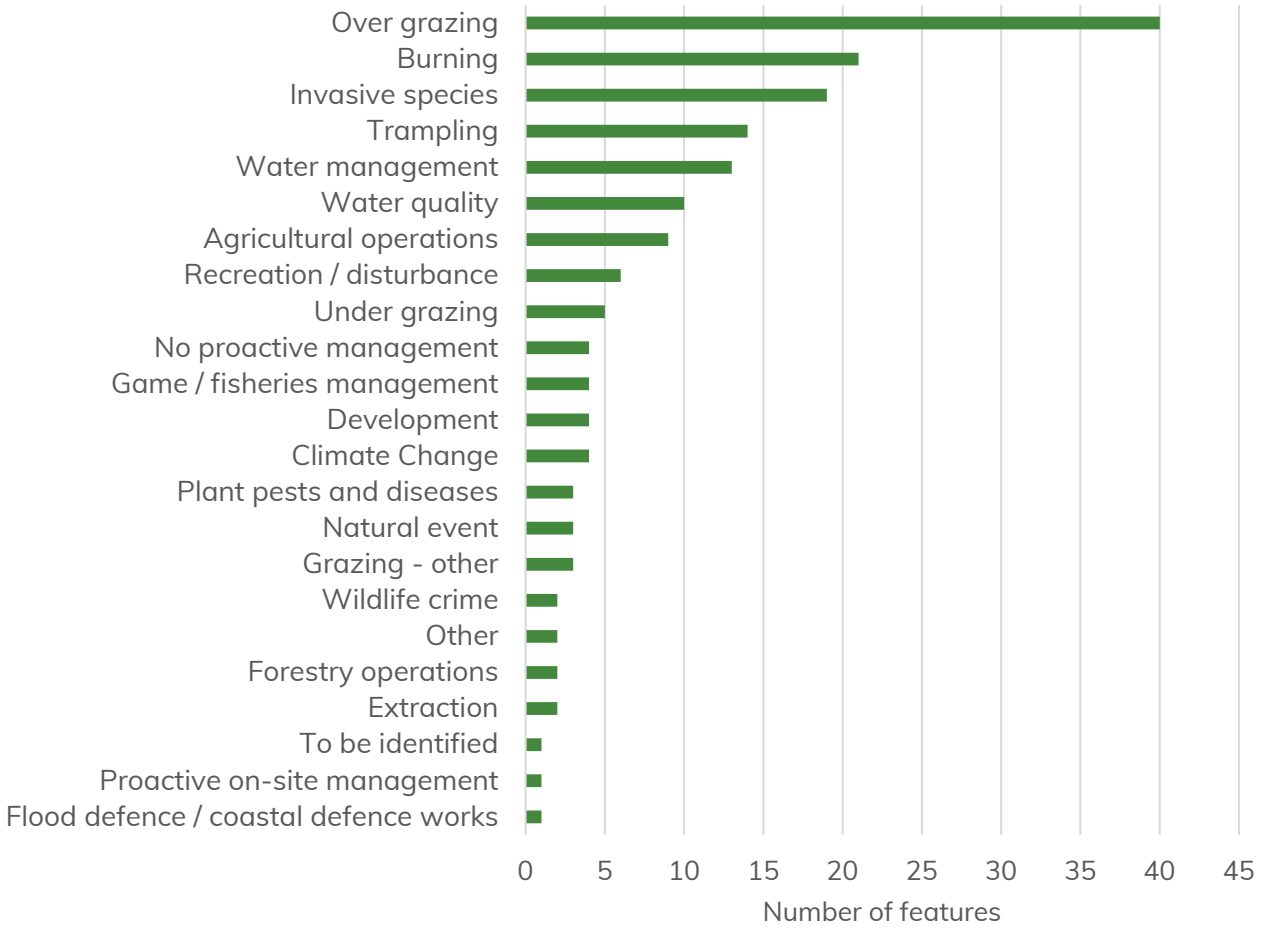

Figure 7 Pressures on qualifying features of Special Areas of Conservation within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

Special Protection Areas

There are 15 Special Protection Areas (CNPA263) within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary, covering around 1,730 km^2 of the National Park's area (Figure 8). As of 2024, 20 features of the Special Protection Areas have been assessed as favourable, one feature as recovering, 18 features as unfavourable and one feature has not had an updated assessment (Figure 9) (CNPA261). The data indicates that there has been an increase in unfavourable features, with 8 features assessed as unfavourable in 2010 (Figure 10). Species which have declined include dotterel.

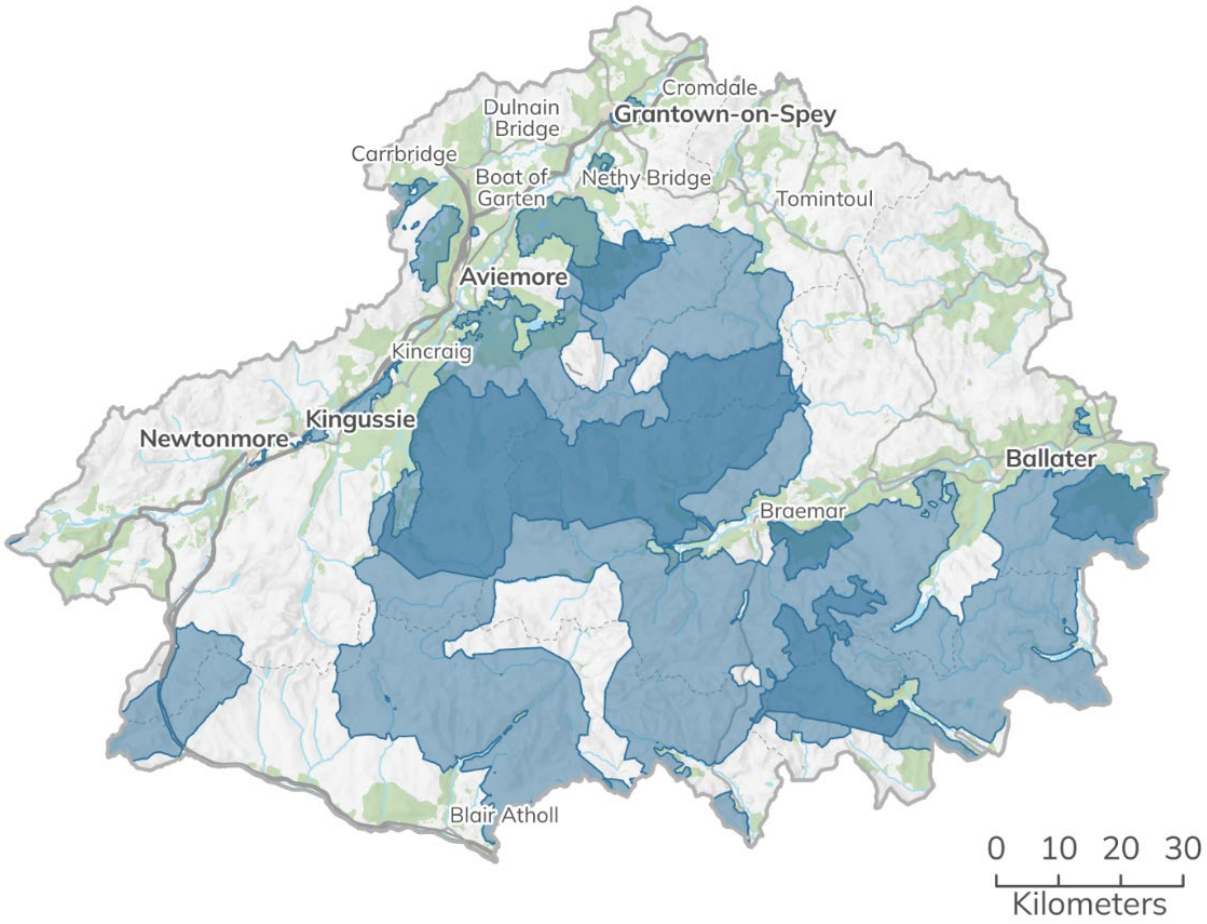

Figure 8 Special Protection Areas within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA263). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © NatureScot 2026.

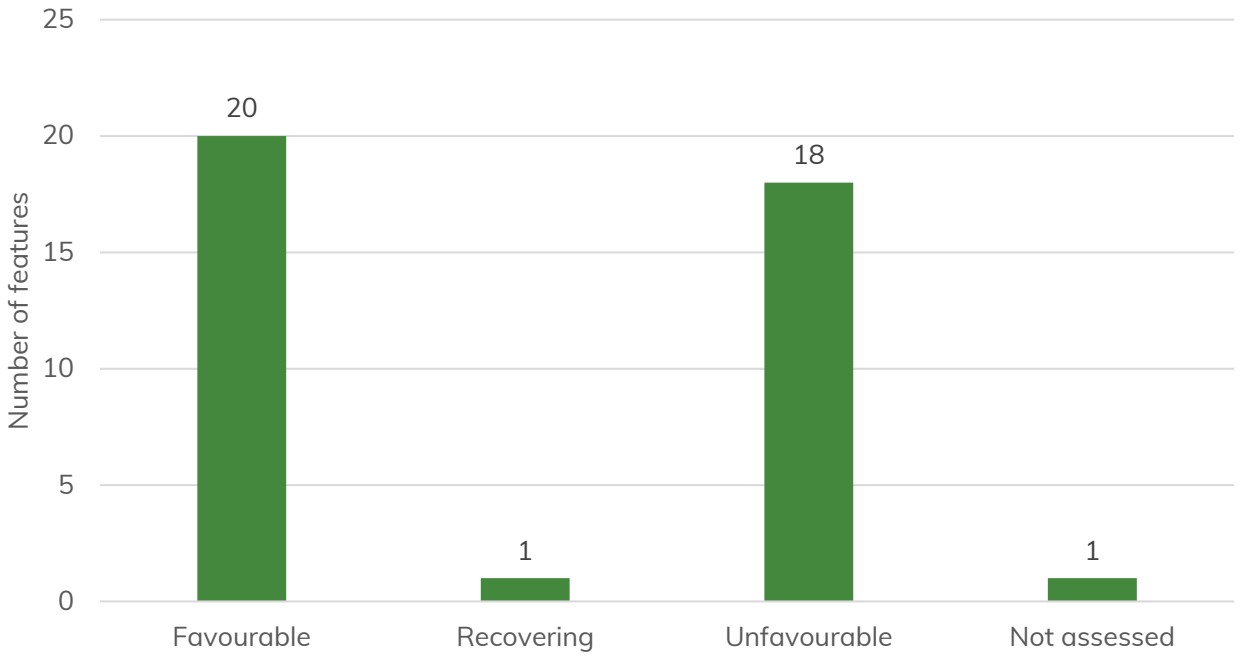

Figure 9 Condition of qualifying features of Special Protection Areas within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

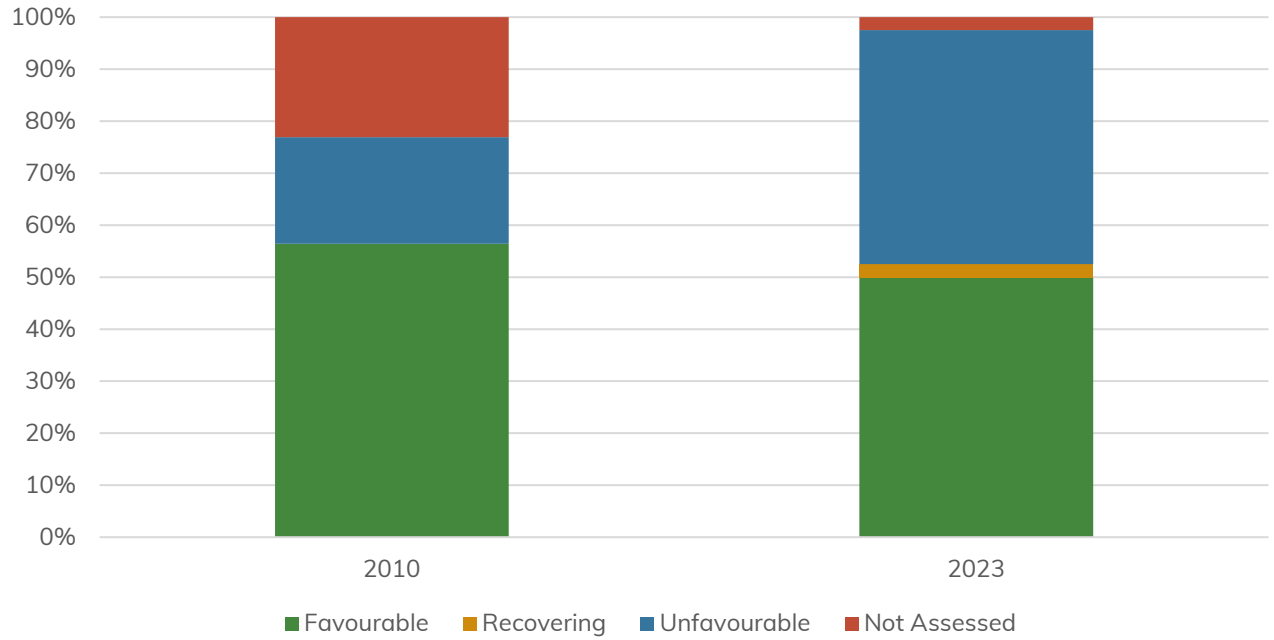

Figure 10 Comparison between the condition of qualifying features of Special Protection Areas within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary in 2010 and 2023. Data accurate as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

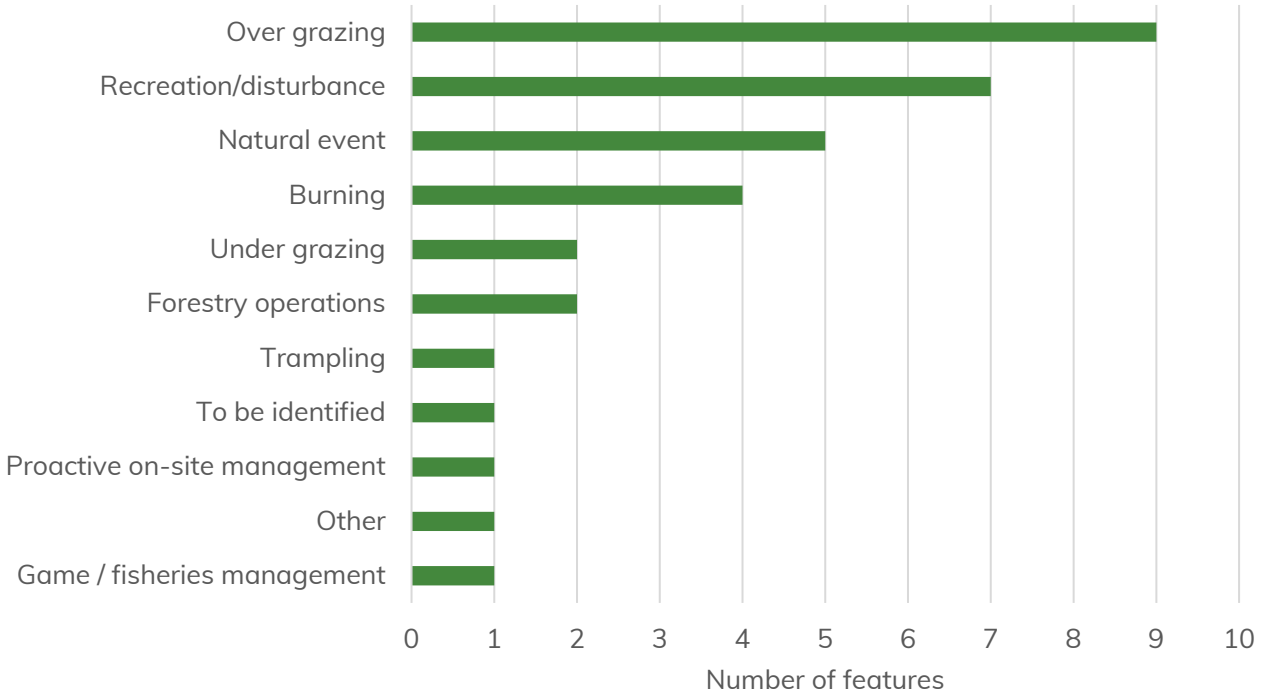

Figure 11 Pressures on qualifying features of Special Protection Areas within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

There are eight Special Protection Areas which have no features in favourable condition (Figure 12) (CNPA261):

- Anagach Woods, for which breeding capercaillie[21] are the qualifying feature.
- Craigmore Wood, for which breeding capercaillie are the qualifying feature.
- Creag Meagaidh, for which breeding dotterel are the qualifying feature.
- Drumochter Hills, for which breeding dotterel and merlin are the qualifying features,
- Forest of Clunie, for which breeding hen harrier, merlin, osprey[22] and short-eared owl are the qualifying features.
- Loch Vaa, for which breeding Slavonian grebe are the qualifying feature.
- Lochnagar, for which breeding dotterel are the qualifying feature.
- Muir of Dinnet, for which non-breeding greylag goose and its waterfowl assemblage are the qualifying features.

[21] Capercaillie are covered in more detail under the priority species section of this schedule. See page 150.
[22] Raptors are covered in more detail under the priority species section of this schedule. See page 161.

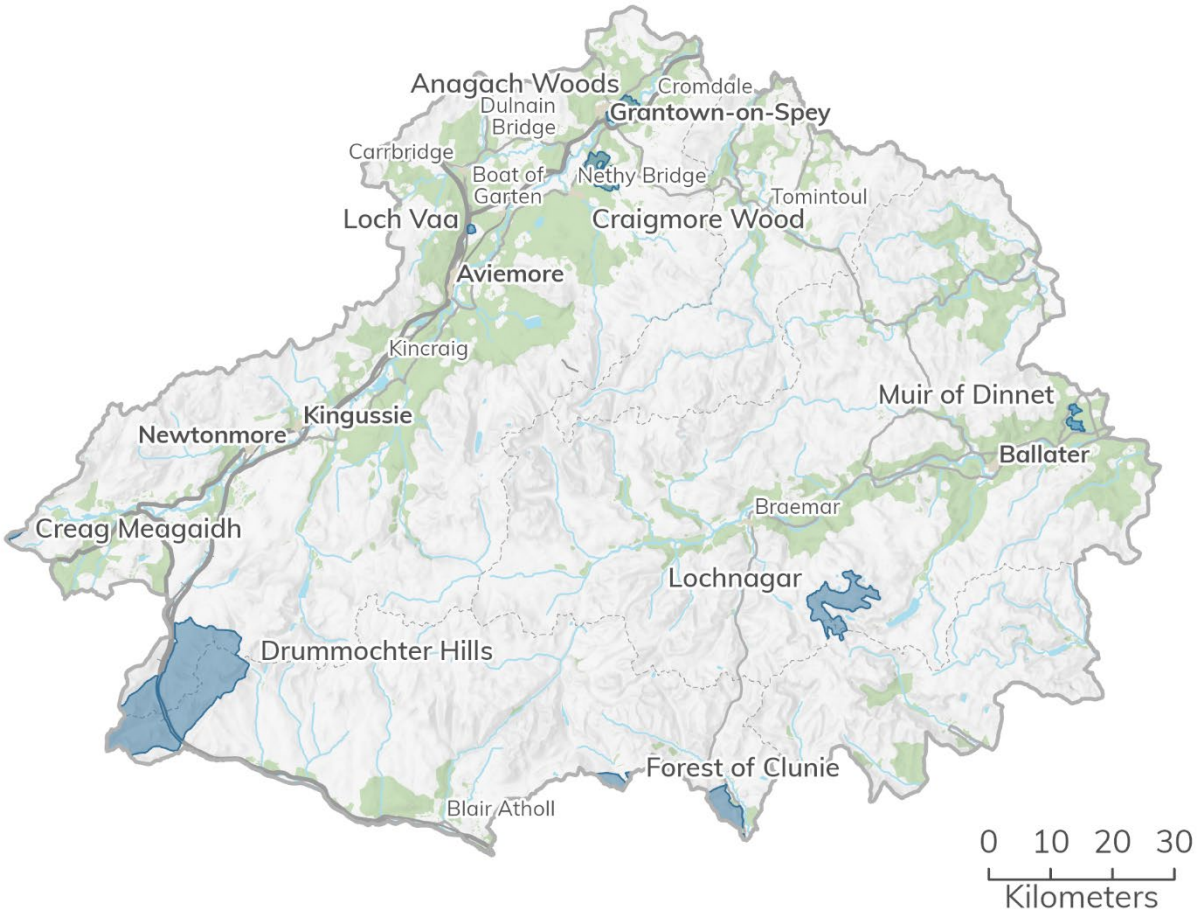

Figure 12 Special Protection Areas within the Cairngorms National Park that have no qualifying features in favourable condition (CNPA261 and (CNPA263). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © NatureScot 2026.

Ramsar sites

There are three Ramsar sites (CNPA264) within the National Park boundary (Figure 13), which are designated to conserve and protect wetlands. Muir of Dinnet is the only Ramsar site with no features in favourable condition, with its single qualifying feature of non-breeding greylag goose having been most recently assessed in 2012 (CNPA261). The River Spey – Insh Marshes Ramsar site also has features in unfavourable condition, namely its wetland woodland and breeding wigeon features. Otter are assessed as being in favourable condition, but declining, with the most recent assessment occurring in 2011. It's spotted crake and wood sandpiper qualifying features have not been assessed.

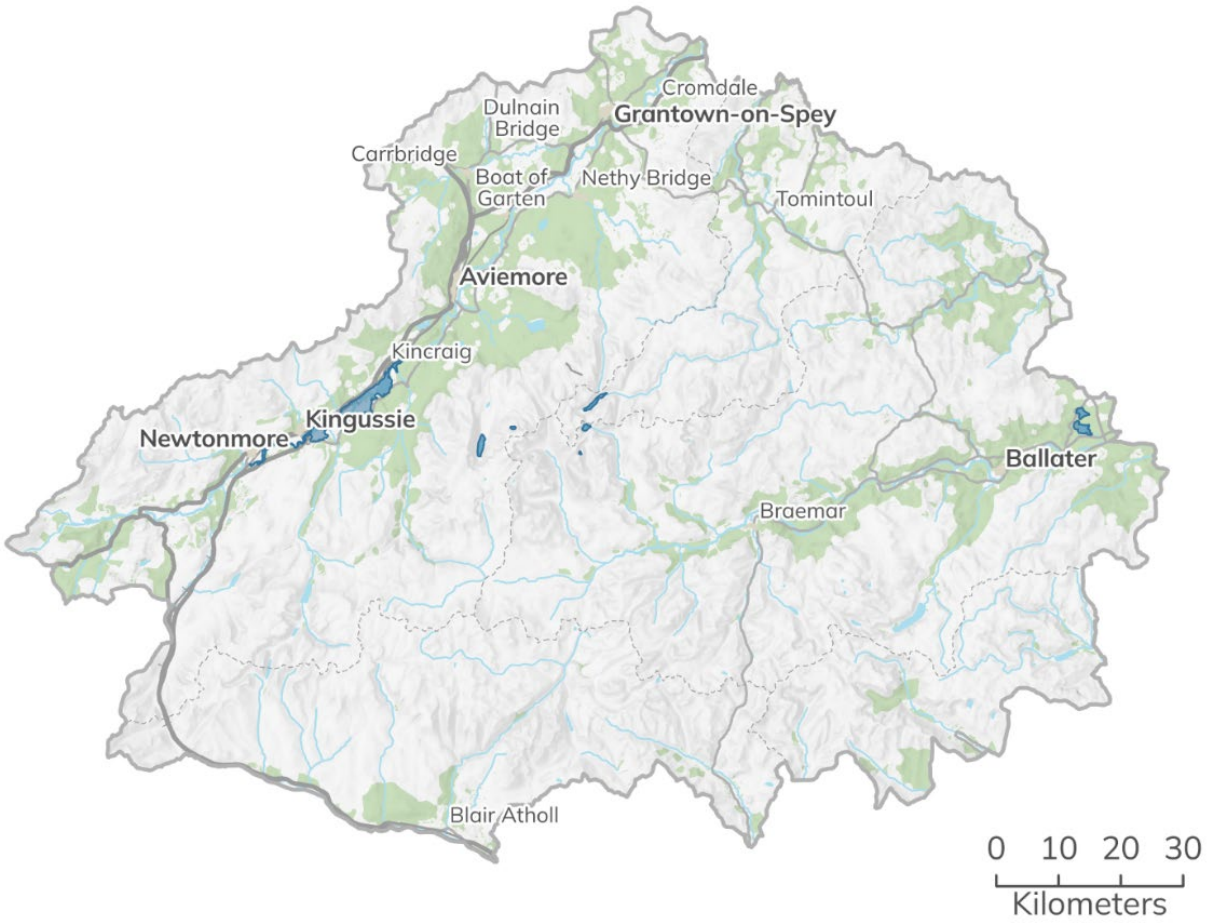

Figure 13 Ramsar sites within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA264). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

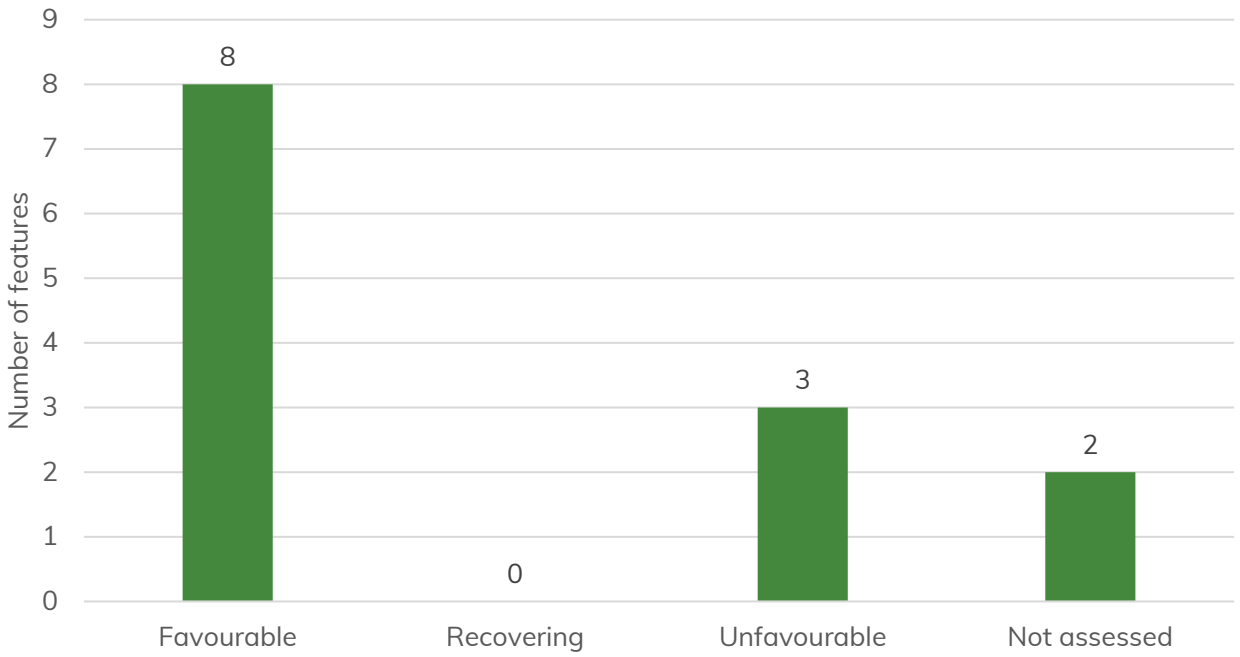

Figure 14 Condition of qualifying features of Ramsar sites within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

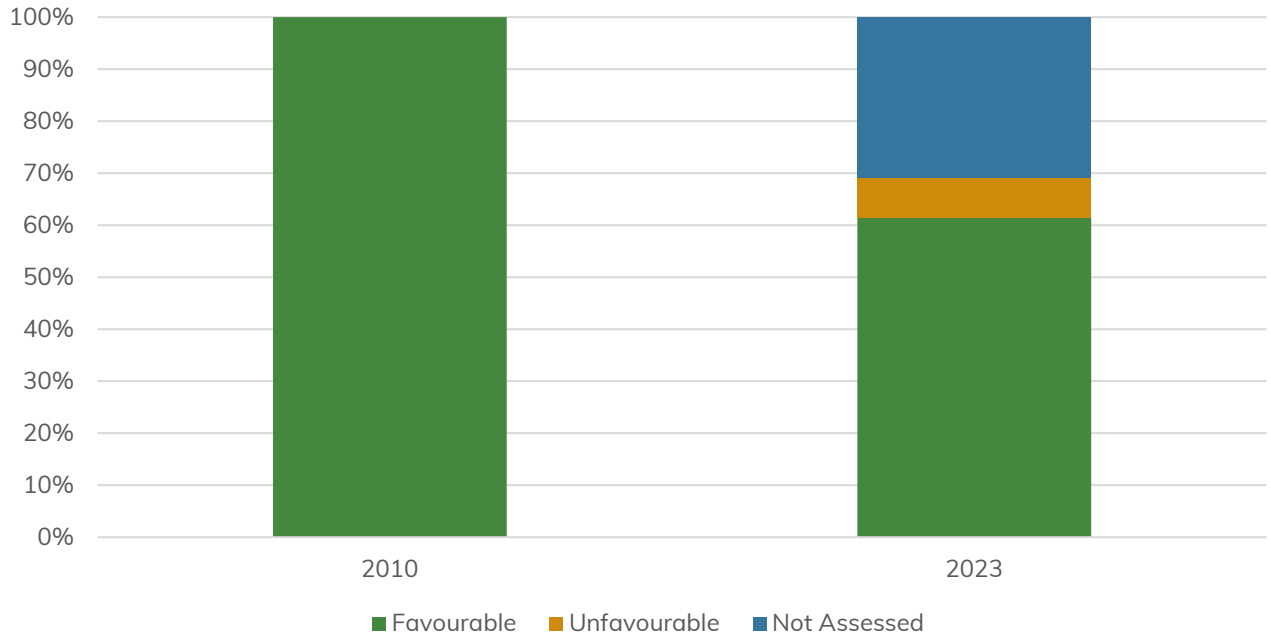

Figure 15 Comparison between the condition of qualifying features of Ramsar sites within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary in 2010 and 2023. Data accurate as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

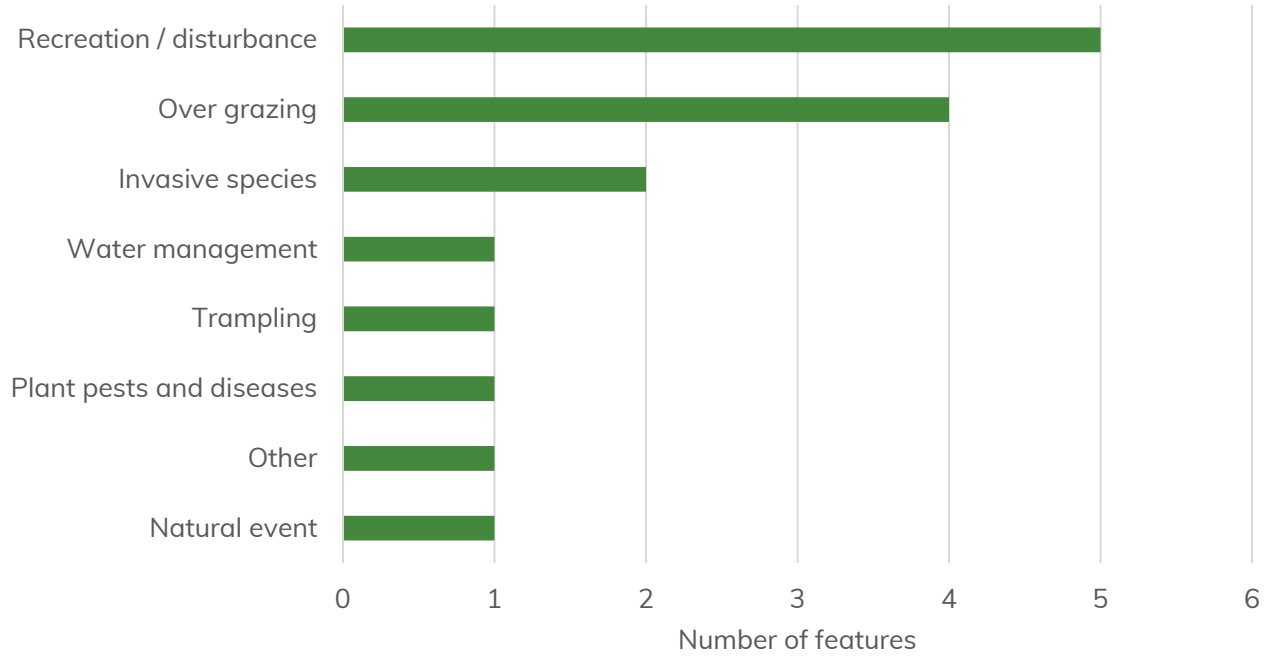

Figure 16 Pressures on qualifying features of Ramsar sites within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

National designations

There are 55 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Figure 17) (CNPA265) and nine National Nature Reserves (Figure 22) (CNPA266) either wholly or partially contained within the Park Boundary.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (CNPA265) are designated for areas of water and land that best represent Scotland's natural heritage and are designated to protect biological and geological. There are 55 Sites of Special Scientific Interest within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary, covering around 1,120 km^2 of the National Park's area. There has been a slight increase in the number of features assessed to be in favourable condition, from 147 in 2010 to 202 in 2024 (Figure 18 and Figure 19) (CNPA261). There has also been an increase in features assessed as unfavourable, from 26 in 2010 to 34 in 2024. There are three Sites of Special Scientific Interest which have no features in favourable condition (Figure 21):

- Aldclune and Invervack Meadows, for which lowland calcareous grassland is the qualifying feature.
- Blair Atholl Meadow, for which lowland calcareous grassland is the qualifying feature.
- Creag Dhubh, for which upland birch is the qualifying feature.

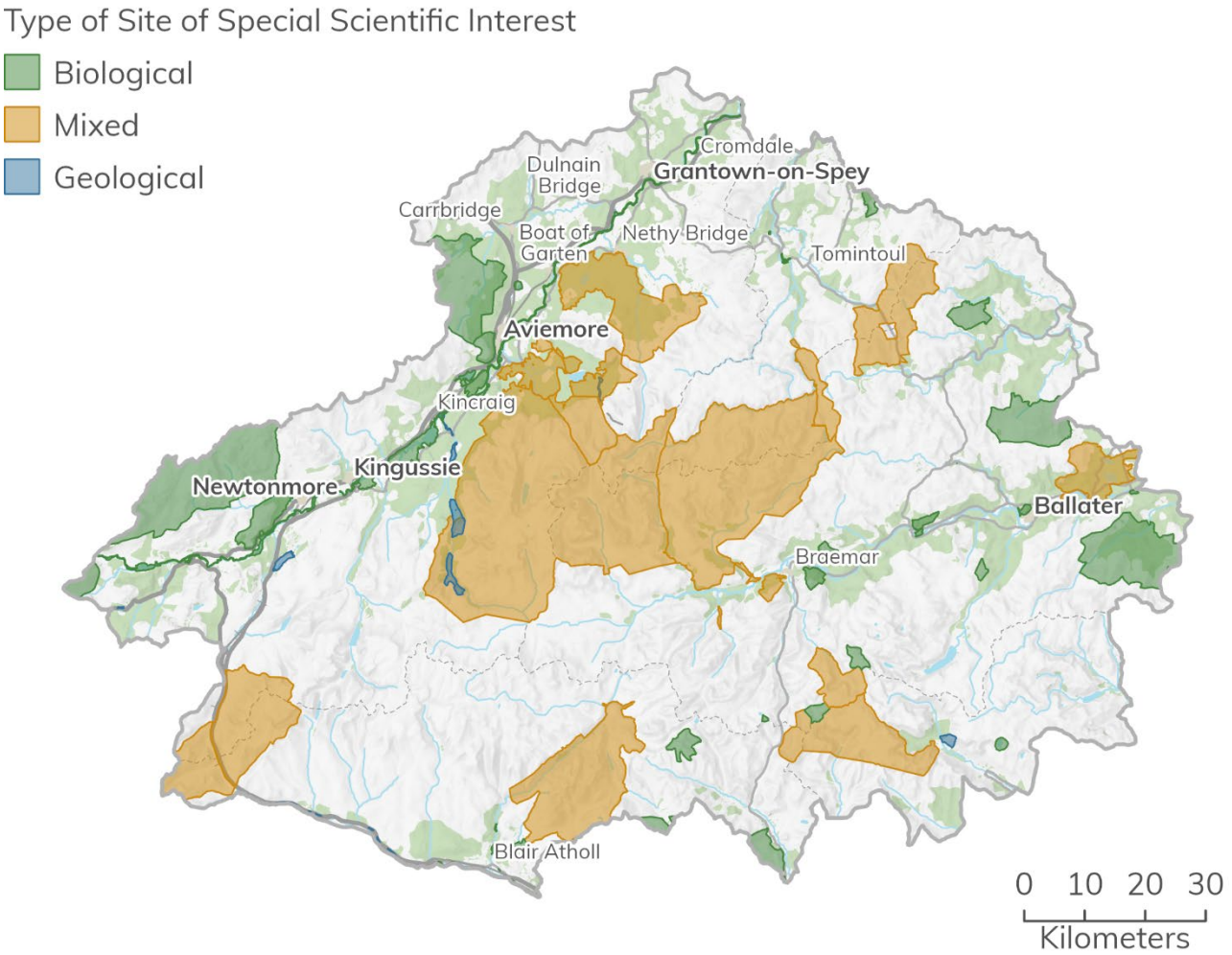

Figure 17 Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA265). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © NatureScot 2026.

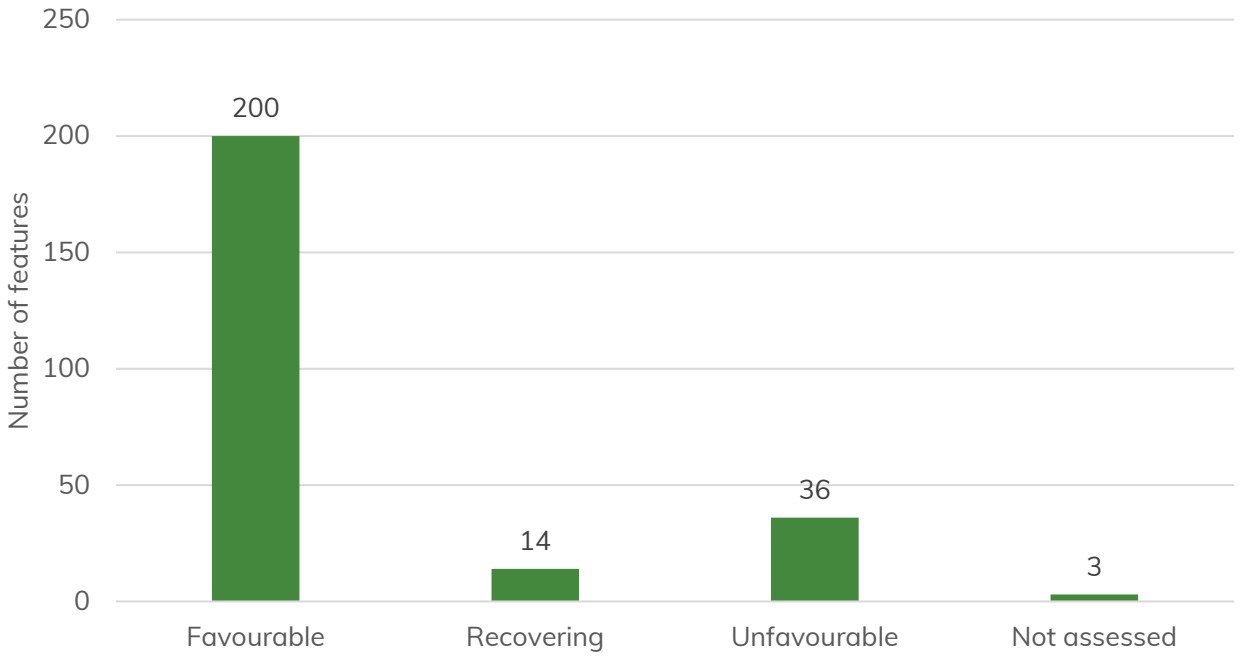

Figure 18 Condition of qualifying features of Sites of Special Scientific Interest within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

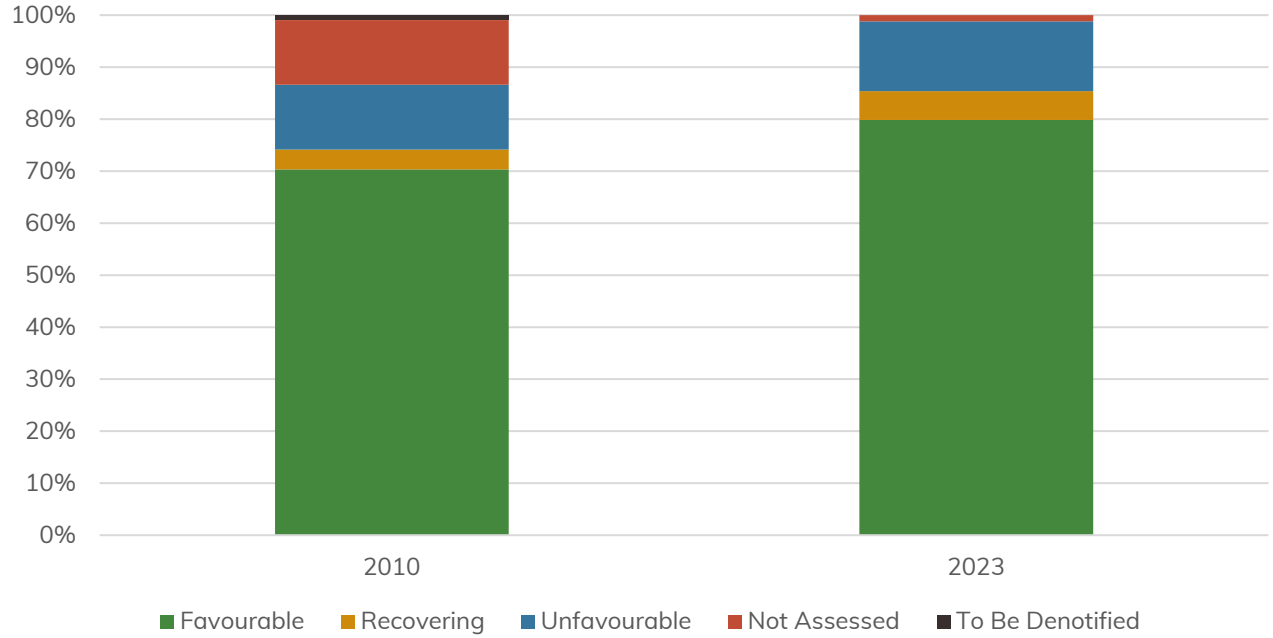

Figure 19 Comparison between the condition of qualifying features of Sites of Special Scientific Interest within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary in 2010 and 2023. Data accurate as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

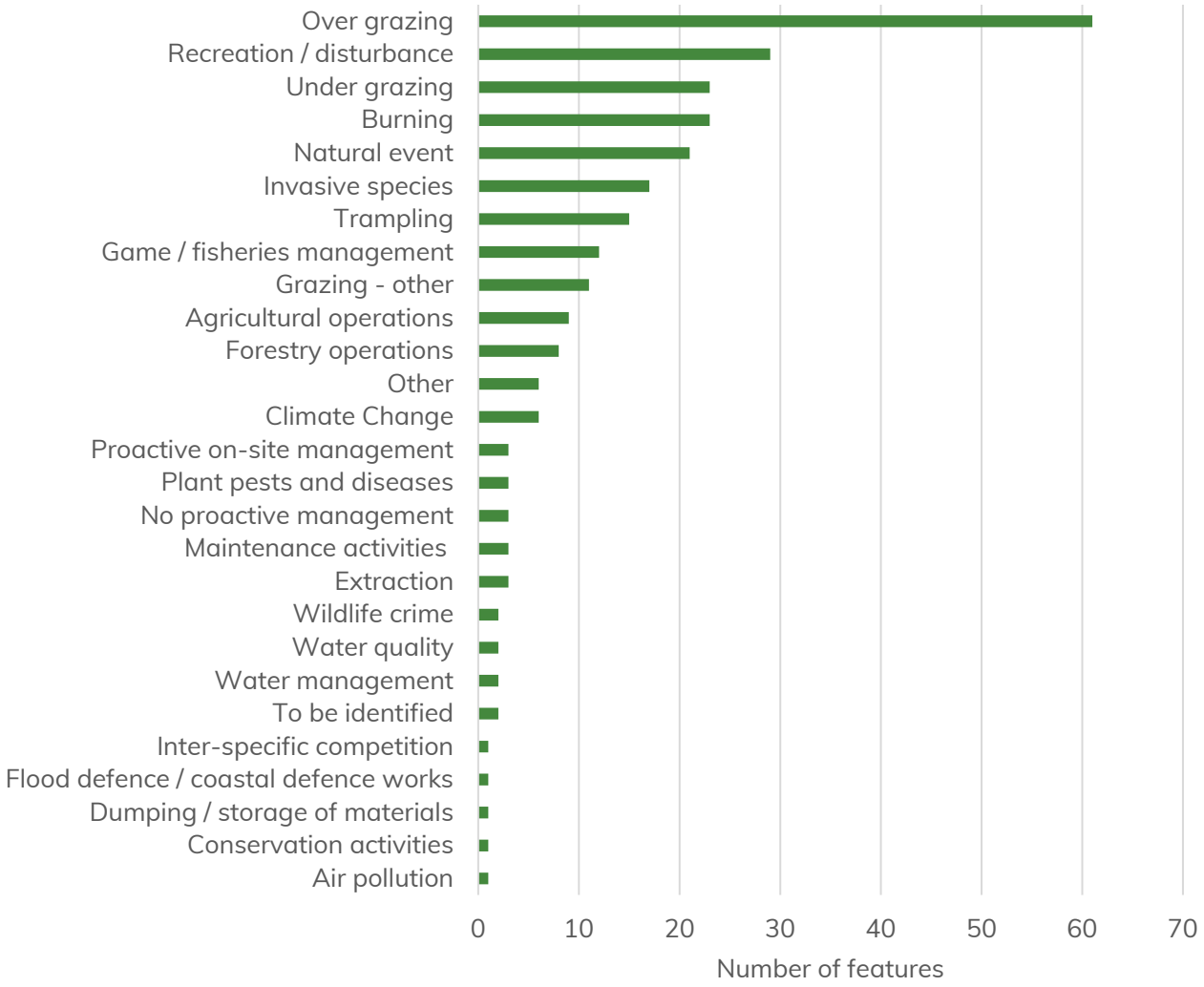

Figure 20 Pressures on qualifying features of Special Protection Areas within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park boundary as of 11 September 2024 (CNPA261) (Source: NatureScot).

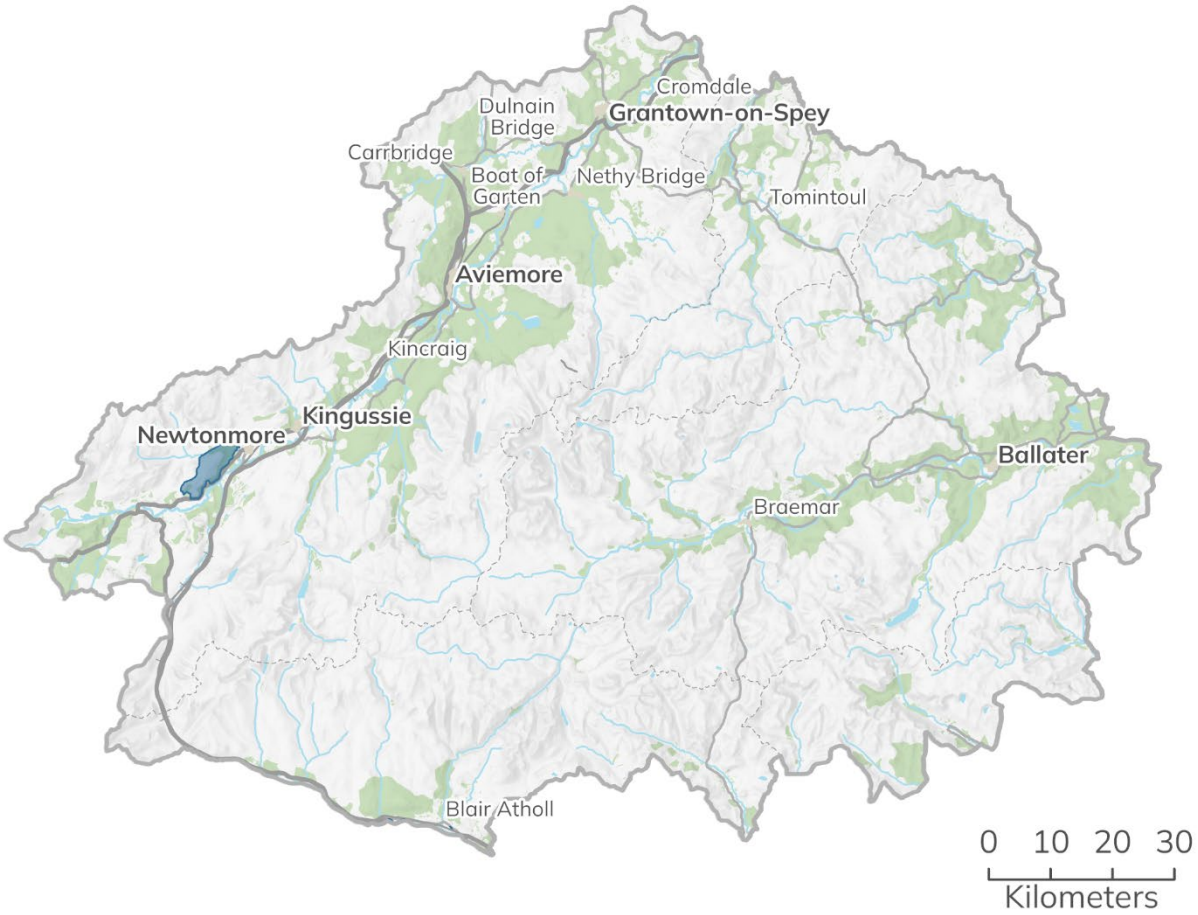

Figure 21 Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Cairngorms National Park that have no qualifying features in favourable condition (CNPA261 and CNPA265). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © NatureScot 2026.

National Nature Reserves

National Nature Reserves (CNPA266) are statutory nature reserves designed under Part III of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They are areas of land that have been set aside for nature and contain nationally or internationally important habitats and species. Most National Nature Reserves have some form of visitor facilities and are managed to ensure that recreational activities do not adversely affect the designated features.

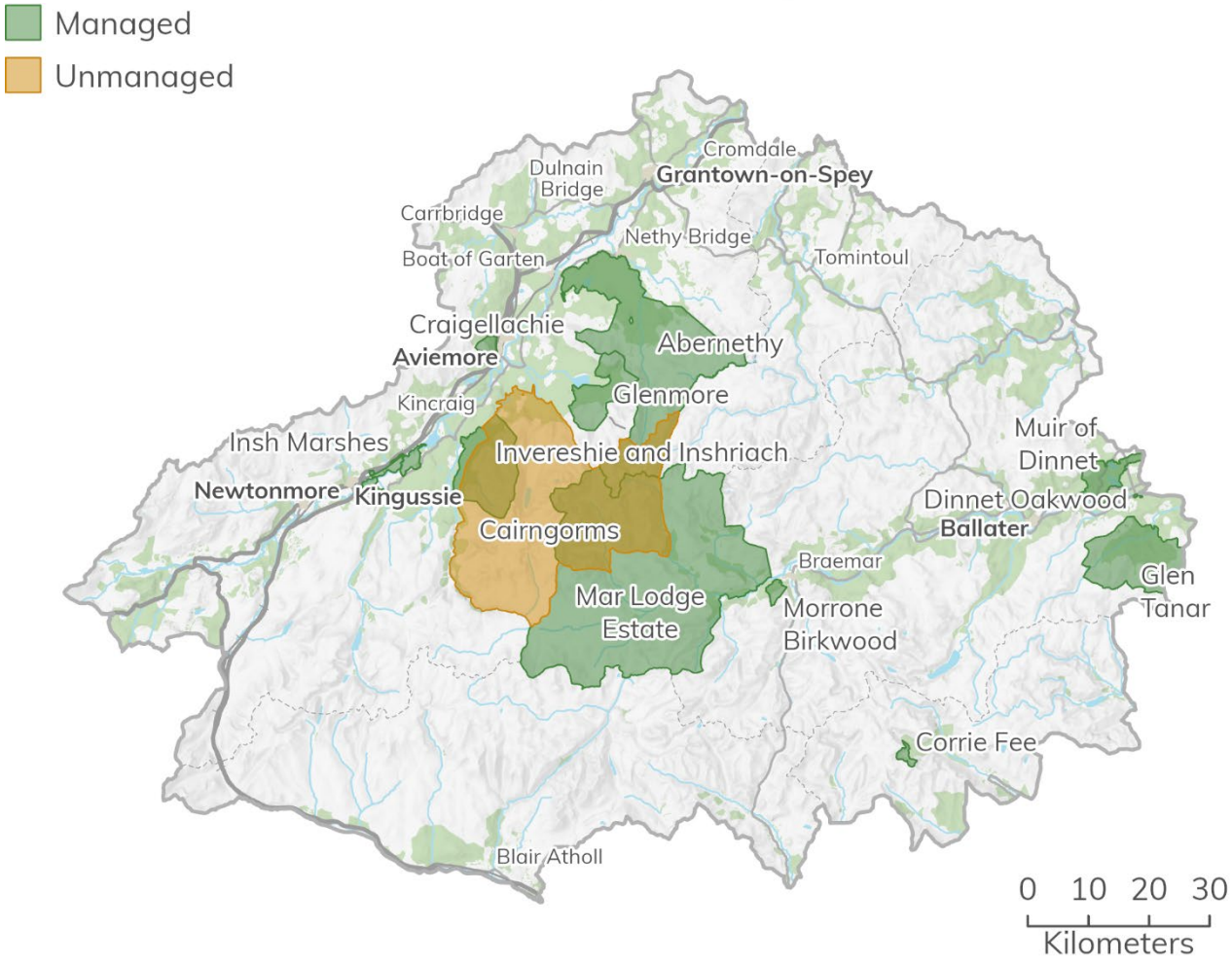

Figure 22 National Nature Reserves within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA266). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

The Cairngorms National Park has 12 National Nature Reserves (Figure 22) which are managed by a range of organisations, including NatureScot, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Forest and Land Scotland and National Trust for Scotland. Only Cairngorms National Nature Reserve is unmanaged as a national nature reserve, although the parts overlapped by other national nature reserves are managed by their respective landowners.

Local and non-statutory designations

There are numerous non-statutory nature designations within Scotland. Many overlap with statutory designations. Those identified as being present within the Cairngorms National Park are:

- Biogenetic Reserves (CNPA267)
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Reserves (CNPA268)
- National Trust for Scotland Reserves (CNPA265 and CNPA266)
- Forest Parks (CNPA269)
- Woodland Trust Scotland sites (CNPA271).

Biogenetic Reserves

A Biogenetic reserve (CNPA267) is a non-statutory designation made by the Council of Europe under:

- Resolution 76 (17) on the European network of biogenetic reserves (CNPA216).
- Resolution 79 (9) concerning the rules for the European network of biogenetic reserves (CNPA217).

Biogenetic reserves act as 'living laboratories' and are representative examples of various types of natural environment in Europe. They can consist of natural or semi-natural habitats and their selection is based on their value for nature conservation and protected status based on four criteria: 'typical', 'unique', 'rare' and / or 'endangered' which can be applied to habitats or species.

The protected status must be adequate to ensure the conservation or management of the sites in the long term in accordance with fixed objectives.

Scotland has two biogenetic reserves. These overlap the Forvie National Nature Reserve and Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve, the latter being located within the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 23). The boundary of Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve also overlaps with Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, Ramsar and Site of Special Scientific Interest designations.

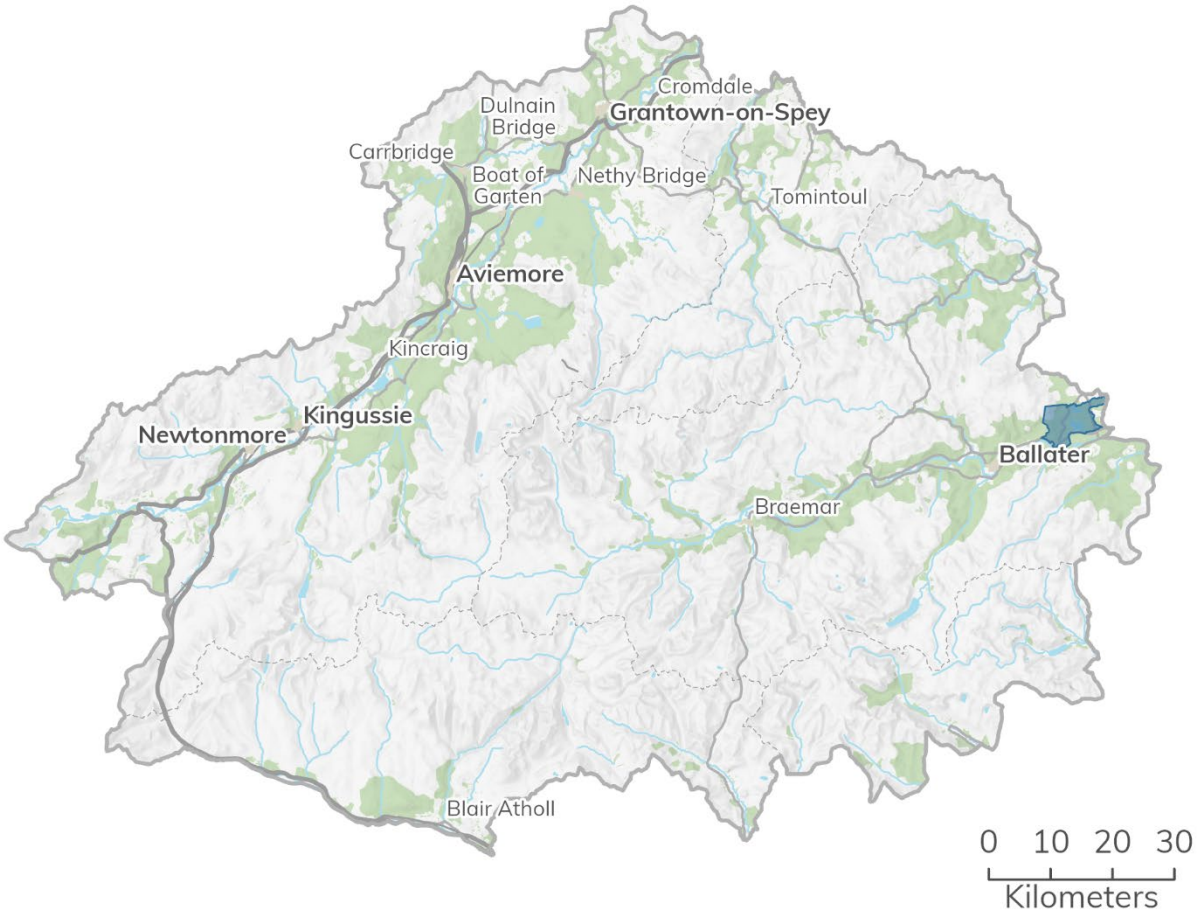

Figure 23 Muir of Dinnet Biogenetic Reserve (CNPA267). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Reserves

There are four Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Reserves in the Cairngorms National Park, which are managed principally for conservation purposes (CNPA268). Covering a combined area of around 516 km^2, the reserves are:

- Abernethy, which covers around 463 km^2.
- Ballinlaggan, which covers around 0.7 km^2.
- Crannach, which covers around 18 km^2.
- Insh Marshes, which covers around 34 km^2.

While the boundaries do not exactly match, Abernethy and Insh Mashes reserves are covered and protected by international and national designated sites. They are also part of the Cairngorms Connect nature restoration project. Only small areas of Crannach and Ballinlaggan are covered by statutory forms of protection. Unlike the other reserves, Ballinlaggan is a non-publicised reserve.

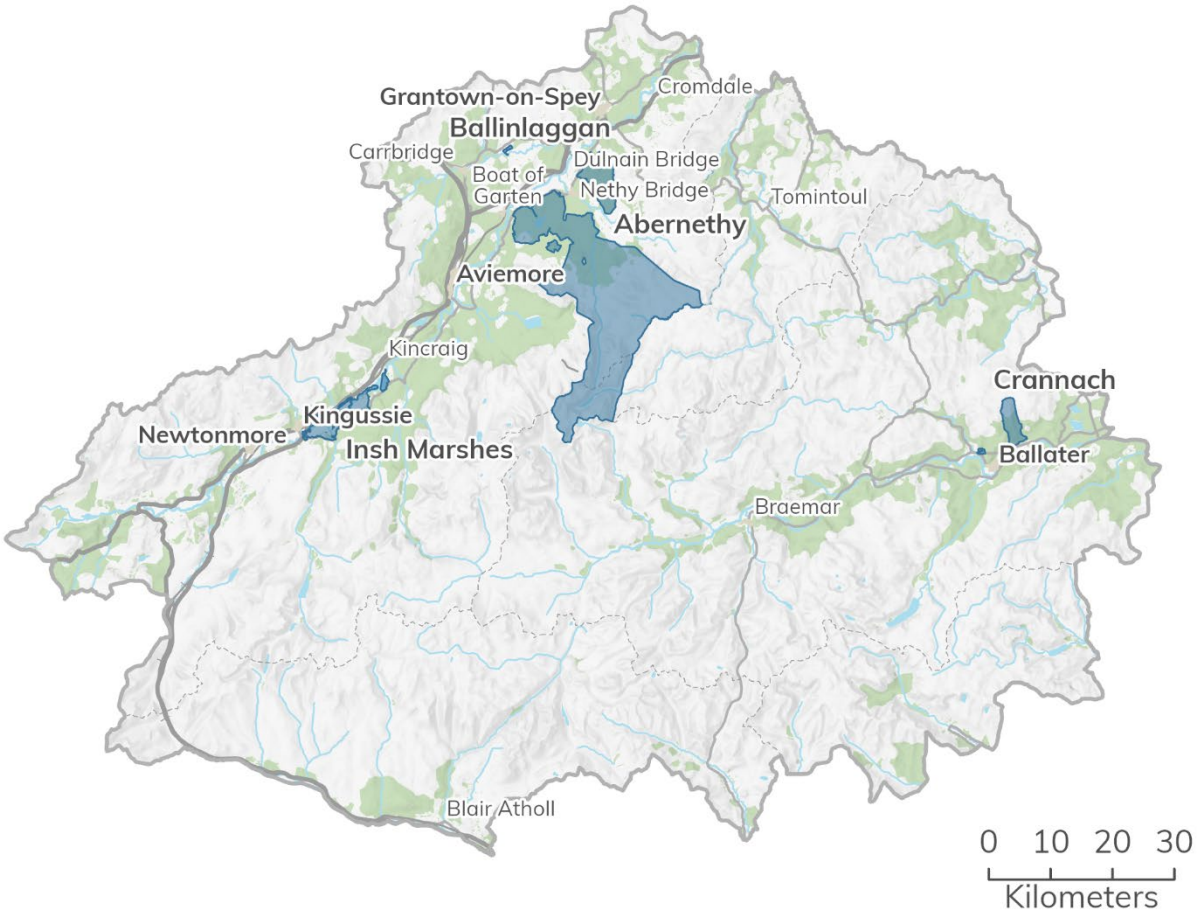

Figure 24 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Reserves in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA268). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 2026.

National Trust Scotland Reserves

National Trust Scotland own and manage sites at Mar Lodge Estate and Killiecrankie. Mar Lodge Estate is designated as a National Nature Reserve (Figure 22) (CNPA266) and is covered by a number of other national and international designations including Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Killiecrankie is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which overlaps the National Park boundary. It is designated for or its semi-ancient woodland and fly assemblage (CNPA265).

Forest Parks

Forest and Land Scotland manage Forest Parks across Scotland, including Glenmore Forest Park (Figure 25) (CNPA269). It is covered by a number of statutory international and national designations, including Special Areas of Conservation (CNPA262), Special Protection Areas (CNPA263), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (CNPA265) and the Glenmore National Nature Reserves (CNPA266). The management of the Forest Park falls under the Strathspey Land Management Plan[23] (CNPA270), which aims to balance management of designated and other priority biodiversity sites with a high-quality visitor experience by:

- Restoring native habitats and species on a landscape scale.
- Managing visitor access to provide high quality experiences whilst protecting vulnerable species and habitats and maintaining the scenic and wild qualities of the area[24].
- Working in partnership with stakeholders and neighbours.

[23] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA270-Strathspey-Land-Management-Plan-2021-%E2%80%93-2031.pdf
[24] Matters relating to visitor management within the Cairngorms National Park are covered in the Schedule 23: Tourism.

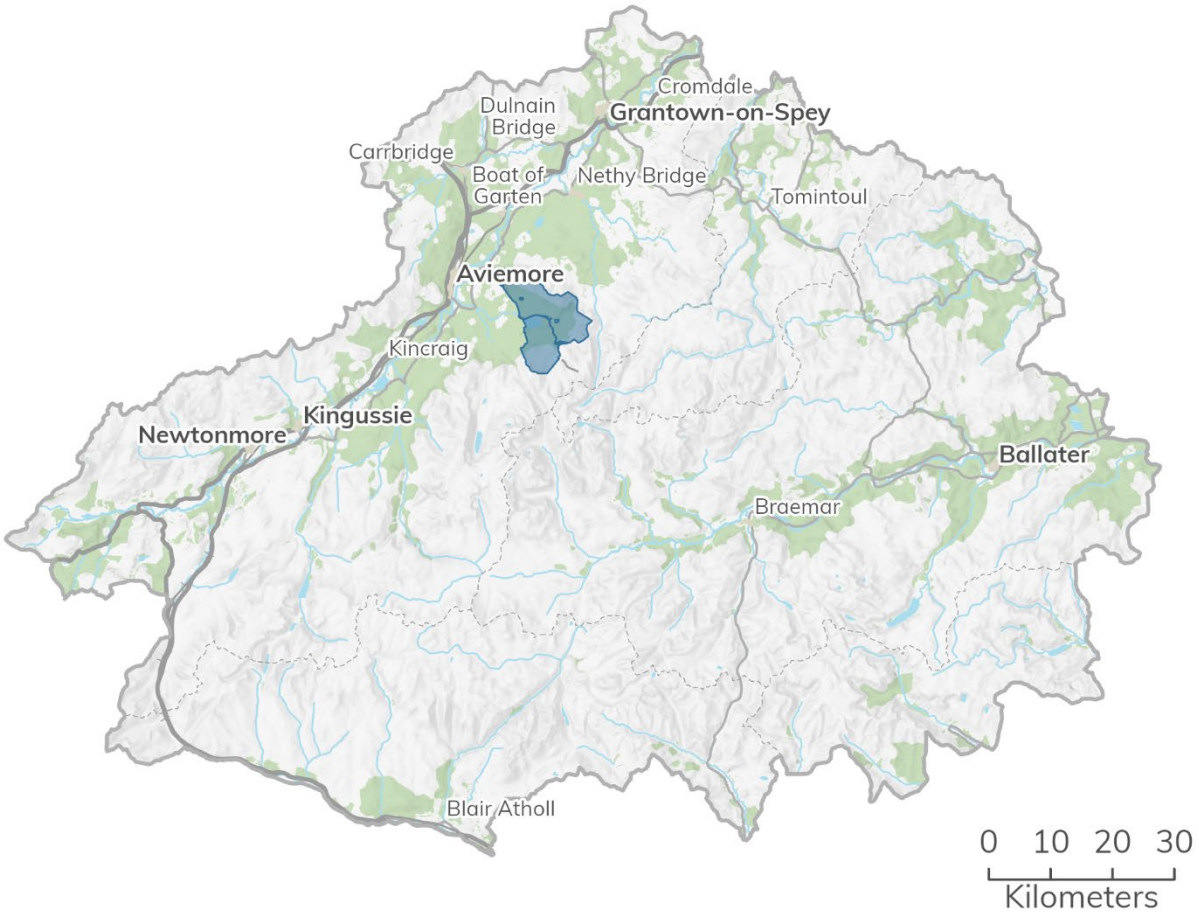

Figure 25 Glenmore Forest Park (CNPA269). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © Scottish Forestry 2026.

Woodland Trust Scotland sites

The Woodland Trust Scotland have one site in the Cairngorms National Park. Glencharnoch Wood is a 14.7 hectare site on the edge of Carrbridge and is part of a larger woodland network (Figure 26) (CNPA271). The woodland is an impressive mini mosaic of a range of habitats typical of the Strathspey pinewoods that have developed in the last 7,000 years following the last ice age.

The site is of particular importance for its high density of Scottish wood ant and hairy wood ant nests and is also habitat for crested tit, crossbill, tree pipet and redstart.

Recreation infrastructure is present in the form of three waymarked trails either on or adjacent to the wood.

Glencharnch Wood is not covered by any international or national designations.

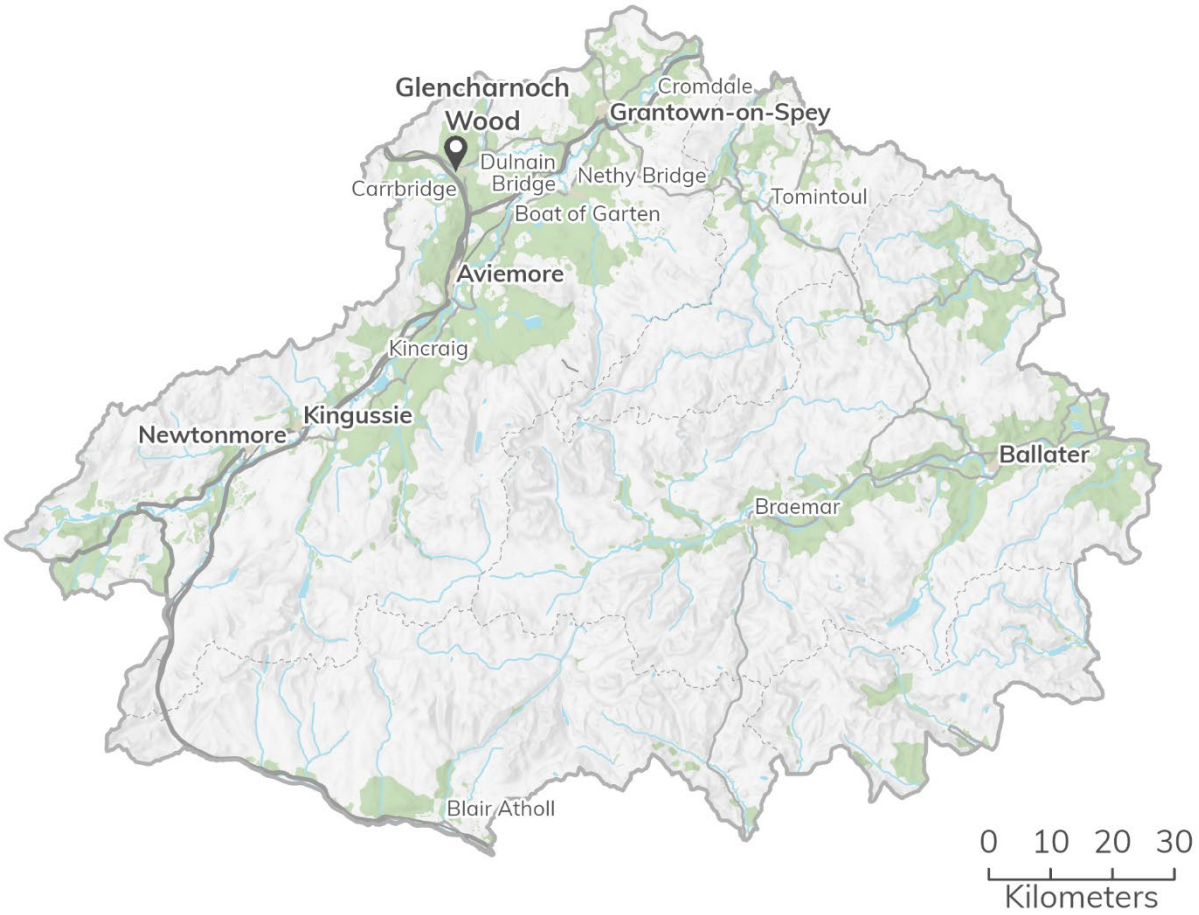

Figure 26 Woodland Trust Scotland sites within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA271). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

According to NatureScot's SiteLink portal, there are no Local Nature Reserves in the Cairngorms National Park[25] (CNPA272).

The potential effects of the local development plan on these designations will be assessed through the statutory national and international designations that overlap them. The local development plan will also need to consider the transport and visitor management aspects of these sites to ensure that they are accessed and used sustainably.

[25]ee https://opendata.nature.scot/datasets/0ec0b9714bc24d129c90e831212bd96d_0/explore?location=56.834477%2C-4.124147%2C6.88

Implications of protected sites for Proposed Plan

The potential effects on development on protected sites needs to be taken into account in the development or the Proposed Plan's strategy and policies and in the identification of allocated sites. This has a statutory basis with regard to international designations, which need to be considered through a habitats regulations appraisal.

At a strategic level, the fact that more than half of the National Park's geography is covered by some level of statutory protection, leads to the need to make the most efficient use of available development land. This is particularly important when considered alongside other environmental factors and constraints, such as the special landscape qualities[26] of the National Park and flood risk[27]. Not only is this to ensure that protected sites are safeguarded, but it also aims to ensure that the needs of future generations can be met, because over the long term, suitable land for development is likely run out in many settlements. An efficient use of land includes measures such as not allocating more land than necessary to meet need (for example. housing land) and discouraging low density development on allocated sites.

This approach is consistent with the sustainable development principles set out within National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008), the National Performance Framework (CNPA007) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (CNPA002). This approach is in accordance with the National Park aims (CNPA004), in particular the first aim 'to conserve and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage', which according to Section 9(6) of the Act is to be given greater weight if conflict arises in the collective pursuit of all aims. See Schedule 1: Plan outcomes for further information on the relevance of the aims.

This approach has implications for a range of policy areas, and in particular for housing development. These are outlined in Schedule 13: Housing.

Priority habitats

The Cairngorms National Park contains some of the United Kingdom's best examples of natural and semi-natural habitats, including a quarter of Scotland's native woodlands, extensive arctic-like plateaux, the headwaters of four of Scotland's major rivers, functioning floodplains and the some of the last few remaining fragments of mountain

[26] See Schedule 6: Landscape for further information on the special landscape qualities of the National Park.
[27] See Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management for further information.

woodland (Figure 27) (CNPA273). The foundations for ecosystem restoration, for habitats to reach their full ecological potential on a grand scale, are impressive.

The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 (CNPA253) lists a number of priority habitats, reflecting 'Agendas for Action' in the previous National Park Partnership Plan 2017 – 2022 (CNPA010), 'Priority Projects' in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (CNPA084), ongoing work from the first Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013 – 2018 and consultation with partners on current issues. These are:

- Woodland expansion and enhancement
- Moorland and peatland
- Nature friendly farming
- Freshwater and wetland restoration.

The evidence in this report is therefore structured according to the Action Plan's priorities for these habitats and provides a summary of their current status and information on progress achieved through the implementation of the Action Plan. It is recognised that there is a strong interrelationship between each of these habitats and the species that rely on them and that they should not be considered in isolation.

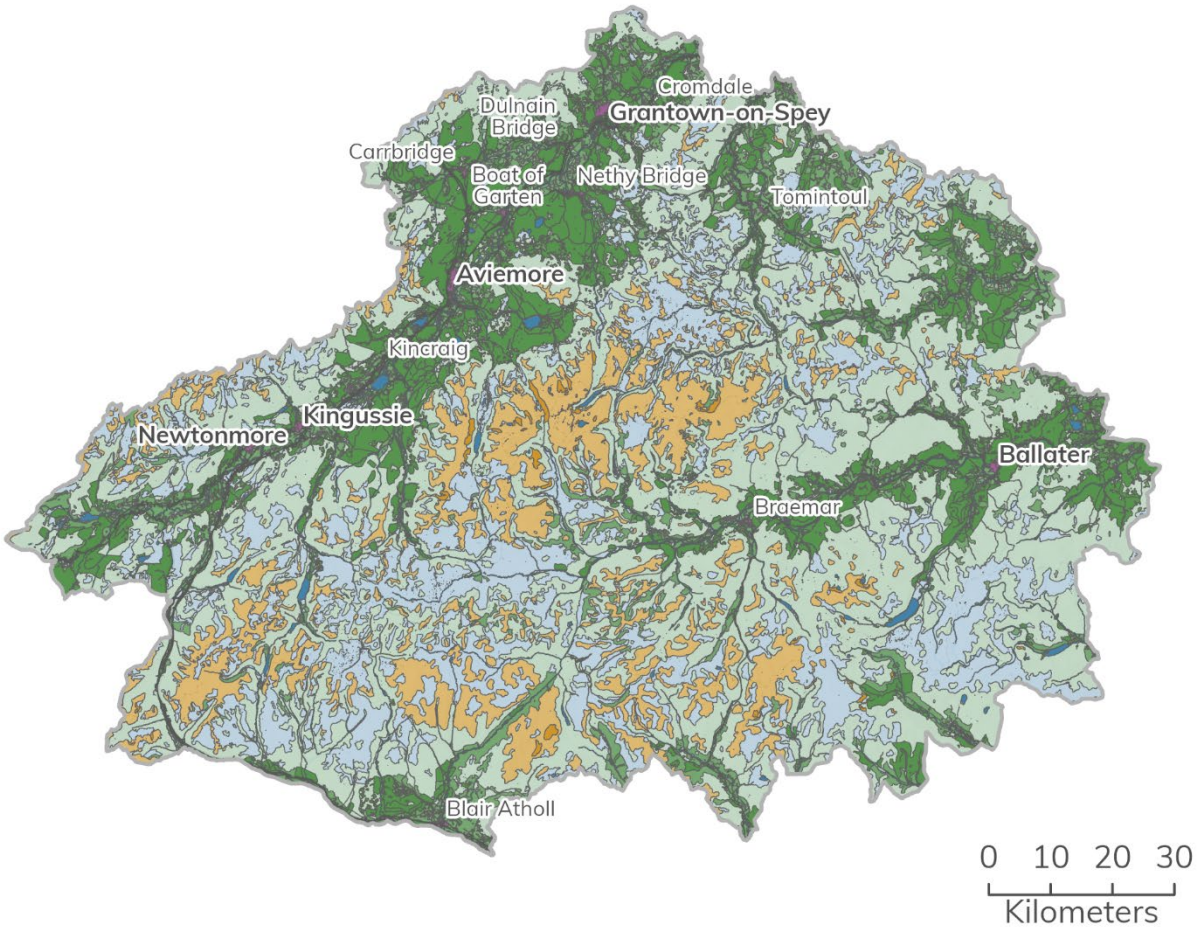

Figure 27 Broad habitat types found in the Cairngorms National Park as identified by the European Nature Information Systems (EUNIS) (CNPA273). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

As highlighted in the State of Nature Report 2023 (CNPA259), Cairngorms Connect provides an example of this interconnectivity. Cairngorms Connect is the United Kingdom's largest habitat restoration project, covering 60,000 ha in the National Park. It has a 200-year vision that aims to improve and protect habitats such as native woodland, peatlands and rivers.

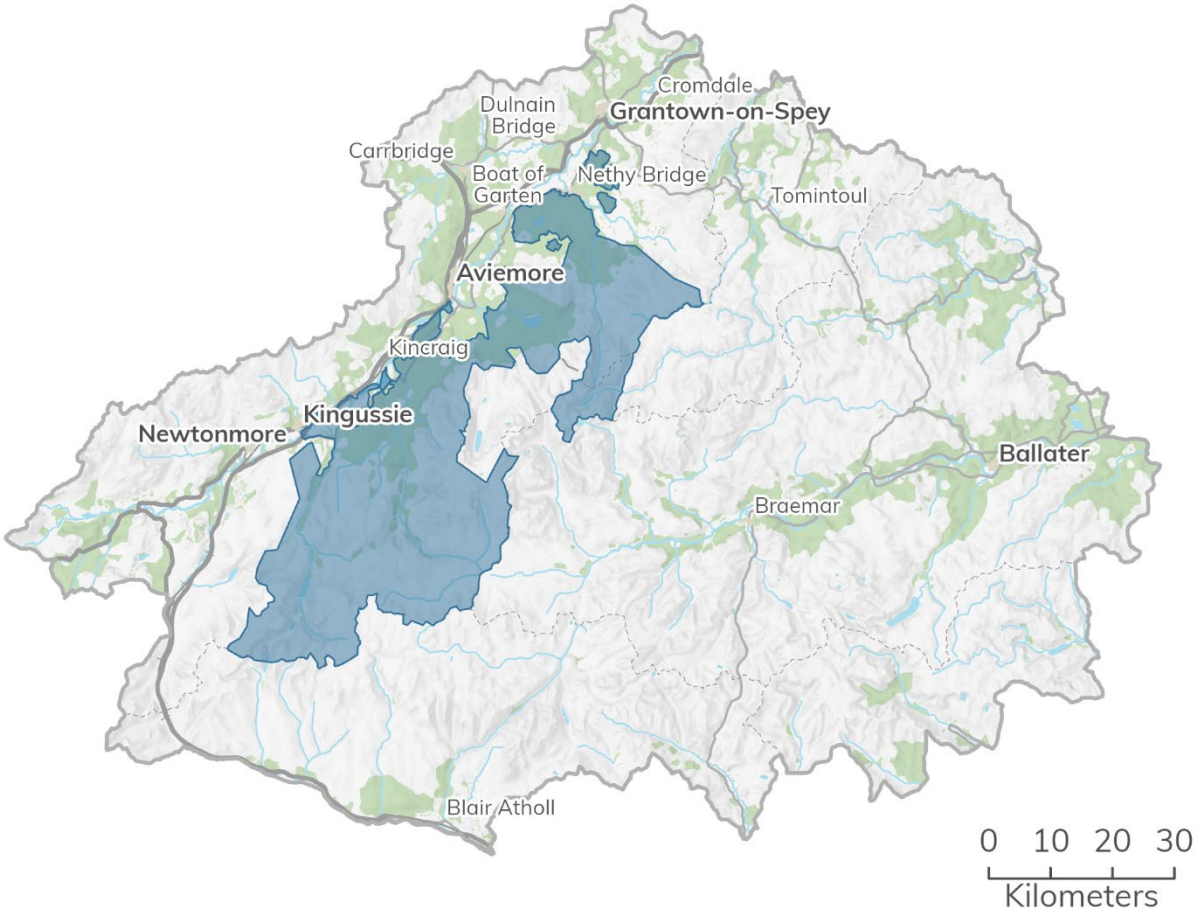

Figure 28 Cairngorms Connect area. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

Neighbouring landowners have united around a shared vision for landscape restoration, including collaborative deer control. This enables native woodland to regenerate, resulting in its marked expansion including the return of palatable species that are otherwise challenging to regenerate, such as aspen. There are early signs that this is benefiting a wider range of woodland-associated species, including birds such as willow warbler and moths such as coxcomb prominent and lesser swallow prominent.

One of the key aspects of Cairngorms Connect is its focus on involving and collaborating with local people. Engaging with local communities is key to achieving wider

conservation goals and ensuring that local people can benefit from the project. Cairngorms Connect works closely with local communities, including farmers and landowners, to develop conservation plans and initiatives that are compatible with their needs and interests. The project also provides opportunities for local people to participate in its conservation efforts through volunteering and citizen science programmes. These help to build a sense of ownership and pride in the local environment, while increasing public awareness of conservation issues.

Cairngorms Nature Index

The Cairngorms Nature Index (CNPA274) is currently in development. It is the tool which will baseline the health of the major ecosystems in the National Park, and monitor effectiveness of conservation action over time. Indices are being compiled for six major ecosystems within the National Park:

- Freshwater
- Mires and wetlands
- Montane
- Woodlands
- Managed uplands
- Managed lowland grasslands.

The Nature Index will use typical indicator species for each of the ecosystems to indicate the current health of the ecosystem.

The goal of the Nature Index will be to identify changes over time which in turn could be used to indicate whether developments within the National Park boundary are potential impacting on ecosystems, either negatively or positively. For further information see (CNPA274):

- https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/fdbca8769683464c91b1dc23818aa239

These ecosystems identified in the Cairngorms Nature Index are not the same as the priority habitats of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Except for the Montane ecosystem, all are covered by the priority habitats of the Action Plan. Montane habitats are therefore covered under a sperate heading within this schedule.

To date, only the freshwater ecosystem outputs have been published. These have been referenced under the relevant sections of this schedule e.g. freshwater and wetland habitats (see page 133), farm and croft land (see page 129), freshwater pearl mussel (see page 179).

The Cairngorms Nature Index will be central to the identification of a nature networks within the Cairngorms National Park. See page 193 for further information.

Forest and woodland habitats

Within the Cairngorms National Park, the estimated tree cover is approximately 16%. The National Park is home to many ancient woodlands, including Caledonian forest, which is predominately protected through Special Area of Conservation designation (Figure 33) (CNPA262). Woodland is key driver for ecological connectivity and there is a significant network of native forest connecting Strathspey, Strath Avon, Glenlivet, Donside, Deeside and the Angus Glens. This network is a widely recognised special quality of the park and supports many of the priority species identified within the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNPA253). Although the park is only made up of 16% of woodland, it is estimated that approximately 79% of that woodland is comprised of native species, for example Scots pine or native broadleaved species. As part of this, the National Park contains the most extensive tracts of Caledonian forest in Britain, as well as some of the best examples in Scotland of bog woodland, montane willow scrub and stands of aspen[28].

The priority for woodland habitats within the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 (CNPA253) is for their expansion and enhancement. The 2063 vision of the Action Plan for woodlands is for:

'Patches of forest and woodland, some miles across, some as small as football fields, link together through farmland and open ground. They are expanding up hillsides and into quiet areas, providing refuge for species to flourish, like the once critically endangered but now flourishing capercaillie. They are made up almost entirely of native trees: a patchwork of different woodlands, including productive plantations, all with rich understories, trees of all ages, clearings, bogs and deadwood scattered throughout. The UK's largest natural forests are considered an exemplar of woodlands managed for multiple benefits.'

[28] Aspen is a priority species in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Further information on its condition is provided on page 184.

The final report on the Action Plan (CNPA254) highlights the achievements over the plan period associated with woodlands (Table 10).

Table 10 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 targets for woodland expansion and enhancement (CNPA254).

Target	Status
Woodland expansion 5,000 hectares of new woodland, including regeneration and montane	6,000 hectares of new woodland
Woodland expansion 70% of new woodland to be native species	95% native species
Woodland enhancement 750 hectares of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) and native woodlands under restoration	750 hectares under restoration

Existing and planned trees and woodlands

No single dataset provides the complete picture of trees and woodland of high nature conservation value in the National Park. However, a combination of the following datasets provides a good range of information that may be used to inform the Proposed Plan:

- National Forest Inventory (Figure 29) (CNPA275).
- Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (Figure 30) (CNPA276).
- Caledonian Pinewood Inventory (Figure 32) (CNPA277).
- Scottish Ancient Woodland Inventory (Figure 33) (CNPA278).
- HabMoS - Mountain Woodland 2023 – wild, relict or remnant (Figure 34) (CNPA279).
- HabMoS - Mountain Woodland 2023 – restoration sites (Figure 35) (CNPA281).
- Riparian woodland data from NatureScot (Figure 36) (CNPA282).
- Forestry Grant Scheme woodland creation claims (Figure 37) (CNPA283).
- Forestry Grant Scheme woodland creation options (Figure 38) (CNPA284).
- Forestry Grant Scheme Woodland – Improvement Grant – Habitats and Species – New Natural Regeneration Establishment claims (Figure 39) (CNPA285).
- Local authority Tree Preservation Orders (Figure 40) (CNPA286).
- Ancient Tree Inventory (Figure 41) (CNPA287).
- Woody linear features framework data (Figure 42) (CNPA288).

- Cairngorms National Park Authority aspen dataset (Figure 77)[29].

There may be issues with individual datasets relating to, for example, the size of woodland that has been recorded (for example, smaller woodland areas can be missed), on how up to date the data is for example, the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (CNPA276) presents data collected between 2010 to 2015), or on the accuracy of the mapping, particularly when it has been based on historic mapping (for example, the Ancient woodland Inventory). However, as stated, in combination they provide the best available data on woodlands in the National Park and may be used to inform the Proposed Plan in accordance with National Planning Framework 4's (CNPA008) requirements (see page 13).

National Forest Inventory

The National Forest Inventory (CNPA275) woodland map (Figure 29) covers all forest and woodland area over 0.5 hectare with a minimum of 20% canopy cover, or the potential to achieve it, and a minimum width of 20 metres. This includes new planting, clearfell, windblow and restock. The latest available inventory is for the year 2023.

Around 760 km^2 of the National Park's forests and woodlands are identified by the Inventory, of which approximately is classified as:

- 384 km^2 of coniferous woodland.
- 133 km^2 of assumed woodland.
- 94 km^2 of broadleaved woodland.
- 87 km^2 of felled woodland.
- 31 km^2 of young trees.
- 8 km^2 of mixed mainly broadleaved woodland.
- 7 km^2 of ground prepared for planting.
- 6 km^2 of windblow.
- 6 km^2 of mixed mainly conifer woodland.
- 3 km^2 of low density woodland.
- 2 km^2 of shrub.
- 0.7 km^2 of failed woodland[30].

[29] This is an internal Park Authority dataset and there are no external links to provide.
[30] Figures may not sum due to rounding.

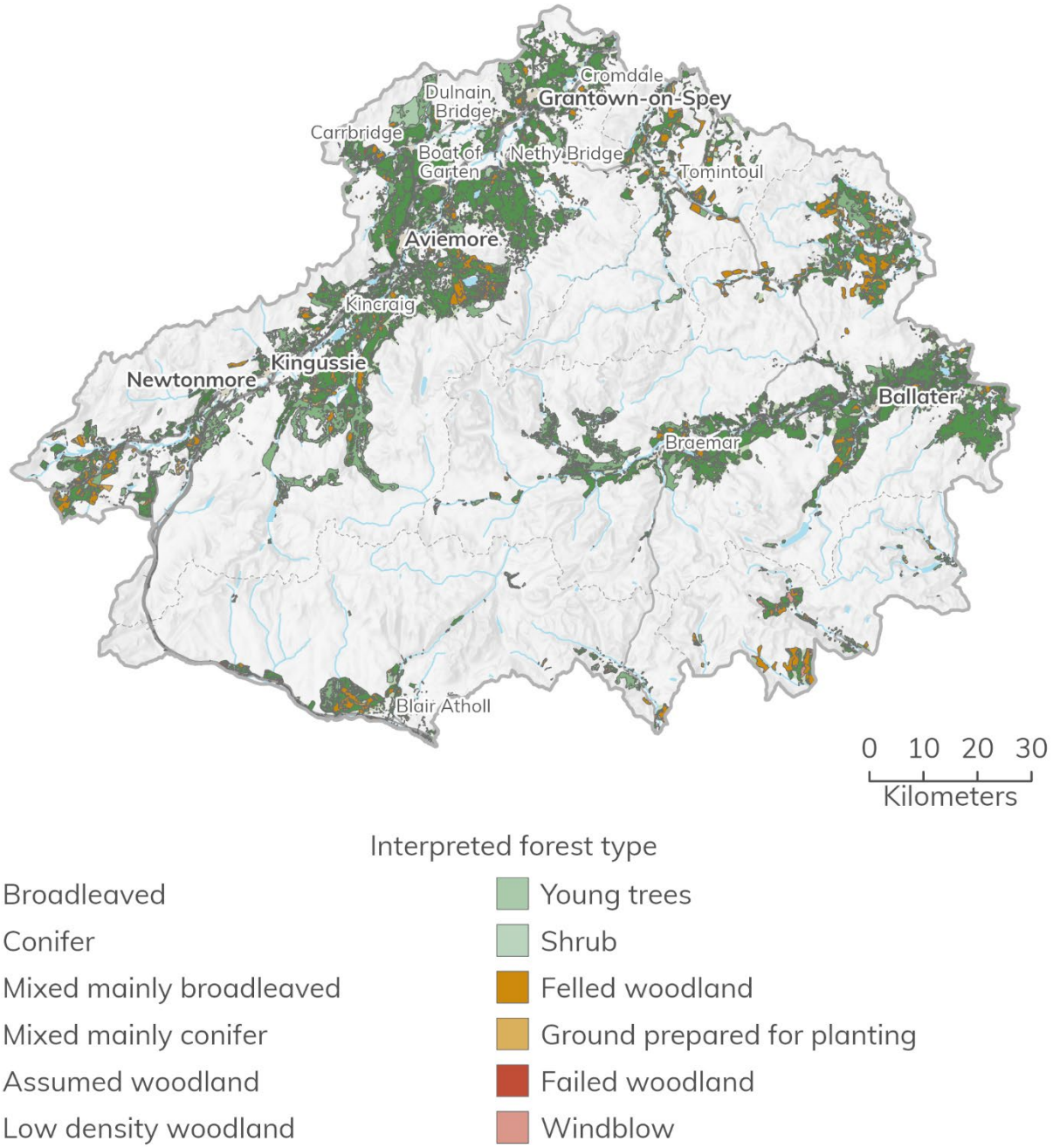

Figure 29 Forests and woodlands identified on the National Forest Inventory 2023 by their interpreted forest type in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA275). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © Forestry Commission 2026.

Native Woodland Survey of Scotland

The aim of the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (CNPA276) was to undertake a baseline survey of all native woodlands, nearly native woodlands and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) in Scotland in order to create a woodland map linked to a dataset showing type, extent and condition of those woods (Figure 30). The data presented in this report was extracted 25 November 2024 when it's most recent update was 22 July 2021.

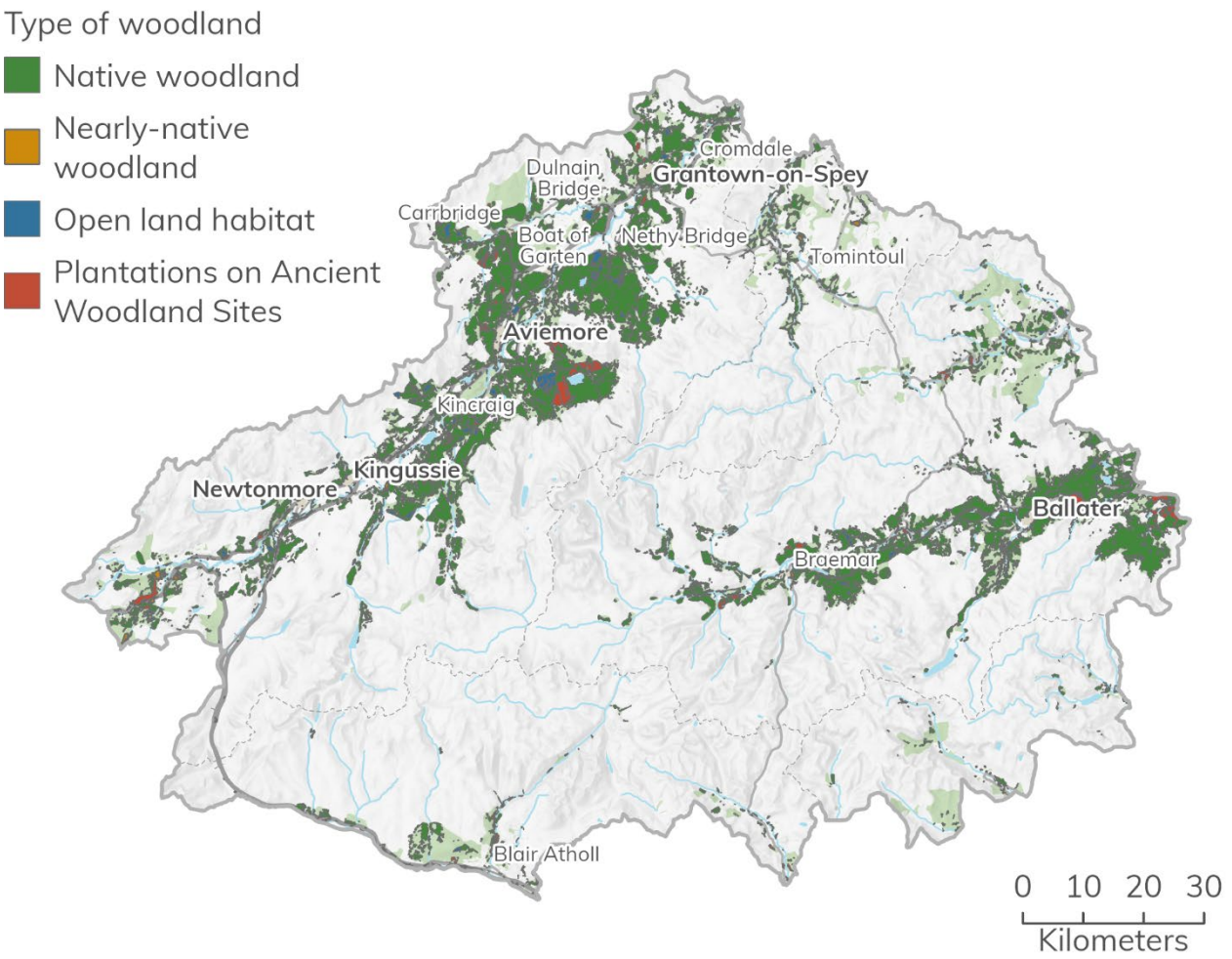

Figure 30 Woodland on the Native and Woodland Survey for Scotland within the Cairngorms National Park, categorised by type (CNPA276). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © Scottish Forestry 2026.

Around 475 km^2 of the National Park's forests and woodlands are identified by the Survey, of which approximately is classified as:

- 430 km^2 of native woodland.
- 5 km^2 of nearly-native woodland.
- 23 km^2 of open land habitat.

- 18 km^2 of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).

The most extensive dominant habitat type is native pinewood, covering around 306km^2 (Figure 31).

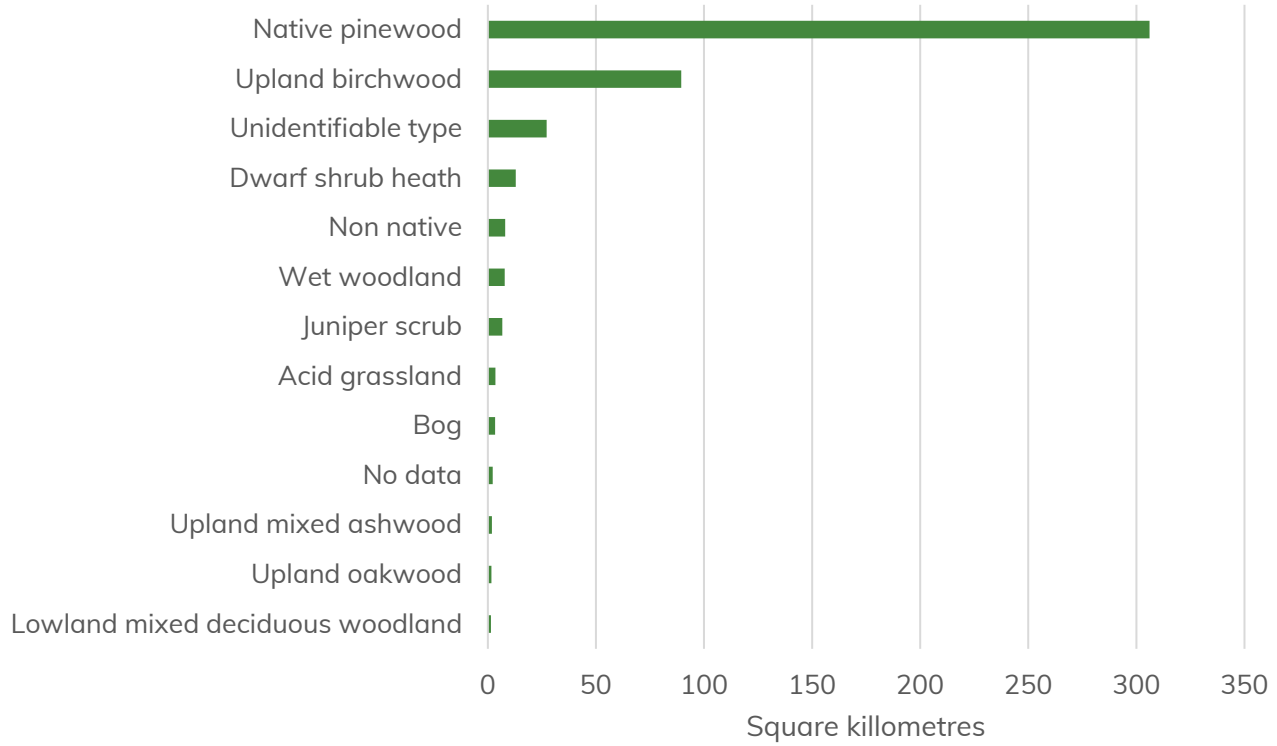

Figure 31 Main dominant habitat types (over one km^2 or above) of forests and woodlands identified Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (CNPA276) (Source: Scottish Forestry 2024)[31].

Caledonian Pinewood Inventory

The Caledonian Pinewood Inventory (CNPA277) records approximately 17,900 hectares of pinewood in Scotland. In all cases the balance of probability suggests that they are genuinely native, that is, descended from one generation to another by natural seeding.

In Scotland, pines were an important component of post-glacial natural forests (the so-called Wood of Caledon) which covered an estimated 70% of the country. They were largely confined to the poorest soils, often occurring in association with birch, but they also grew in mixture with other species in natural transitions to oak, ash and elm dominated woodland on the better soils, and to willows and alder on wet areas. Over many centuries vast areas of these ancient forests were cleared, and pinewood

[31] There are a further 18 dominant habitat types identified by the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland, each covering an area under one km^2. Combined these smaller areas cover an area of about 4km^2.

regeneration was prevented, either by allowing the land to be grazed or by replanting it with other tree species, usually of non-native origin. Other adverse effects were the browsing of deer and 'muirburning' to improve the grazing or the age structure of heather on adjacent grouse moors.

Approximately 10,300 hectares of the woodlands on the Inventory are in the Cairngorms National Park, representing around 57% of all such woodland in Scotland (Figure 32).

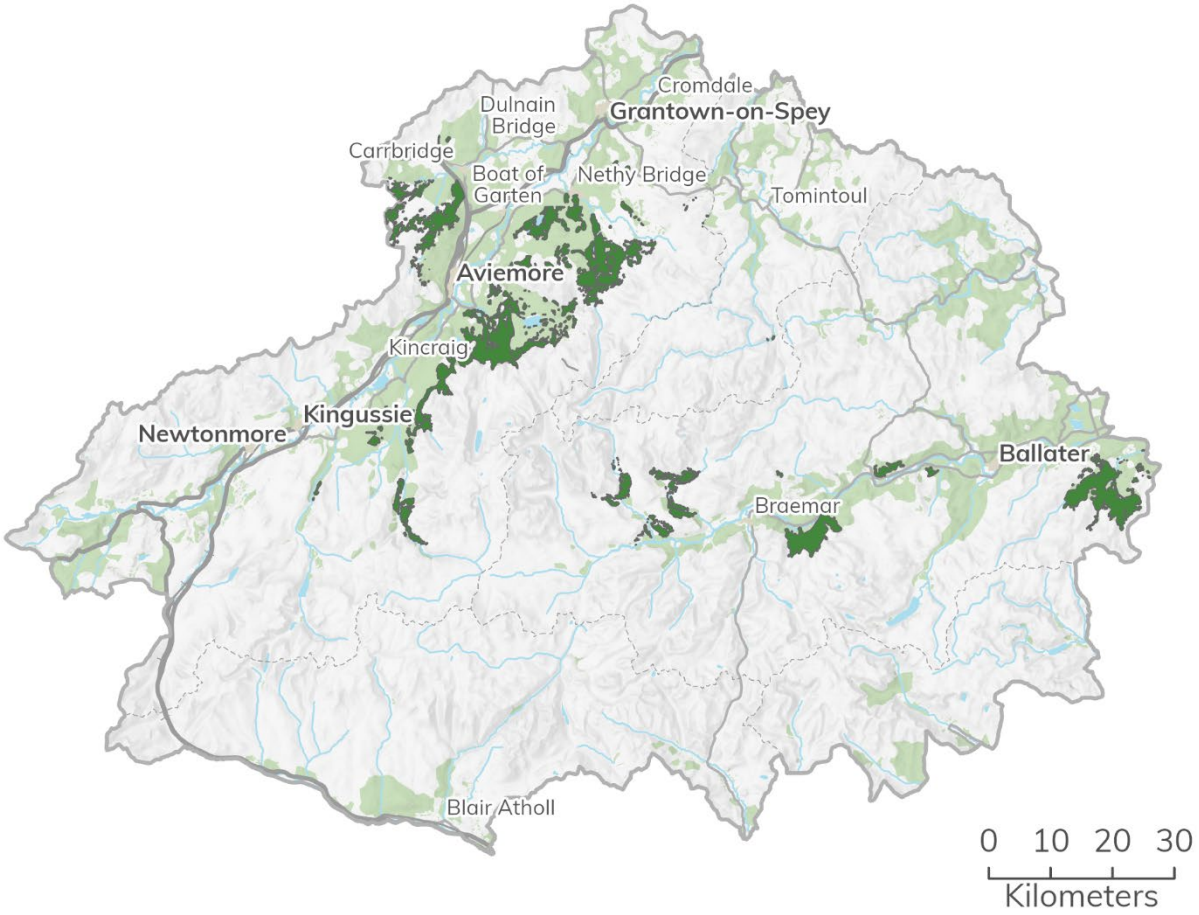

Figure 32 Forest and woodlands identified on the Caledonian Pinewood Inventory within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA277). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © Scottish Forestry 2026.

Ancient woodland Inventory

In Scotland, Ancient Woodland is defined as land that is currently wooded and has been continually wooded, at least since 1750 (CNPA278). Ancient woods are important because:

- They include all remnants of Scotland's original woodland; their flora and fauna may preserve elements of the natural composition of the original Atlantic forests.
- They usually have much richer wildlife than that of more recent woods.
- They preserve the integrity of soil ecological processes and associated biodiversity.
- Some have been managed by traditional methods for centuries and demonstrate an enduring relationship between people and nature.
- Woods and veteran trees are ancient monuments whose value to the local community and historians may be as great as that of the older buildings in a parish.
- Once destroyed, they cannot be recreated.

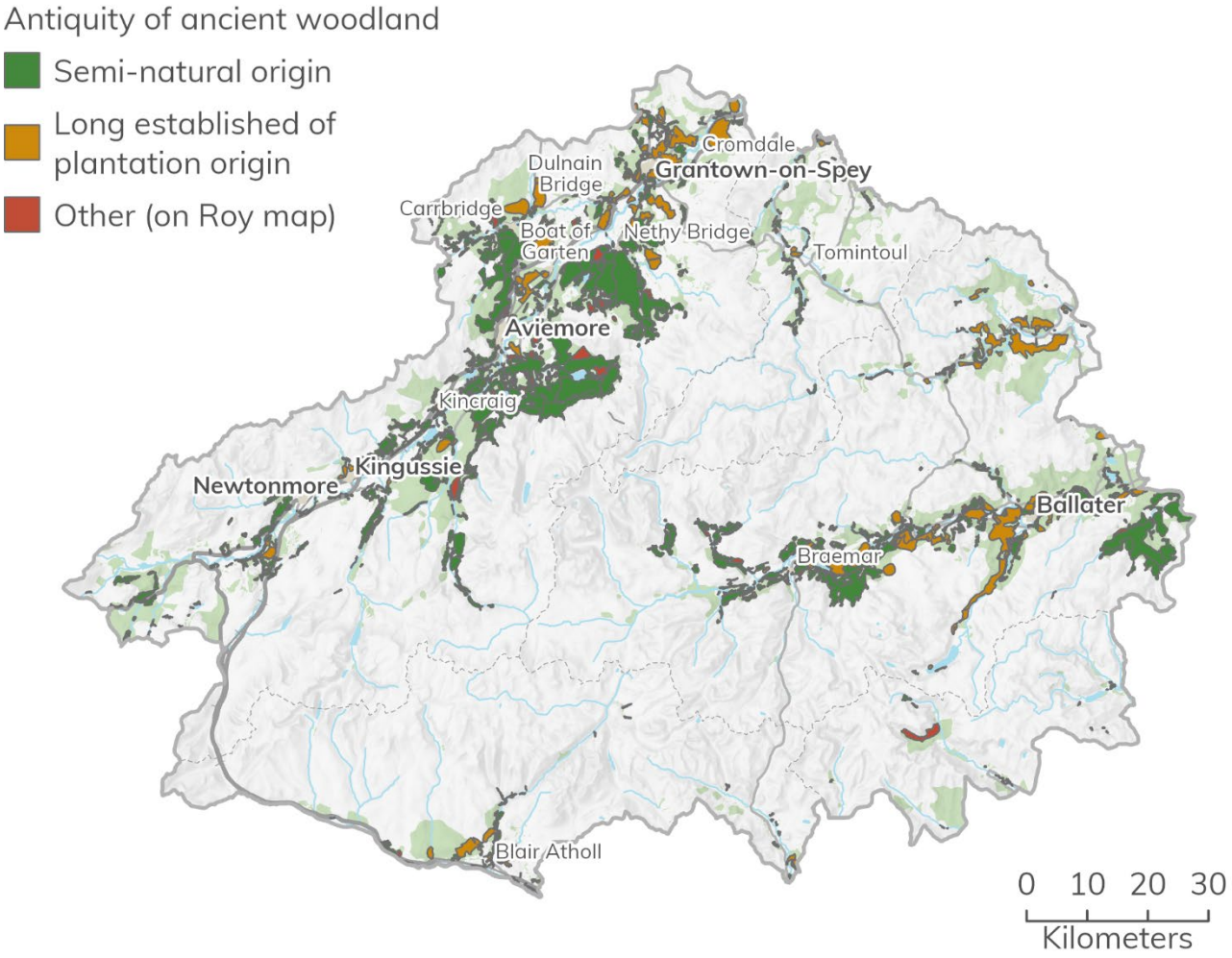

Figure 33 Forest and woodlands identified on the Ancient Woodland Inventory within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA278). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

Although there is no legislation specifically protecting ancient woodland, National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008) states that development proposals will not be supported where they result in any loss of ancient woodlands.

Around 340 km^2 of the Cairngorms National Park's woodlands are identified as being ancient according to the Ancient Woodland Inventory (CNPA278). Although not definitive due to historical mapping issues, the Inventory provides an indication of where ancient woodlands can be found in the National Park (Figure 33). Around 160 km^2 of ancient woodlands have been identified as being semi-natural. The data was last updated in October 2000, with no further updates planned.

HabMoS – Mountain Woodland 2023 – wild, relict or remnant

This dataset provides a collation of 'wild, relic or remnant' mountain woodland point records for Scotland (CNPA279). NatureScot commissioned this dataset to be used to inform landscape scale restoration, 30x30 goals, Nature Networks, United Kingdom and European Reporting and Area based casework, and training data for habitat mapping.

A total of 11,498 point records have been compiled across 24 tree and shrub taxa that feature in mountain woodland habitats in the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 34). From these records, there are a total of 117 that qualify for Annex 1 H4080, and a total of 178 that qualify for Annex 1 H5130. However, some geographical areas have had higher recording effort than others. The dataset was published 13 March 2023 and it is recommended that it is updated every three years, or annually for the Nationally Rare / Scarce arctic-alpine willows and scrub specialist species.

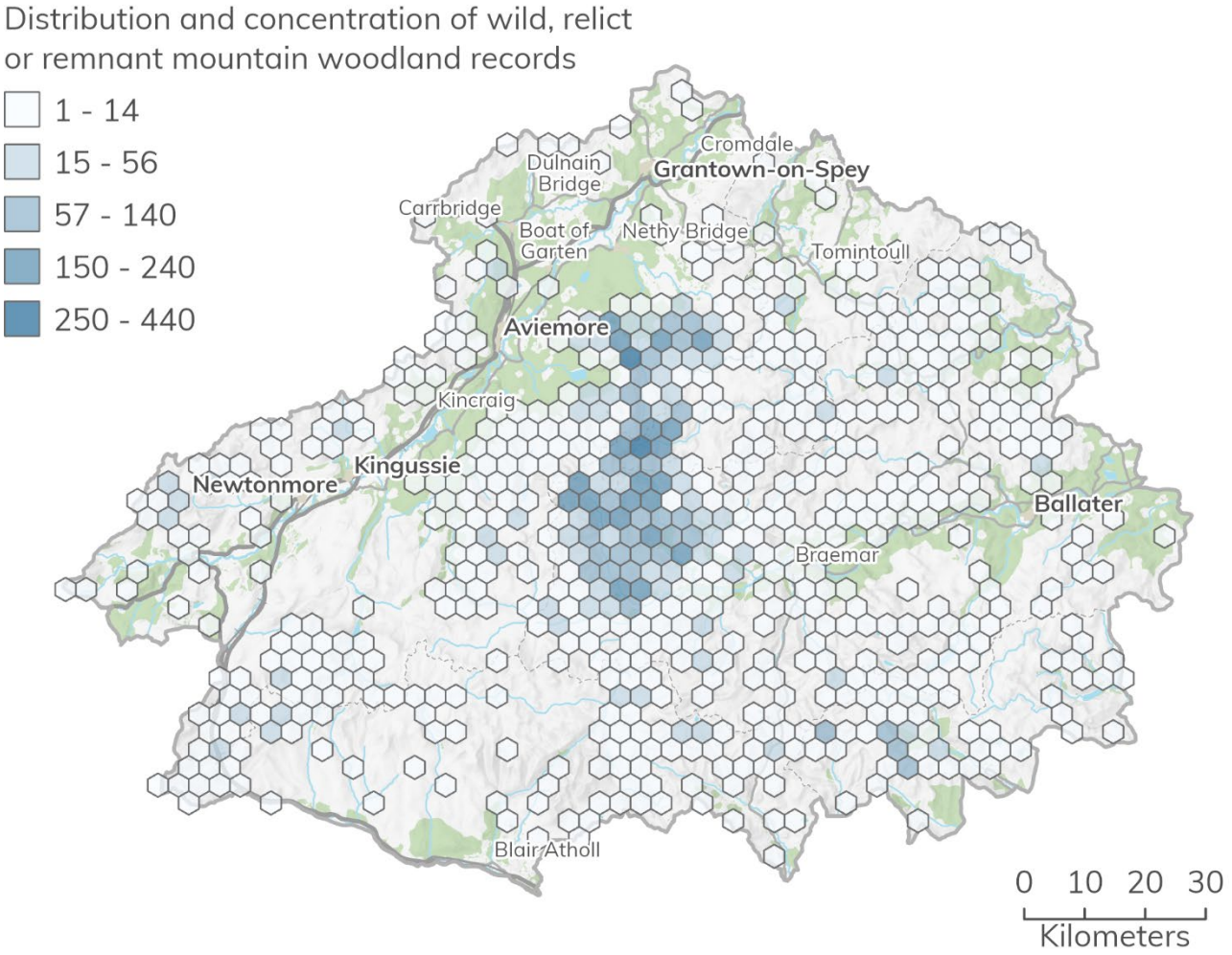

Figure 34 Distribution and concentration of wild, relict and remnant mountain woodland records in the Cairngorms National Park as of March 2023 (CNPA279). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

HabMoS – Mountain Woodland 2023 – restoration sites

This dataset provides boundaries for mountain woodland restoration sites in Scotland (CNPA281). NatureScot commissioned this dataset to be used to inform landscape scale restoration, 30x30 goals, Nature Networks, United Kingdom and European Reporting and Area based casework, and training data for habitat mapping.

A total of 46 mountain woodland restoration sites have been compiled across the Cairngorms National Park, covering a total gross area of around 5,500 ha (Figure 35). There are a total of 15 sites which contain a component targeting Annex 1 Habitat H4080, 2 sites which contain a component targeting H5130, and one site that targets both. Contributing organisations have participated in a purely voluntary capacity and the dataset will therefore not be an absolute list of all restoration work across Scotland.

The dataset was published 31 March 2023 and it is recommended that this new dataset is updated every three to five years.

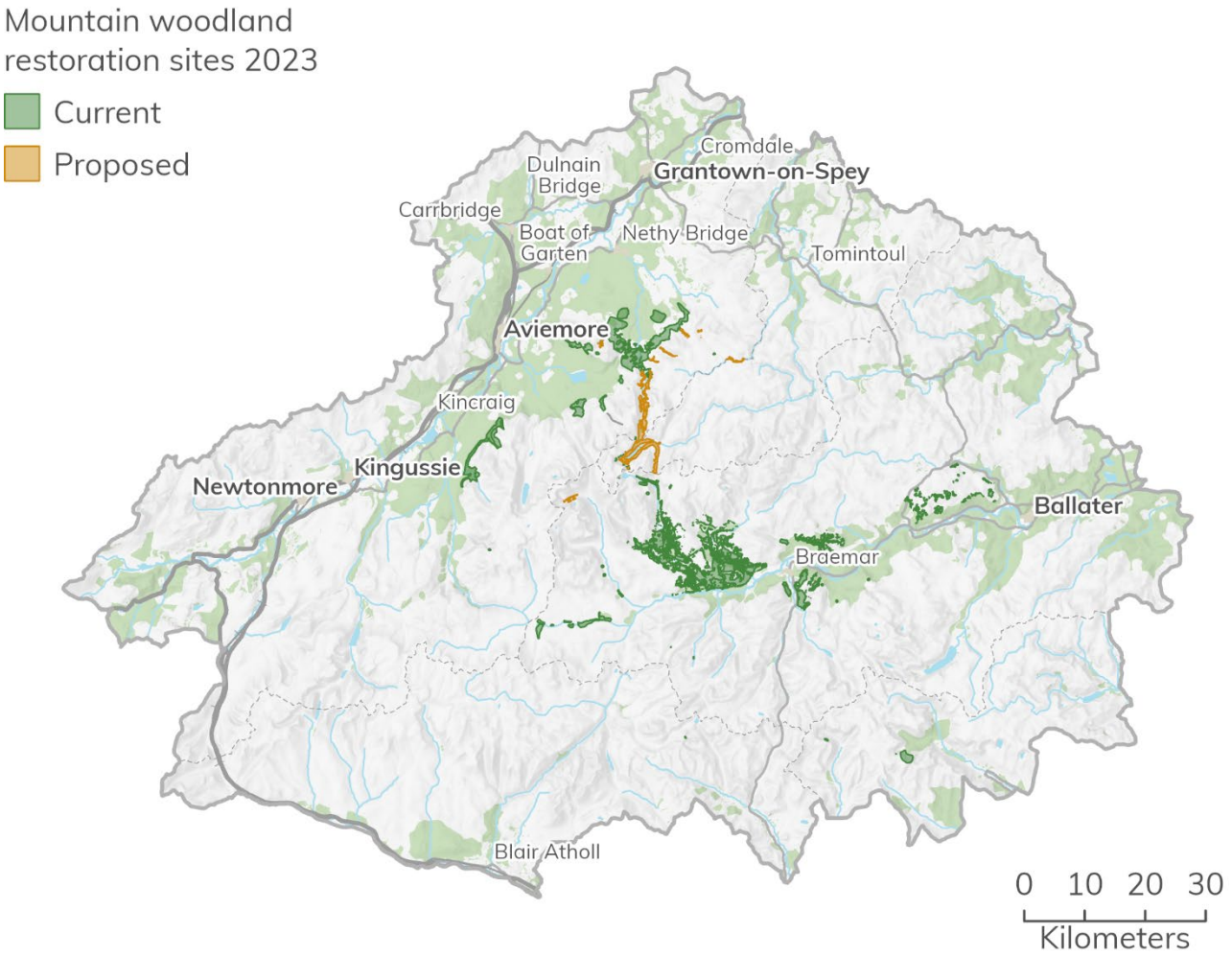

Figure 35 Mountain woodland restoration sites in the Cairngorms National Park as of March 2023 (CNPA281). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

Riparian woodland

Native woodland on the riparian zone is a vital part of the water ecosystem. It helps regulate the temperature of the water by providing shade, while falling leaves and insects feed the hungry animals below. It is linked closely with the freshwater and wetland priority habitats covered on page 133.

Riparian woodland data is hosted by NatureScot (Figure 36) (CNPA282). It was mapped using a combination of existing open datasets, including the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland, Smallwoods dataset from Forest Research, National Forest Inventory, Ordnance Survey open rivers data and Scottish Environment Protection Agency open

rivers data. It includes coniferous and broadleaved woodland, native and non-native. The data presented in this report was extracted 25 November 2024 when it's most recent update was 16 June 2023.

It is recognised that the summary data provided by Figure 36 is difficult discern. It can be viewed at greater deal via NatureScot's data portal (CNPA282):

- https://opendata.nature.scot/datasets/snh::riparian-woodland-2/explore?location=57.060601%2C-3.588487%2C10.40

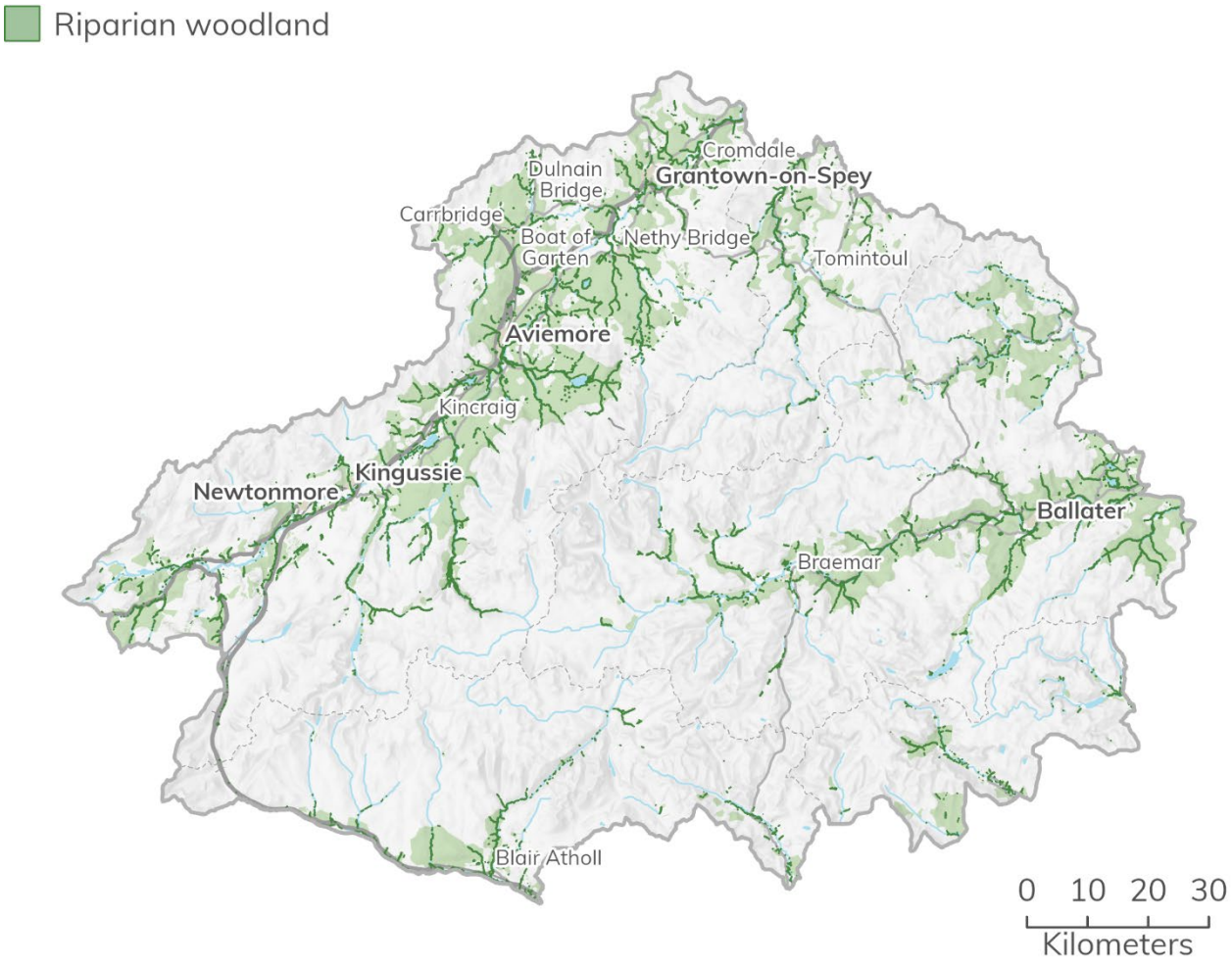

Figure 36 Mapping of riparian woodlands in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA282). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

Due to the overlap with flood risk constraints, it is unlikely that riparian woodland is at significant risk from development. However, there may be opportunities for enhancement following National Planning Framework 4's (CNPA008) requirement for local development plans to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity in line with the mitigation hierarchy.

Opportunities for the expansion and enhancement of riparian of woodland are covered within the context of freshwater and wetland habitats (see page 133).

Forestry Grant Scheme woodland creation claims and options

The Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) offers financial support for the creation of new woodland and the sustainable management of existing woodland. Within the scheme, there are a range of support options covering planting, woodland protection, harvesting and more.

The Scheme's woodland creation claims (Figure 37) (CNPA283) and options (Figure 38) (CNPA284) data can provide information on woodland areas that may not be picked up by other datasets. In the case of claims data, this is because the data is updated at a greater frequency than the inventories and surveys, such as the National Forest Inventory (CNPA275). In the case of options, this is because the areas have been approved for woodland creation under the grant scheme but may not yet have been planted. Woodland creation options might therefore not appear on the other datasets covered in this report. While it is possible that the woodland does not get planted, it is considered appropriate to also categorise these areas as woodland and to protect them in accordance with the policy requirements of National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008).

This information can be supplemented with data on claims for successful New Natural Regeneration Establishment under Scheme's Woodland Improvement Grant, Habitats and Species option (CNPA285). The Woodland Improvement Grant provides support for capital work that will benefit a range of priority habitats and species, as defined in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and European Directives. This option is aimed at:

- Improving the condition of native woodlands and restoring Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites to native woodland.
- Restoration or conservation of non-woodland habitats (such as lowland raised bogs and blanket bogs) that are present within the internal boundary of the woodland
- Species associated with woodland edge (such as the pearl-bordered fritillary).
- Woodland Designed Landscapes.

This data is useful as natural regeneration may not be picked up in surveys such as the National Forest Inventory.

There is some overlap between the claim and option datasets, which were accessed 4 November 2024. At the time, the most recent update of both datasets occurred 14 November 2024.

There is just over 3,600 hectares of land with Forestry Grant Scheme woodland creation claims in the National Park (Figure 37), which was approved from 2016 – 2023, under the following options:

- 1,401 hectares of native Scots pine.
- 710 hectares of native broadleaves.
- 702 hectares of native upland birch.
- 385 hectares of diverse conifer.
- 310 hectares of conifer.
- 81 hectares of native low-density woodland.
- 45 hectares of broadleaves.
- 13 hectares of small or farm woodlands.

The claims for these areas were made from 2016 – 2023.

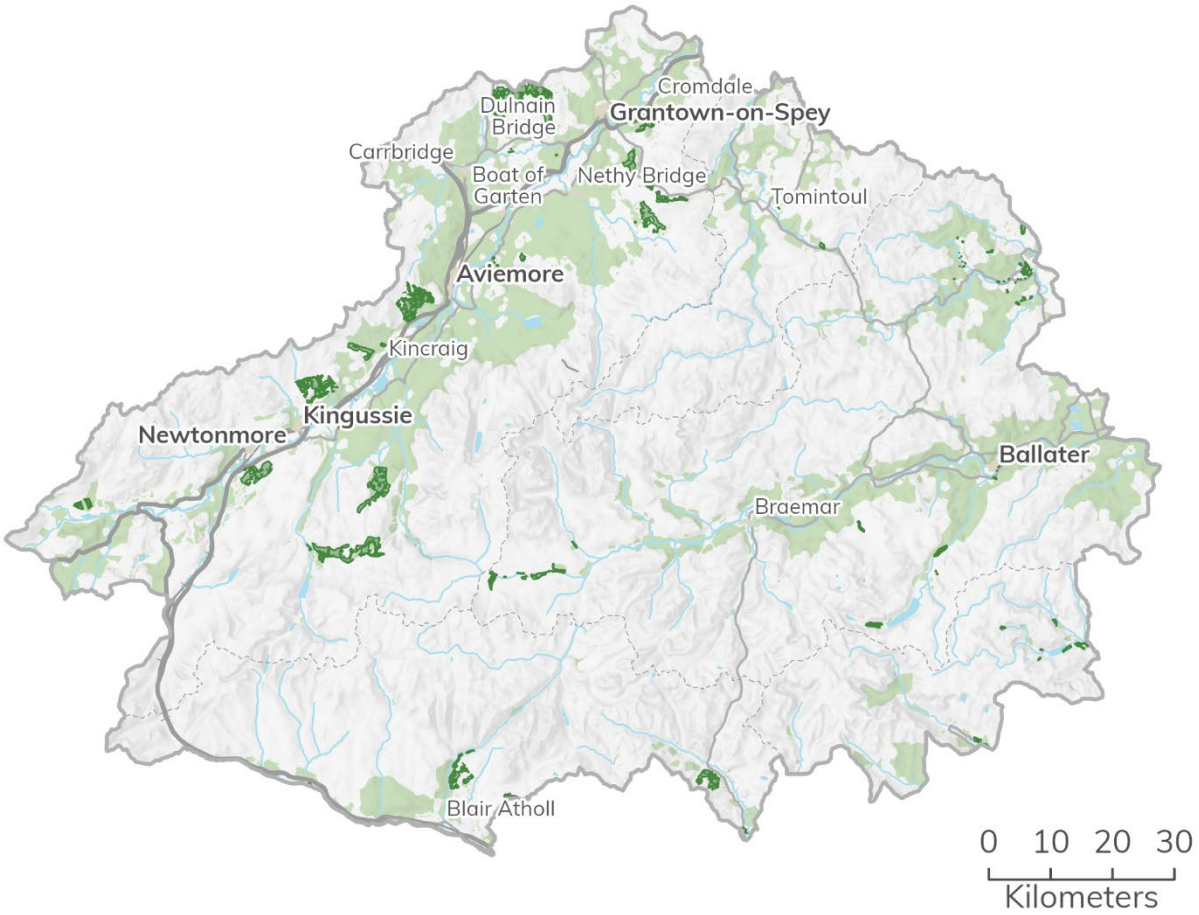

Figure 37 Forestry Grant Scheme woodland creation claims (CNPA283). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © Scottish Forestry 2026.

There is just over 6,390 hectares of land with woodland creation options in the National Park (Figure 38), which was approved from 2015 – 2024, under the following options:

- 2,889 hectares of native Scots pine.
- 1,272 hectares of native upland birch.
- 1,134 hectares of native broadleaves.
- 483 hectares of diverse conifer.
- 386 hectares of conifer.
- 163 hectares of native low-density woodland.
- 50 hectares of broadleaves.
- 14 hectares of small or farm woodlands.

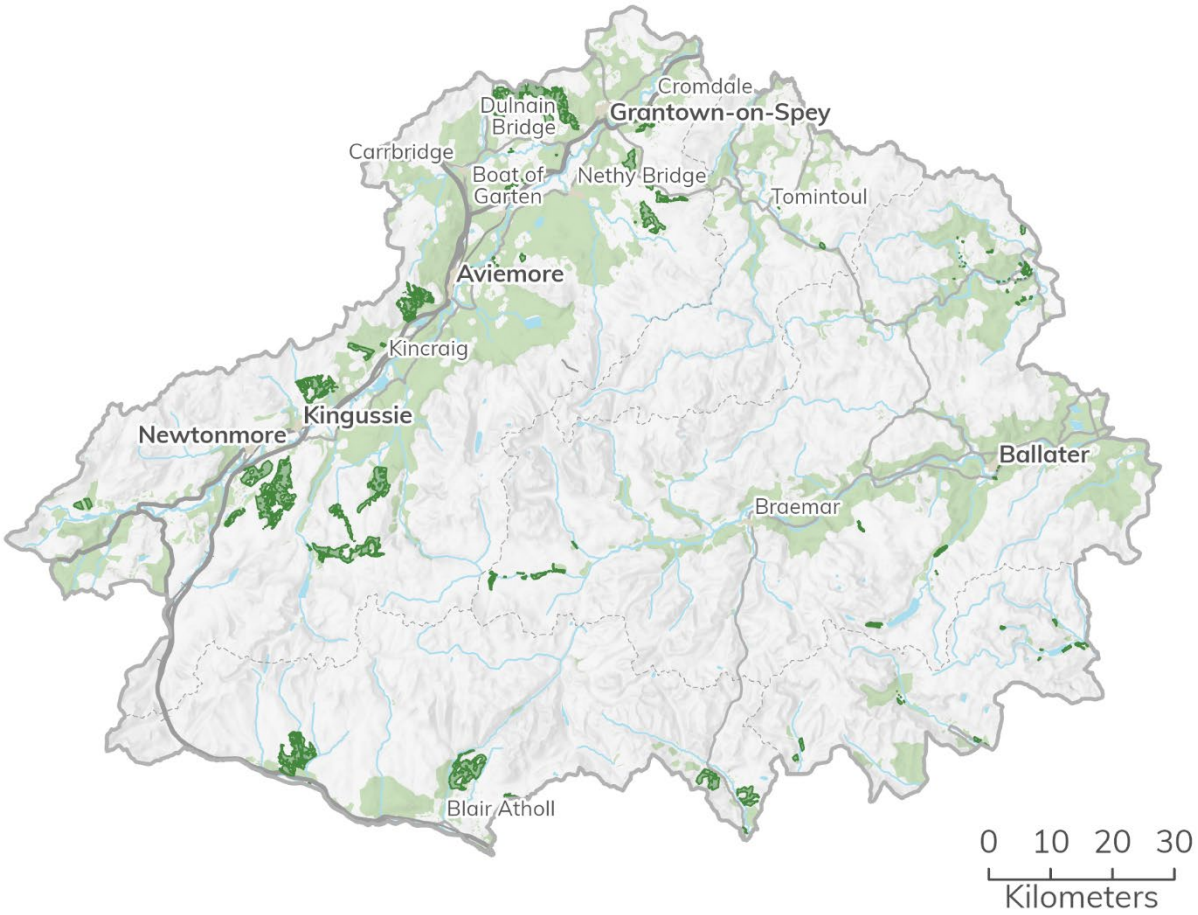

Figure 38 Forestry Grant Scheme woodland creation options (CNPA284). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © Scottish Forestry 2026.

The data presented in Figure 39 is for the successful establishment of natural regeneration of native tree species on open ground within or around the woodland edge where there are prospects of regeneration occurring, and where the successful establishment of native trees meets the objectives of the Woodland Improvement Grant – Habitats and Species option. There is just over 1,700 hectares of land within the National Park under this option.

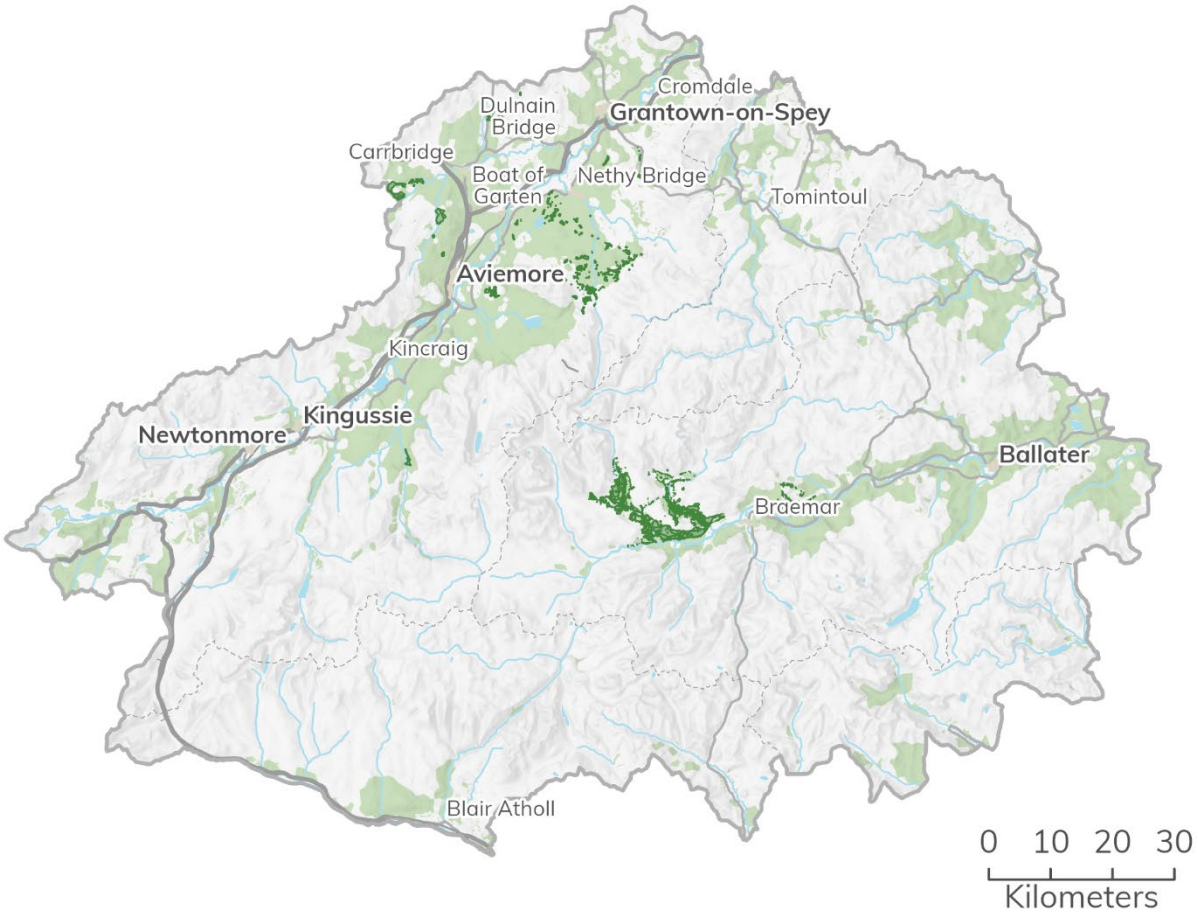

Figure 39 Forestry Grant Scheme Woodland Improvement Grant Habitats and Species new natural regeneration claims (CNPA285). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © Scottish Forestry 2026.

Trees and hedgerows

As noted, the datasets used in this report have their limitations, in particular, data on smaller areas of woodlands, hedgerows and / or individual trees is fragmentary with much lacking any form of identification. This can include trees of high value on field boundaries or along watercourses for example. Trees in urban and peri urban areas are important assets that need to be protected and encouraged, although they may not preclude development.

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended (CNPA003) and the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order and Trees in Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Regulations 2010 (CNPA235) grant planning authorities the ability to make Tree Preservation Orders if it appears to be (CNPA236):

- Expedient in the interest of amenity and / or

- That the trees, groups of trees or woodlands are of cultural or historical significance.

The Tree Preservation Order data held by the local authorities covering the National Park therefore offer a source of information on the location of these assets that have legal protection (CNPA286). There are 54 Tree Preservation Order records within the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 40). These records do not equate to the number of trees protected by the preservation orders, as some records relate to groups of trees.

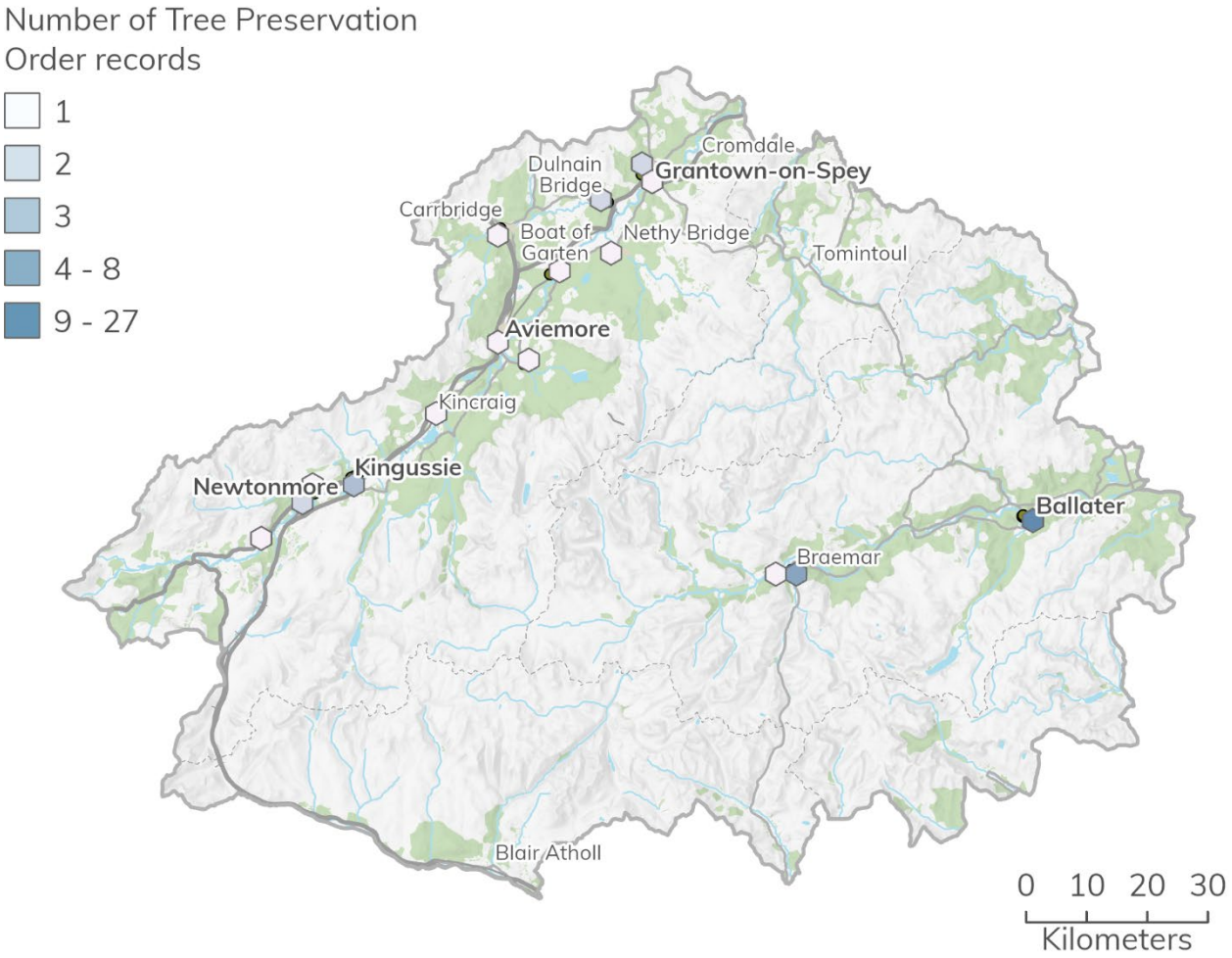

Figure 40 Tree Preservation Order records in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA286). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © Scottish Government 2026.

The Tree Preservation Order data contained within Figure 40 was extracted from data held by the Improvement Service on 2 December 2024 (CNPA286):

- https://data.spatialhub.scot/dataset/tree_preservation_orders-is

The Park Authority will need to ensure that this data is up to date for the site assessment stage of the Proposed Plan's preparation.

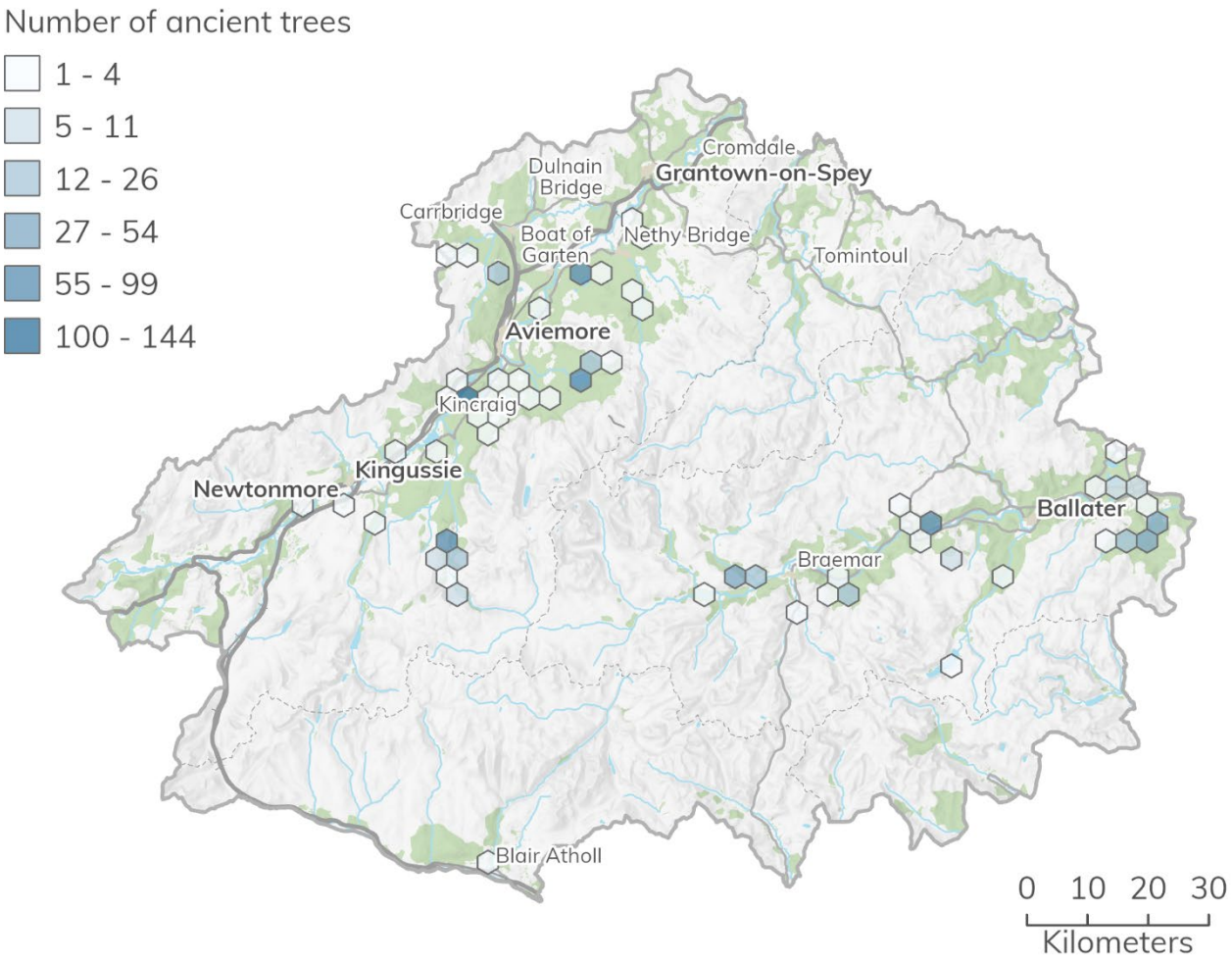

Figure 41 Trees recorded on the Ancient Tree Inventory within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA287). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © Woodland Trust 2026.

This data may be supplemented with the Ancient Tree Inventory operated by the Woodland Trust (Figure 41) (CNPA287). The inventory hosts information on the location of ancient, veteran and notable trees. There may be overlap between this dataset and the Tree Preservation Order data held by local authorities. However, together they offer a more comprehensive view of the ecologically, historically and culturally important trees

and woodlands within the Cairngorms National Park. The data presented in this report was extracted 25 November 2024 when it's most recent update was 7 March 2024.

There are 789 trees on the Inventory within the Cairngorms National Park. The vast majority of these are Scots pine (634), with other species including alder, birch and juniper. The majority of these were classified as veteran trees (around 74%) while the remaining 26% were classified as ancient trees. Around 97% of the trees were identified as being alive, while 3% were identified as dead.

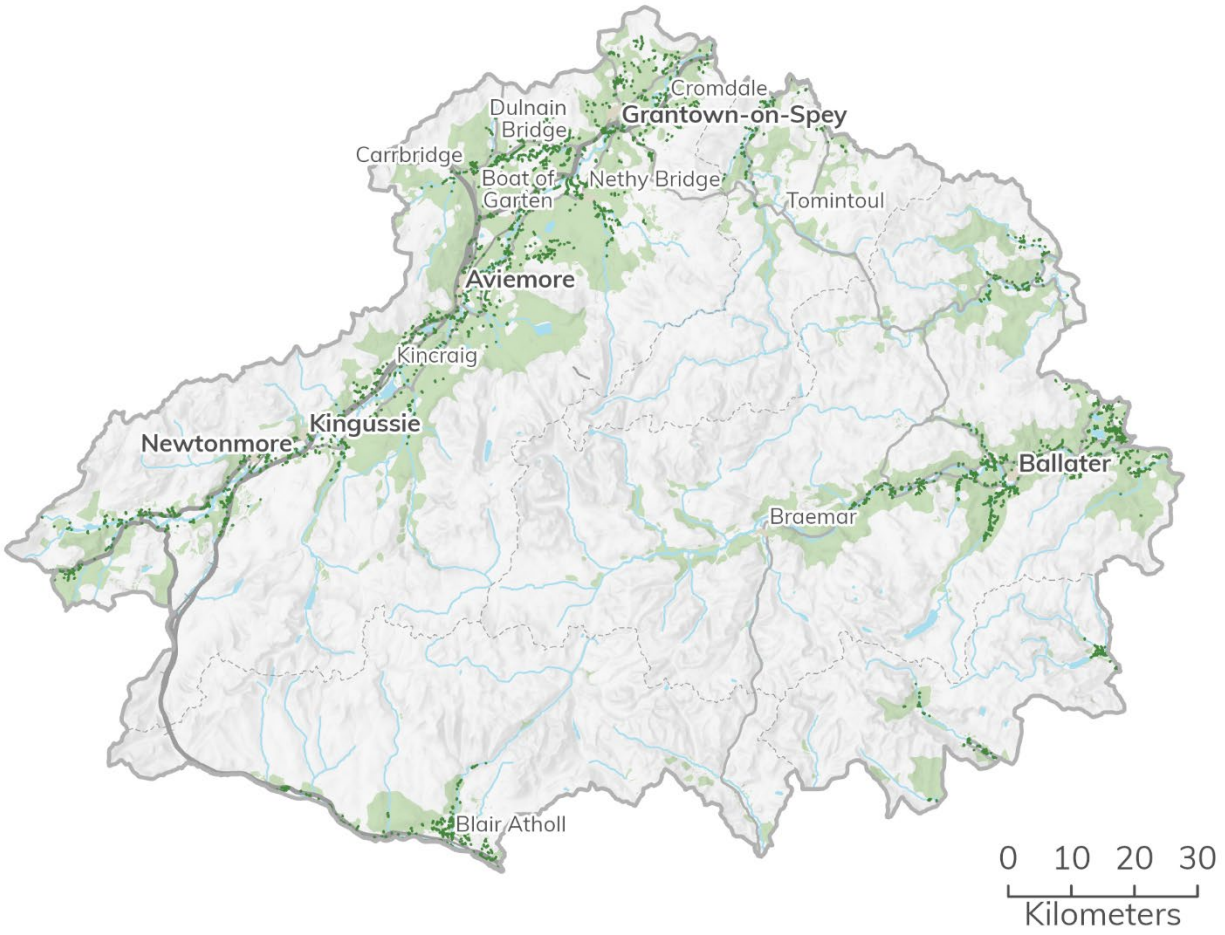

Figure 42 Features held on the Woody Linear Features Framework in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA288). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology 2026.

Further information on trees and hedgerows in the National Park is available through the Woody Linear Features Framework dataset supplied by the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (Figure 42) (CNPA288). The dataset describes the location and lengths of hedge boundaries and lines of trees (woody linear features). The dataset was derived from existing national datasets and created by a predictive model, which was

developed at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology in 2016. This unique dataset shows hedges / lines of trees on all land, not just agricultural. These features are Priority Habitats in their own right and are extremely valuable, particularly in intensively managed landscapes. There are around 240km of woody linear features identified on this dataset within the Cairngorms National Park

Further sources of information to aid identification of these features as part of the site assessment process include site visits and aerial imagery. This is a site-specific issue; therefore, it cannot be concluded that it will have an implication on the spatial strategy of the Proposed Plan.

Woodland expansion

Native woodland expansion includes the creation of new native woods and conversion from non-native woods. Biodiversity benefits are higher where expansion helps to develop habitat networks, which help woodland-dependent native species to spread and to adapt to climate change. Scottish Forestry have published guidance on developing native woodland habitat networks (CNPA289), which advises land managers how to locate native woodland expansion in order to help to develop habitat networks and deliver Scottish Forestry Strategy targets. The guidance is supported by native woodland habitat network mapping[32] (CNPA290), which helps direct expansion to be achieved under the Forestry Grant Scheme (CNPA291). These resources can be accessed here:

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA289-Developing-Native-Woodland-Habitat-Networks-guidance.pdf
- https://scottishforestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0d6125cfe892439ab0e5d0b74d9acc18

The National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027 (CNPA008), supported by the Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy 2018 (CNPA255), provides direction on the future forest management and restoration of woodlands within the National Park, including targets for woodland expansion (see pages 60 and 64).

The Forest Strategy (CNPA255) indicates that there is ecological scope and vast potential for woodland expansion in the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 43).

[32] For further information, see: https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA290-Forest-Habitat-Networks-Scotland-2008.pdf

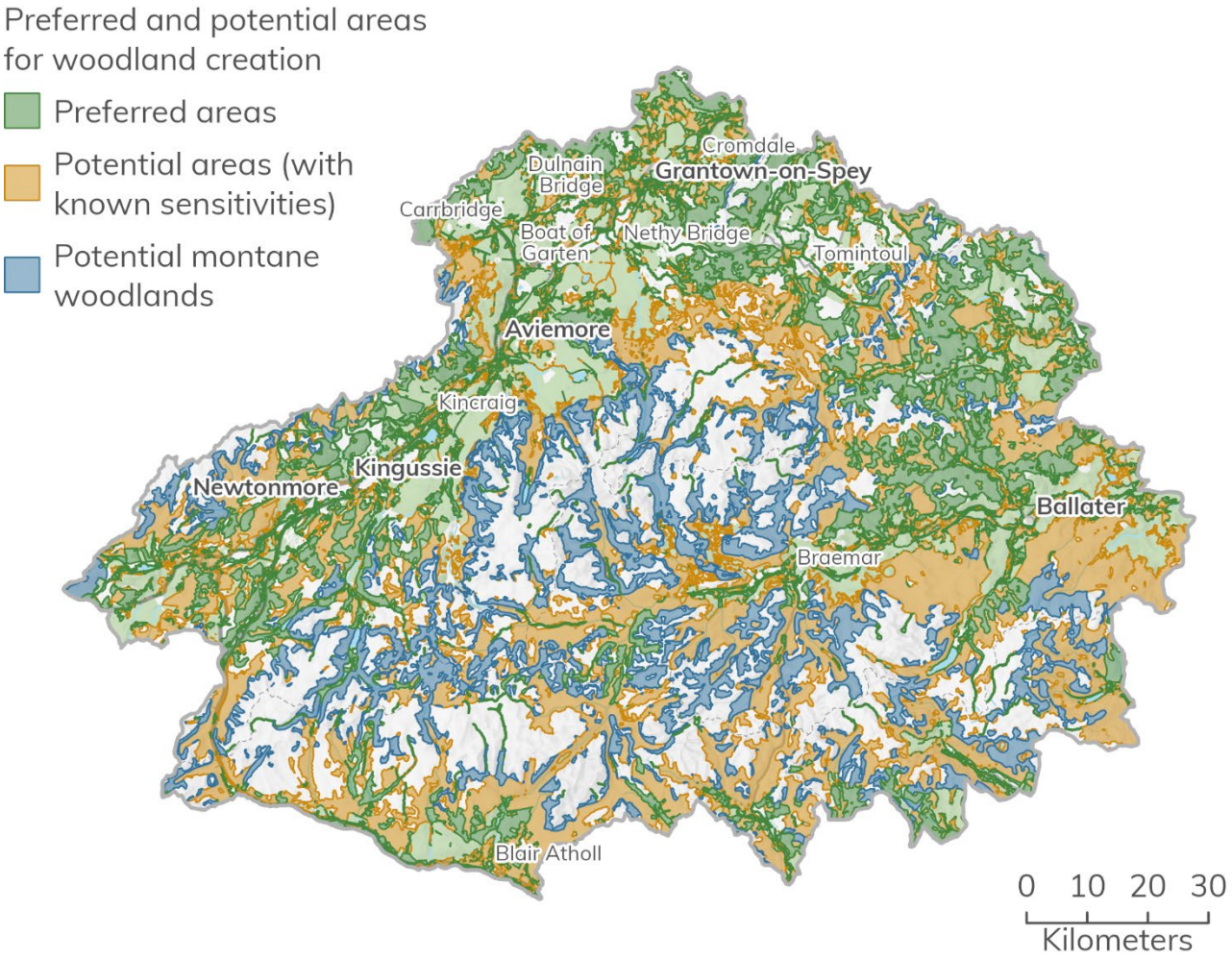

Figure 43 Preferred and potential areas for woodland creation in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA255). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

Further information of the potential for woodland expansion is provided by Scottish Environment Protection Agency's Recommended Riparian Corridor (Figure 44) (CNPA299) and Riparian Vegetation planting opportunities (Figure 45) (CNPA296) datasets.

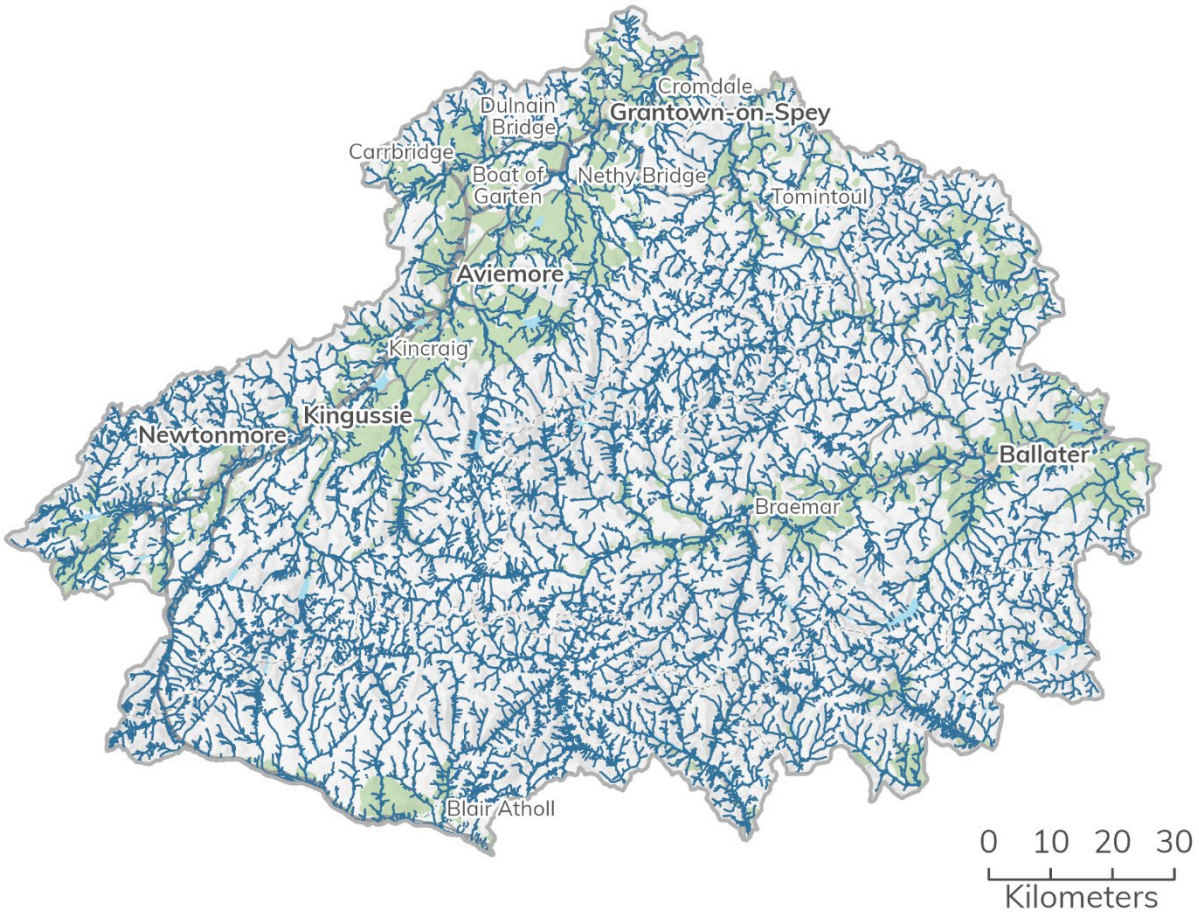

Figure 44 Recommended riparian corridors in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA299). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data @ Scottish Environment Protection Agency, 2026.

It is recognised that map of riparian vegetation planting opportunities (Figure 45) is difficult is difficult to interoperate at the scale of the National Park. It is included to demonstrate sufficiency of evidence. The data may be viewed in more detail via Scotland's environment web (CNPA296):

- https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/

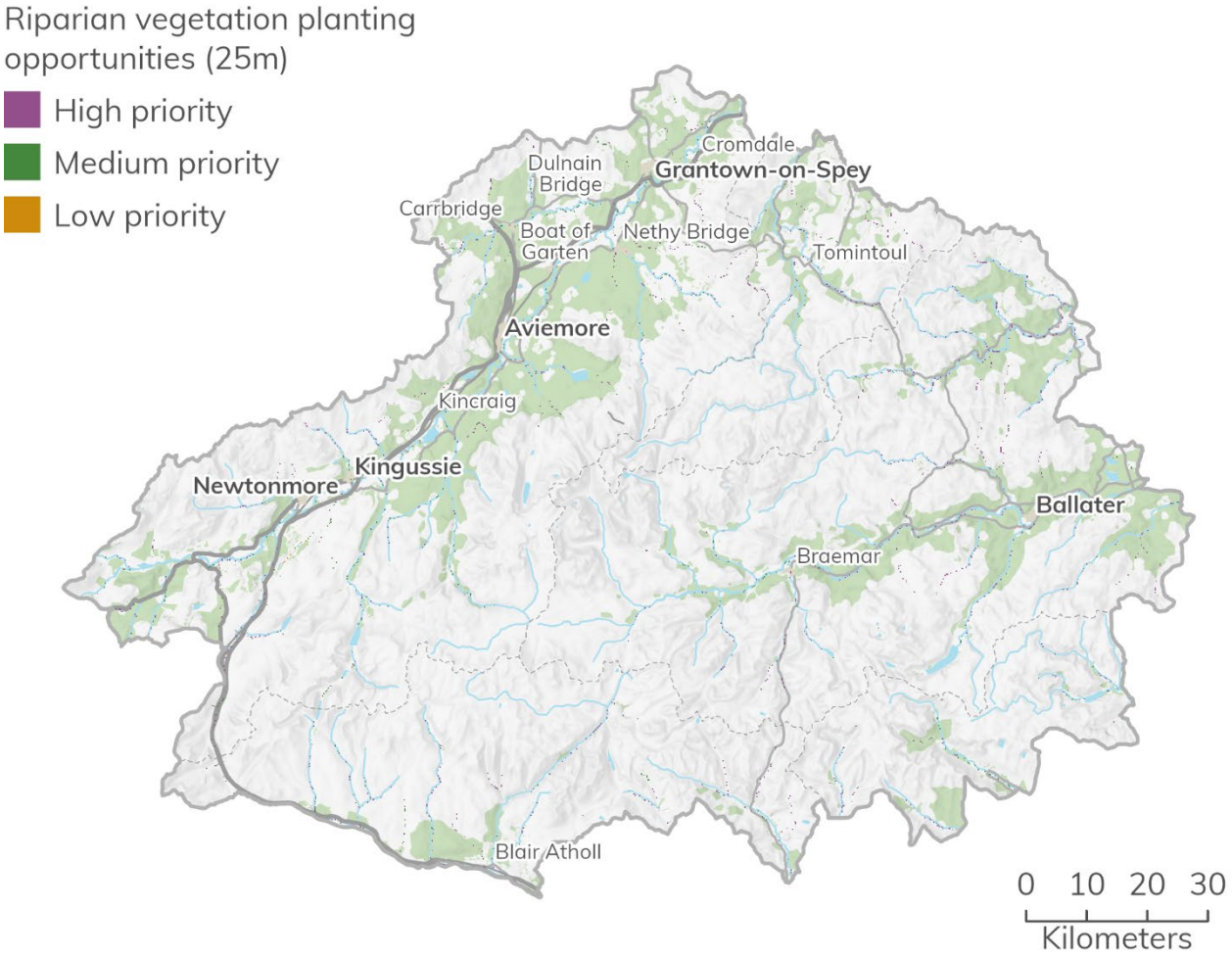

Figure 45 Riparian vegetation planting opportunities (25m) in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA296). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data @ Scottish Environment Protection Agency, 2026.

In accordance with Policy 6 of National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008), the Proposed Plan should take account of these potential and opportunity areas for woodland expansion in the formation of its spatial strategy and the assessment of its potential development sites. For this, the Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy 2018 (CNPA255) provides the spatial strategy with regard for woodlands. Furthermore, the local development plan may support the delivery of new woodland and increase connectivity between existing woodland habitats, through its support for nature networks. Scottish Forestry guidance (CNPA289) may provide practical assistance in achieving this.

Information on the capacity of land for forestry, based on a range of factors, including soil, is covered in the Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources.

Moorland and peatland habitats

The National Park is home to important upland habitats such as, Northern Atlantic wet heaths, European dry heaths and other compositions of heathland Figure 46 (CNPA067). Heathland habitats are generally dominated by dwarf shrubs with other species such as grasses, sedges and herbs. In the National Park, upland heaths are the most widespread habitats and are predominately managed for activities, such as grazing, grouse and red deer hunting. Thirteen of the Special Areas of Conservation (CNPA262) found within the National Park boundary have heathland as a designated feature e.g. dry heaths, wet heaths, alpine and subalpine heaths. Seven of these have heathlands which are in unfavourable condition, with factors affecting the condition of the heathland including over / under grazing, burning and forestry operations. Proposed actions set out in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (2019 – 2024) (CNPA253) to maintain heathland habitat include reducing the grazing pressure from both domestic and wild animals as well as managing disturbance to soils[33].

The 2063 vision of the Action Plan for moorland is for:

'Moorlands have structural diversity and link habitats together sympathetically. A natural transition from woodland to montane scrub to upland heath is developing throughout the Cairngorms National Park. The contributions it makes to ecosystem services are widely recognised. Raptor persecution ended decades ago, and a full complement of native raptors lives and breeds across the Cairngorms National Park. Productive grouse moors and high-quality stalking remains a mainstay of life, contributing environmentally, economically and socially'.

The 2063 vision of the Action Plan for moorland for peatlands is for:

'Most of the blanket bog is in favourable condition, retains water and acts as a carbon sink.'

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan associated with moorlands and peatlands (Table 11).

[33] Further information on the extent of moorland and peatland landcover types and carbon rich soils in the National Park is covered in Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources.

Table 11 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 targets for peatland restoration (CNPA254).

Target	Status
Peatland restoration 5,000 hectares of peatland under restoration management	5,400 hectares under restoration

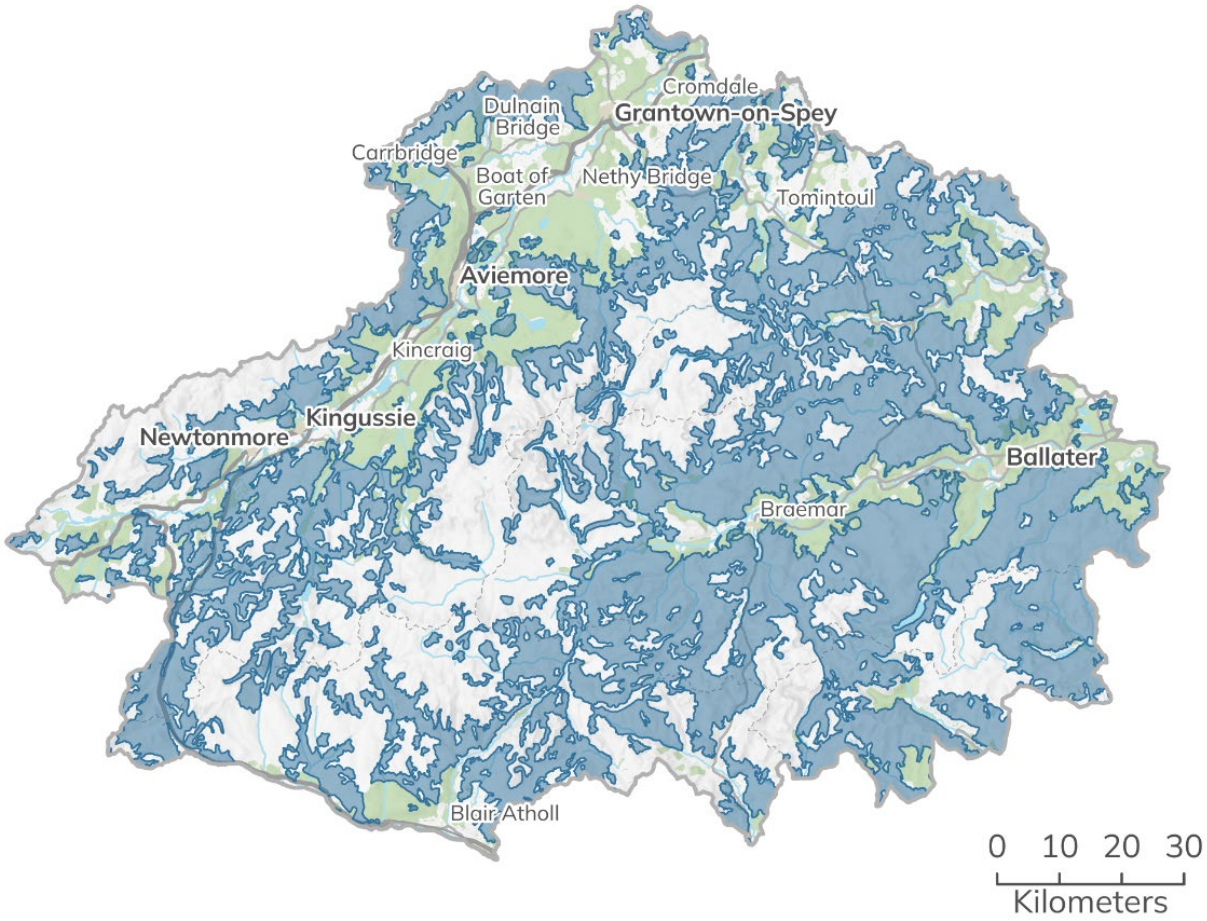

Figure 46 Heathland and Moorland within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA067). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2026, European Environment Agency (EEA).

Blanket bog is the second most extensive habitat within the National Park. They are susceptible to erosion from human activity and impacted upon by grazing animals (e.g. deer and sheep). It is estimated that there are around 90,000 ha of impacted peatland in the National Park and 57,000 ha of this has experienced some form of erosion).

Land management actions for protecting blanket bog within the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNPA253) include managing grazing and controlling muirburn. The Park Authority has strong working relationships with the area's landowners, with the aim of helping them work alongside each other in achieving the best results for the National Park as a whole. That way, it hoped that their individual needs and interests can be met along with those of the wider community.

The East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership (Figure 47) is an important example of this work (CNPA1030). In this unique partnership the Mar Lodge, Mar, Balmoral, Glenavon and Glenlivet estates are working with the Cairngorms National Park Authority, seeking to demonstrate that it's possible to deliver both public and private interest outcomes by successfully integrating sporting management with other land uses. Working together on an unprecedented scale, the partnership is trialling techniques and exploring new ways of working to carry out species conservation, peatland restoration, woodland expansion and demonstrate more sustainable moorland management. Projects that have been worked on include:

- Wader monitoring (with British Trust of Ornithology) - using nest loggers to get an estimate of productivity in a Cairngorms grouse moor landscape.
- Peatland restoration - using Peatland Action funds, planning major restoration work on all six estates.
- Woodland expansion - using opportunity mapping, seeking to increase the woodland cover over the six estates from the current average of 10%.
- Raptor conservation - auditing the current raptor population with the long-term aim of increasing populations.
- Muirburn mapping - auditing the current 'no burn', 'sensitive burn' and 'regular burn' areas to give a clearer picture of what is happening now and potentially looking to increase the 'no burn' area.
- Mountain hare management - using NatureScot / James Hutton Institute methodology, to get a better picture of hare populations on the six estates and develop management plans based on this information.

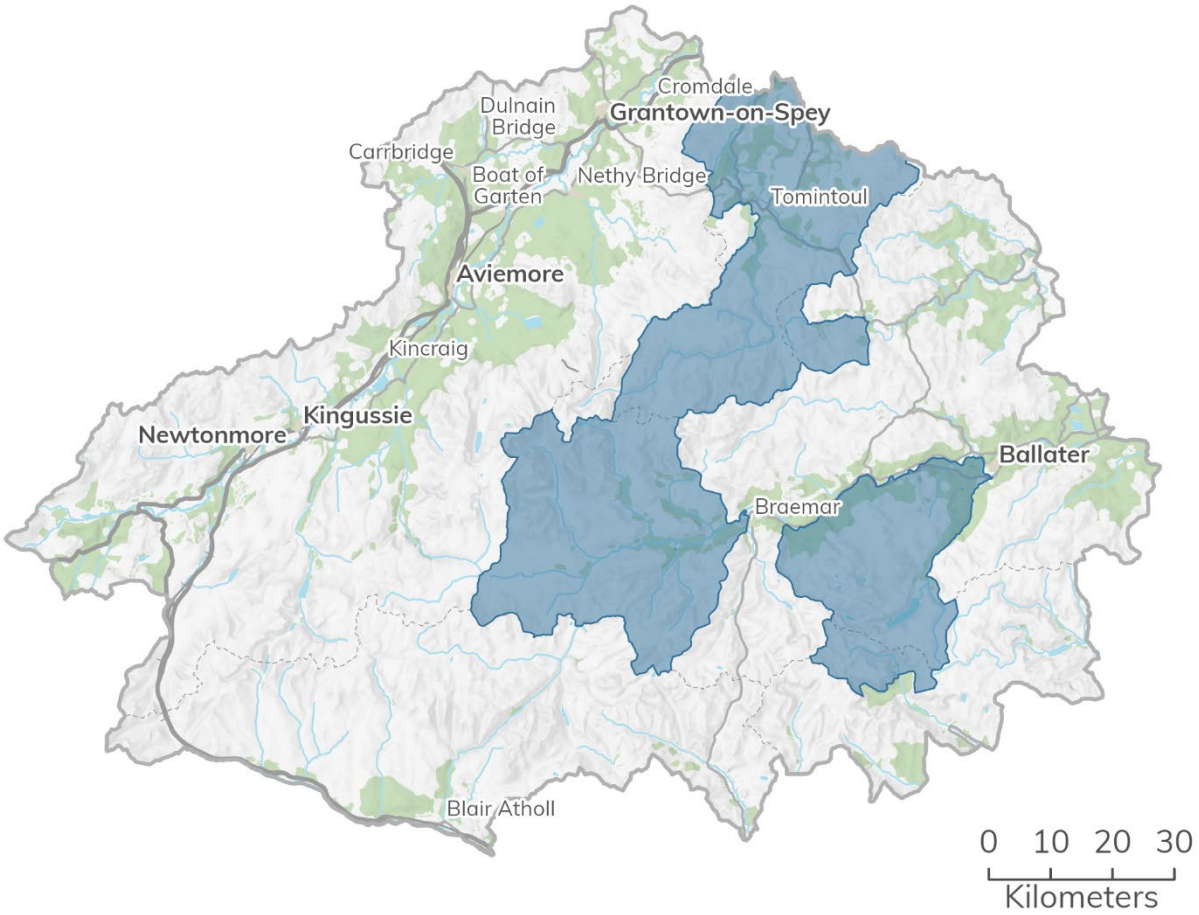

Figure 47 East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership (CNPA1030). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © NatureScot, 2026.

Development pressures on moorlands and peatlands come from a number of sources, including energy infrastructure, telecommunications masts and the creation of private roads and ways[34].

Peatlands are carbon rich soils and need to be protected in accordance with Policy 5 of National Policy Framework 4 (see page 13) (CNPA008). These matters, which include information on degraded peatland and peatland restoration, are considered in more detail in the Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources. This paper also contains further

[34] Matters relating to these types of development are covered in the following schedules:
- Schedule 6: Landscape
- Schedule 9: Energy
- Schedule 20: Digital infrastructure

information on moorland management. Habitats within these areas may also be supported through the local development plan's support for nature networks.

Farm and croft land

The Cairngorms National Park is also a cultural landscape. The work of generations of land managers has produced the landscapes and habitats we see today. It is an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Category 5 protected landscape, which recognises and seeks to safeguard the integrity of the interaction of people and nature over time, and the aims of the National Park cater for the needs of people as well as wildlife. Managing for biodiversity and the sustainable use of the area's natural resource is part of many land managers' everyday business. Significant areas of the National Park are managed primarily for agriculture (Figure 48) (CNPA067), and farms and crofts are home to many of the National Park's rare and endangered species. The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 (CNPA253) seeks to build on this, supporting land farmers and crofters working for wildlife, with a priority nature friendly farming. The 2063 vision of the Action Plan is for:

'A patchwork of productive land uses is good for wildlife. It supports thriving communities and reflects centuries of tradition. Delivering biodiversity benefit is an integral part of high quality food production and does not impact on profitability. High quality grasslands support a healthy range of nationally and locally important species. Farmland wader populations have recovered and increased throughout the Cairngorms National Park, and the area is nationally recognised as a model of farmland management for conservation on productive land.'

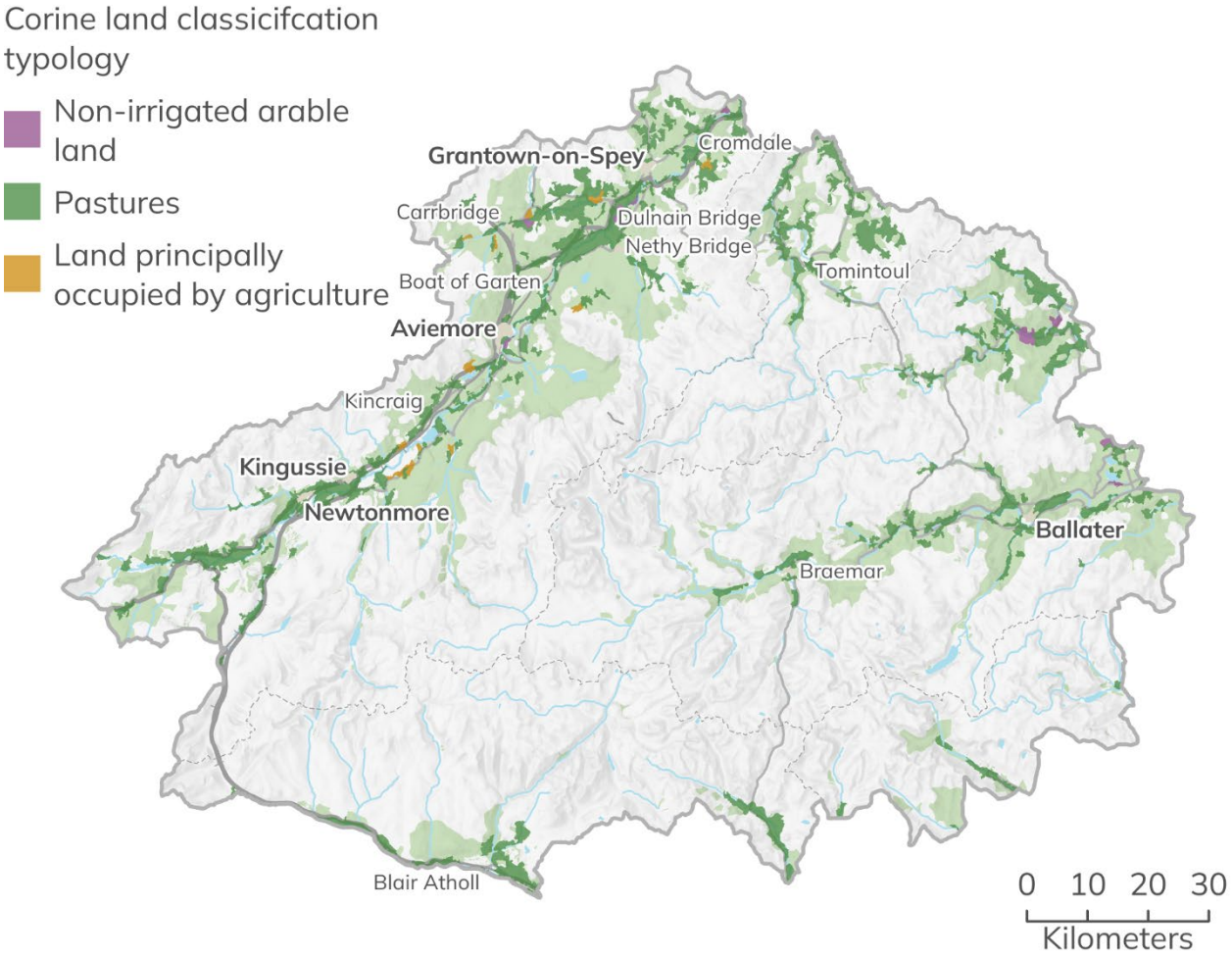

Figure 48 Agricultural land use typologies within the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA067). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2026, European Environment Agency (EEA).

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with nature friendly farming (Table 12).

Table 12 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 targets for nature friendly farming (CNPA254).

Target	Status
Nature friendly farming 20 farms in woodland and grassland projects	27 farms engaged
Nature friendly farming	25% decrease

Target	Status
Increase in wader populations from the 2015 baseline	

Farmland wader conservation remains a priority for the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, despite wader populations not improving since the 2015 census. The Action Plan target to increase wader populations was set following a 16% increase in between 2000 and 2015, but from 2015 to 2021 the population has decreased by 25%. There are multiple factors affecting populations, for example the impacts of climate change and predation. Interactions can be difficult to pick apart and all or some may have contributed to the decline in varying degrees. Nevertheless, concerted efforts continue to counter this, with species including lapwing, redshank, curlew, snipe and oystercatcher all receiving critical, Park-wide support through the Action Plan (CNPA253). Further information on ongoing work in this area is outlined in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254):

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/CNPA254-Final-Report-_Cairngorms-Nature-Action-Plan-2019-2024.pdf

The British Trust for Ornithology in partnership with the Forestry Commission and the Cairngorm National Park Authority have created Wader Sensitivity and Breeding Wader Sensitivity Map maps, which predict the relative abundance of ten species of breeding wader for each 1km square of England, Scotland and Wales (CNPA307 and CNPA308). The species are:

- Curlew
- Lapwing
- Redshank
- Snipe
- Oystercatcher
- Golden Plover
- Dunlin
- Common Sandpiper
- Ringed Plover
- Greenshank.

Predicted relative abundances are categorised into five strata numbered 1 to 5. Predicted abundances are lowest in stratum 1 and highest in stratum 5.

Predictions were derived using statistical models (random forest regression tree) with bird data taken from the British Trust for Ornithology / Scottish Ornithologists Club / Bird Watch Ireland Bird Atlas (which covered the period 2008 – 2011) and a range of environmental data sets, including climate (temperature and precipitation), topography (elevation and slope), habitat, wind farms and roads and predation risk. While overall the predictive models performed well as assessed by correlation with empirical data, it must be emphasised that these are predictions which will not be accurate in all cases.

The research report for the project anticipates that the strata will be used to indicate areas where positive management for breeding waders may be most beneficial, and to inform the planning and assessment procedures for land-use change and developments that could be detrimental to breeding waders, such as the creation of new forests or the expansion of existing forested areas. The Park Authority consider that it could also be used inform strategic development planning decisions, such as those required during the preparation of the Proposed Plan, for example by informing site assessments and directing where biodiversity enhancements may be best made.

This schedule further considers the status of Curlew, which are a Cairngorms Nature Action Plan Priority Species, and have been identified as being potentially vulnerable to development (see page 158).

The outputs of the modelling can be viewed on the British Trust for Ornithology's wader map tool (CNPA308):

- https://app.bto.org/wader-map/index.jsp

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds are currently updating their wader density maps. These will cover the regularly surveyed key wader areas in Strathspey, Glen Livet and Tomintoul and Glen Clova. These are not available for inclusion in the Evidence Report, however the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds will provide them to the Park Authority once work is complete, and they may inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

Due to the lack of previously developed and brownfield land (see Schedule 9: Land use, soil and resources) within the National Park, it is likely that most proposals for development will be on agricultural land. The site assessment process for the Proposed Plan will need to ensure that high value habitats and the species that rely on them are not likely to be significantly impacted by development. The Proposed Plan will also need to identify where mitigation and compensation / enhancement is needed. This may be

achieved, at least in part, through the local development plan's also support for nature networks.

Further information on land used for agricultural uses, land capability for agriculture and the contribution crofting may make towards enhancing habitats and species is contained in the Schedule 9: Land use, soil and resources.

Freshwater and wetland habitats

Many of the rivers and lochs within the National Park are internationally protected for nature conservation, primarily for the species they support – Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel and lamprey species. The National Park contains part of eight river catchments, with the largest catchment belonging to the River Spey.

The National Park is also home to a mosaic of wetland habitats ranging from fens, bogs, wet woodlands and wet grassland, all of which provide a home to a rich array of wildlife. Wetlands are thought to have once been an extension habitat within the National Park but have suffered a decline, much like the rest of the United Kingdom. Changes in land use, drainage and pollution are all factors affecting freshwater and wetland habitats (Figure 49 and Figure 50) (CNPA297, CNPA298 and CNPA299).

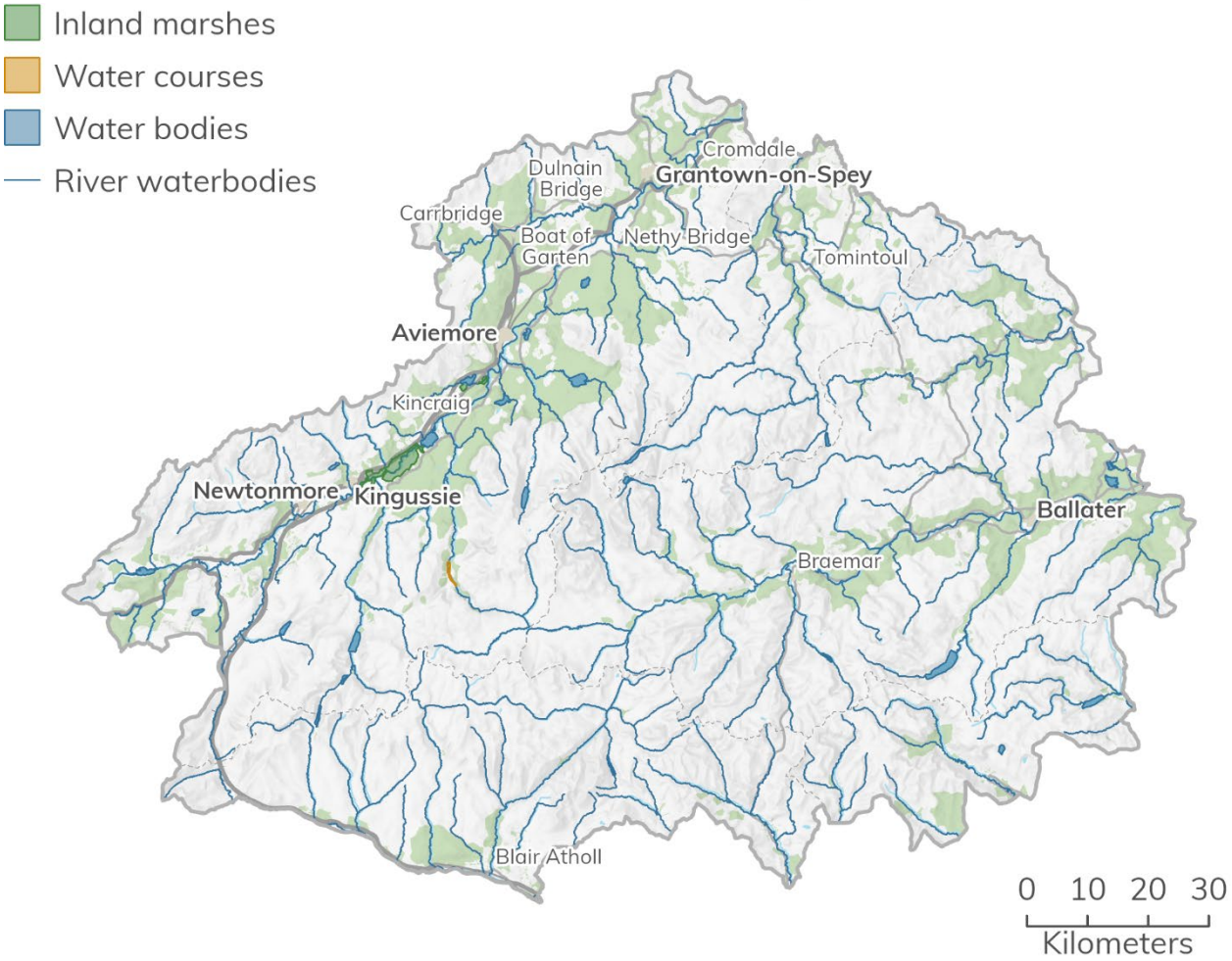

Figure 49 Freshwater and wetland habitats in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA067). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2026, European Environment Agency (EEA).

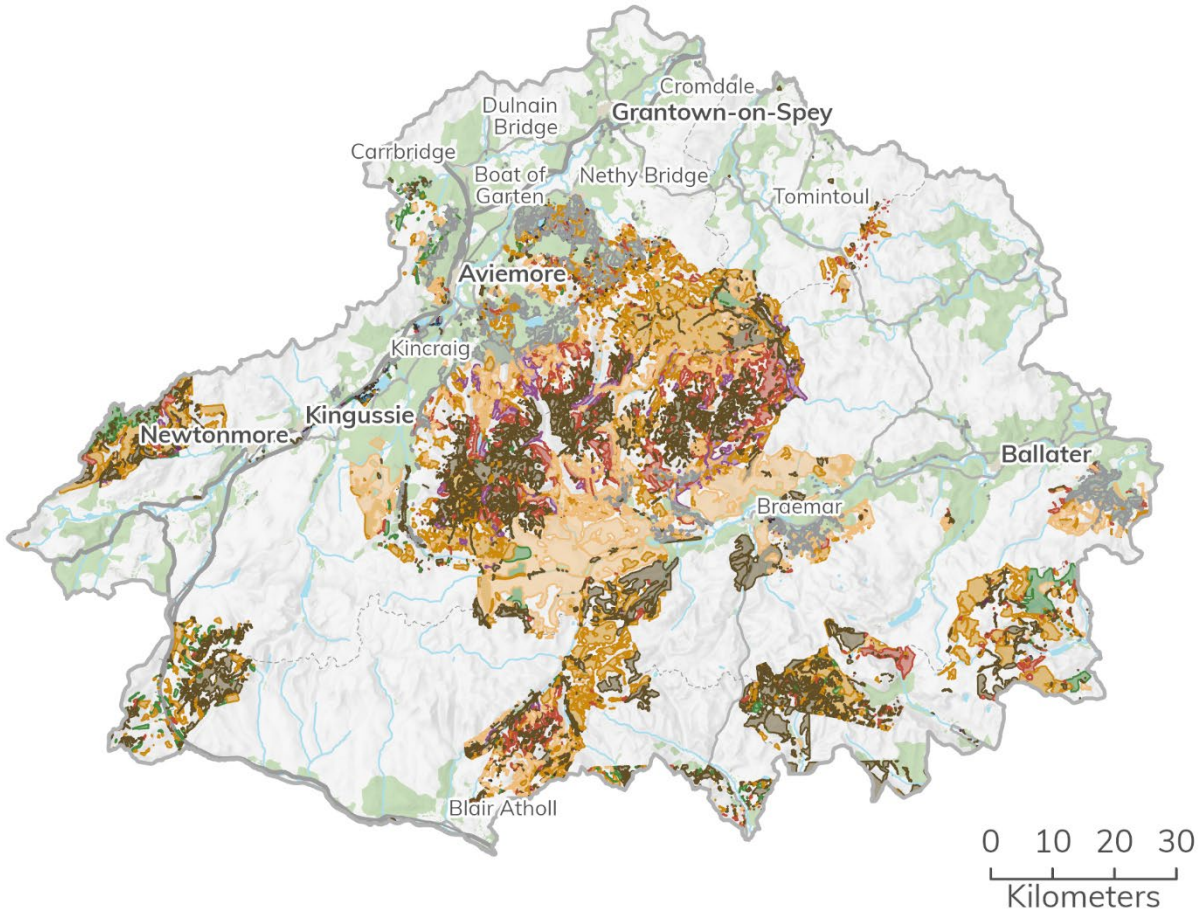

Figure 50 Scottish Wetland Inventory typologies in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA299). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Scottish Environment Protection Agency 2026.

Within the National Park, the most extensive wetland habitat is at Insh Marshes National Nature Reserve (Figure 22), on the River Spey floodplain between Kingussie

and Kincraig. Insh Marshes are one of the most important wetlands in Europe, known to support a wide range of breeding waders and invertebrates[35].

Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve (Figure 22), near Ballater, is also an important site within the National Park. At the heart of the Reserve are Lochs Davan and Kinnord, with their near pure water and associated bogs and fens providing ideal habitat for a wide mix of species; from rare water beetles to mammals like otter, feeding and breeding on the Reserve. During winter, the lochs are an important roost site, attracting migrating geese and other wildfowl[36].

The priority in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 (CNPA253) is for freshwater and wetland restoration. The 2063 vision of the Action Plan for freshwater and wetland habitats is for:

'Rivers naturally meander and waters rise and fall seasonally across land grazed by livestock. Large, interconnected wetlands help prevent damaging flood events in the Park and further downstream. Natural processes in river catchments do not affect the productivity of land. The high-water quality status has been maintained or increased.'

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with freshwater and wetland habitats (Table 13).

[35] Insh Marches are protected by multiple designations, including Insh Marshes Special Area of Conservation, River Spey Special Area of Conservation, River Spey - Insh Marshes Special Protection Area, River Spey - Insh Marshes Ramsar site, River Spey - Insh Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest and Insh Marshes National Nature Reserve. See page 74 for information on these designations.
[36] Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve is also protected by multiple designations, namely Muir of Dinnet Special Protection Area, Muir of Dinnet Ramsar site and Muir of Dinnet Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Table 13 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 targets for freshwater restoration (CNPA254).

Target	Status
Freshwater restoration 150 km river and riparian restoration	100 km restored
Freshwater restoration 50 ponds created or restored, including Sustainable drainage (SuDS) ponds	50 ponds created

Figure 36 provides the location of existing riparian woodlands in the National Park. Scottish Environment Protection Agency host a further spatial dataset, concerning riparian vegetation planting opportunities (Figure 44 and Figure 45) (CNPA296). This data combines the riparian vegetation quality information, with the energy (will the river do the work) information with the aim of identifying, at a catchment scale, areas where riverbanks could be protected from erosion by improved riparian vegetation ideally including riparian woodland. Thus, the opportunity data identifies areas where tree planting will benefit geomorphology through river restoration when morphological pressures were present in a particular section.

This data only considers baseline water bodies (those with catchment greater than 10km^2) and has a raster format resolution of 25m. It is therefore useful at local development planning scale for identifying wider areas where tree planting could benefit the water environment.

While the data may be used to provide project-based interventions at a local level, it is too granular to view effectively to provide a National Park overview. However, a web version can be accessed via Scotland's environment map (CNPA296):

- https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/?layers=riparianVegetationPlantingOpportunities

Scottish Environment Protection Agency provide information on the ecological status of the 157 waterbodies found within the National Park (Figure 51) (CNPA297 and CNPA298). Since 2013 there has been an increase in the number of waterbodies achieving good to high status, from around 50% to around 68% in 2023. The reasons

for waterbodies failing to reach good status are generally the presence of a large number of barriers to fish migration and poor morphology[37] (CNPA297 and CNPA298).

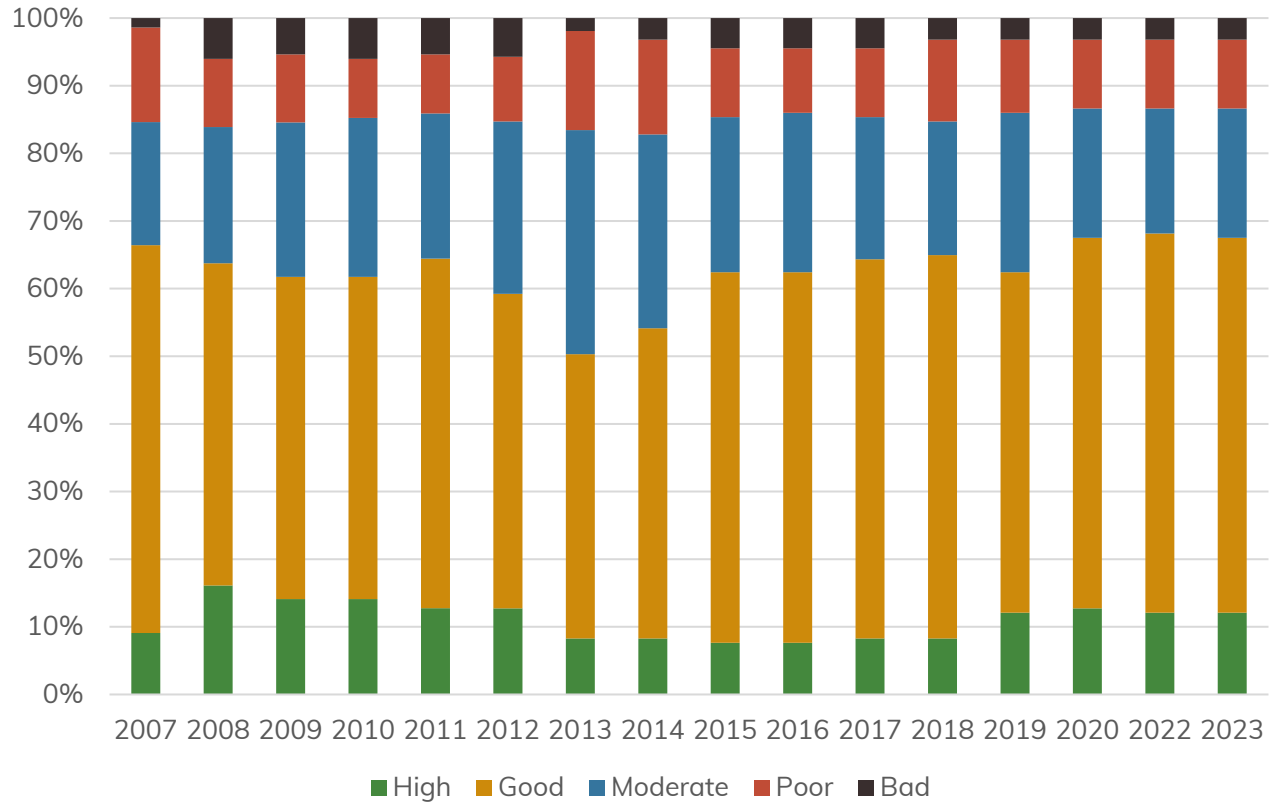

Figure 51 Proportion of waterbodies by overall ecological status in the Cairngorms National Park, 2007 – 2023 (Scottish Environment Protection Agency, 2024) (CNPA297).

Data on fish barriers is available from Scottish Environment Protection Agency's Obstacles to fish migration dataset (Figure 52) (CNPA299).

[37] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Cairngorms-National-Park-waterbody-information.pdf

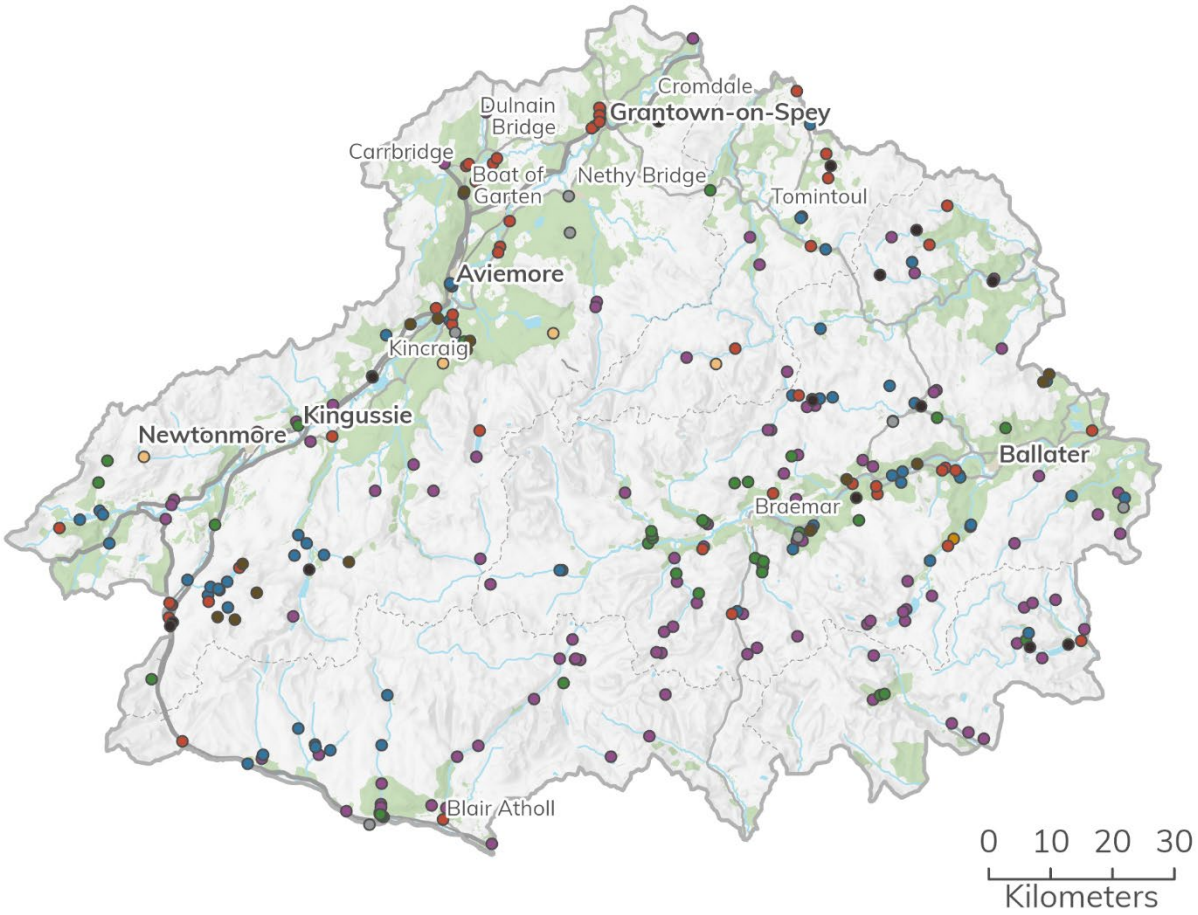

Figure 52 Obstacles to fish in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA299). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Scottish Environment Protection Agency 2026.

There are a variety of pressures considered to affect the waterbodies within the National Park and there are a number of River Basin Management Plans which have been produced to set measures to address these pressures. The main catchments within the National Park which management plans have been developed for are the River Spey and the River Dee:

- The River Spey Catchment Plan 2016 (CNPA294) identifies barriers to fish migration as the biggest contributor to downgrading of ecological status (classified as poor in 2019 and 2020). Other factors include flow and levels, water quality and unspecified

ecological issues which have resulted in poor fish condition. Projects under the River Spey Catchment Plan have included natural flood management within a tributary of the River Spey which sought to re-establish natural processes and enhance habitats.

- The River Dee Catchment Management Plan published in 2007 (CNPA292) identified a number of pressures on the natural processes of the catchment, including severe weather events which caused flooding and erosion to the surrounding landscapes along the river. A vast amount of activity has occurred since the adoption of the management plan, to reduce pollution, remove obstructions to fish passage, control invasive species and naturalise channels. The new delivery plan (2022 – 2027) seeks to build on these projects as a step towards restoring a healthy river environment (CNPA293).

Scottish Environment Protection Agency's Water Environment Fund enables the restoration of river waterbodies by:

- Repairing damaged urban rivers often in deprived areas to enhance the environment for the communities that live there. Scottish Environment Protection Agency are creating attractive and accessible green river corridors within towns and cities that can be used for active travel and recreation, improving health and wellbeing. Scottish Environment Protection Agency help rivers contain flood waters and create new opportunities for local businesses and suitable development.
- Removing and easing barriers to migrating fish and improving vital fish stocks. We are increasing the lengths of habitat accessible to native fish, helping to improve endangered populations and creating new opportunities for angling, tourism and recreation, bringing economic benefits and recreational opportunities to river communities. Scottish Environment Protection Agency administers the Water Environment Fund on behalf of Scottish Government. Scottish Environment Protection Agency works in partnership with local authorities, land and structure owners, fishery trusts and conservation bodies to deliver an annual programme of projects.

There are currently two projects within the Cairngorms National Park that have received funding (Figure 53) (CNPA300):

- weir, which represents a future opportunity with Scottish Environment Protection Agency as the lead organisation.
- Allt a'Mharaidh, which represents a completed project with Scottish Forestry as the lead organisation. This project saw a 1.2km stretch of the Allt a'Mharaidh restored as

part of a Scottish Forestry led partnership and linked with an associated peatland restoration scheme, improving the water body to good ecological status[38].

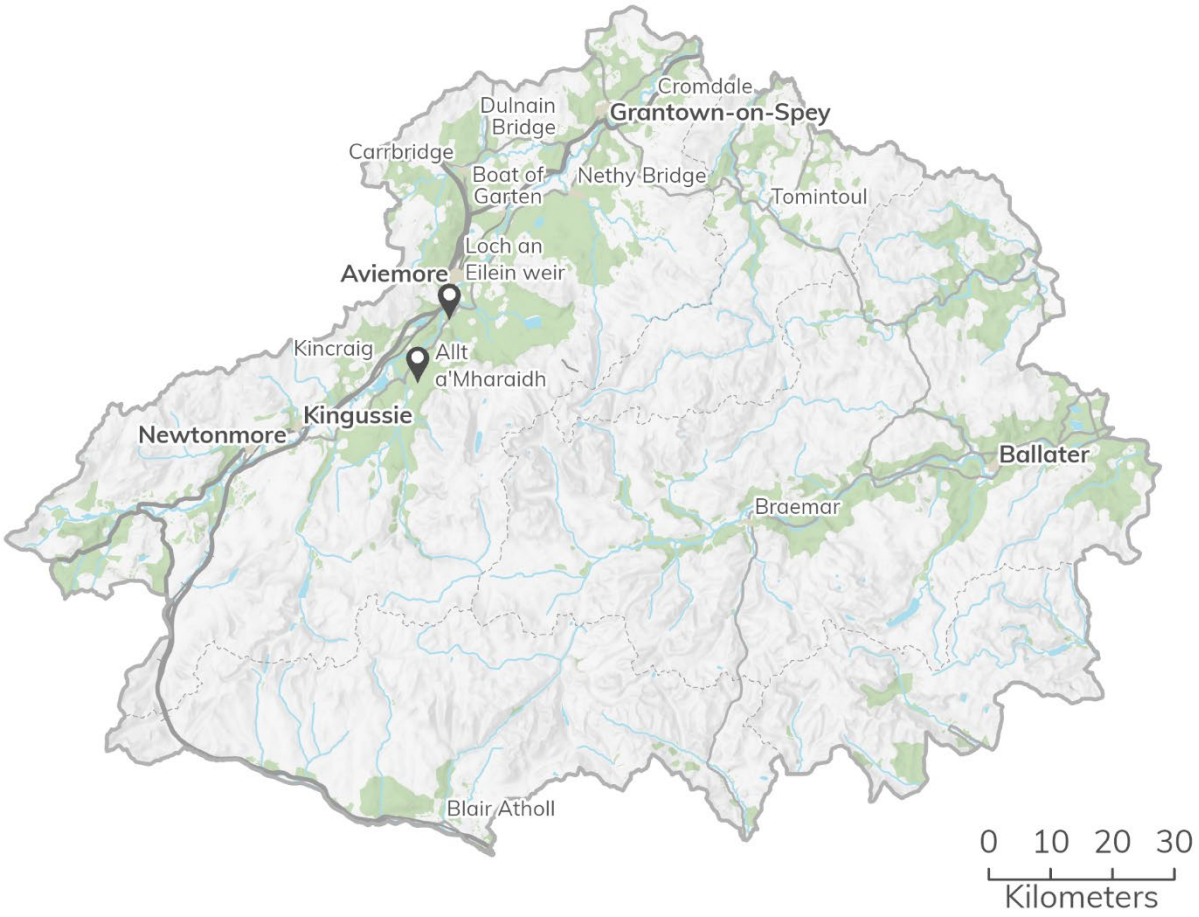

Figure 53 Water Environment Fund projects in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA300). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Scottish Environment Protection Agency 2026.

The Proposed Plan will need to ensure that proposed development is unlikely to have a negative impact on water quality. This may be judged through the site assessment and Habitats Regulations Appraisal processes. The local development plan may also support the integrity of freshwater and wetland habitats through its support for nature networks.

[38] Further information is available in Water Environment Fund Annual Report to Scottish Government 2014 – 2015 (CNPA300): https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA300-Water-Environment-Fund-Annual-Report-to-Scottish-Government-2014-%E2%80%93-2015.pdf

Matters relating to water management, including overall water quality and natural flood management, are covered in Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management. Further detail on flood risk in the National Park is contained within the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (CNPA097).

Montane habitats

Montane habitats are found in areas above the natural tree level (approximately 600m above sea level). These alpine and sub-alpine areas represent some of the most natural and undisturbed habitats in the United Kingdom.

Approximately 520 km^2 of the Cairngorms National Park is classified as montane habitat by the European nature information system (Figure 54) (CNPA273). The National Park is home to a full range of submontane and montane habitats characteristic of the eastern Highlands, from native Scots pine woodland to subalpine and alpine heathland and grassland habitats. The massive summit plateaus and broad watersheds of the area's mountains, with a considerable land mass above 1,000 metres, allow prolonged snow cover in a variety of situations and in turn give rise to a greater range and extent of late snow-influenced vegetation than in any other mountain system in Britain.

The Cairngorms Mountains have the most extensive tracts of sub-alpine and alpine heath in Britain. They support a rich assembly of montane vascular plants, acid-tolerant montane plants, mosses, lichens and liverworts, including alpine and Highland saxifrages, hare's-foot sedge, alpine foxtail and green shield-moss. They also support breeding populations of ptarmigan, snow bunting, dotterel[39], and golden eagle.

[39] A national survey of dotterel was undertaken in 2025 but is not available at the time of preparing the evidence report.

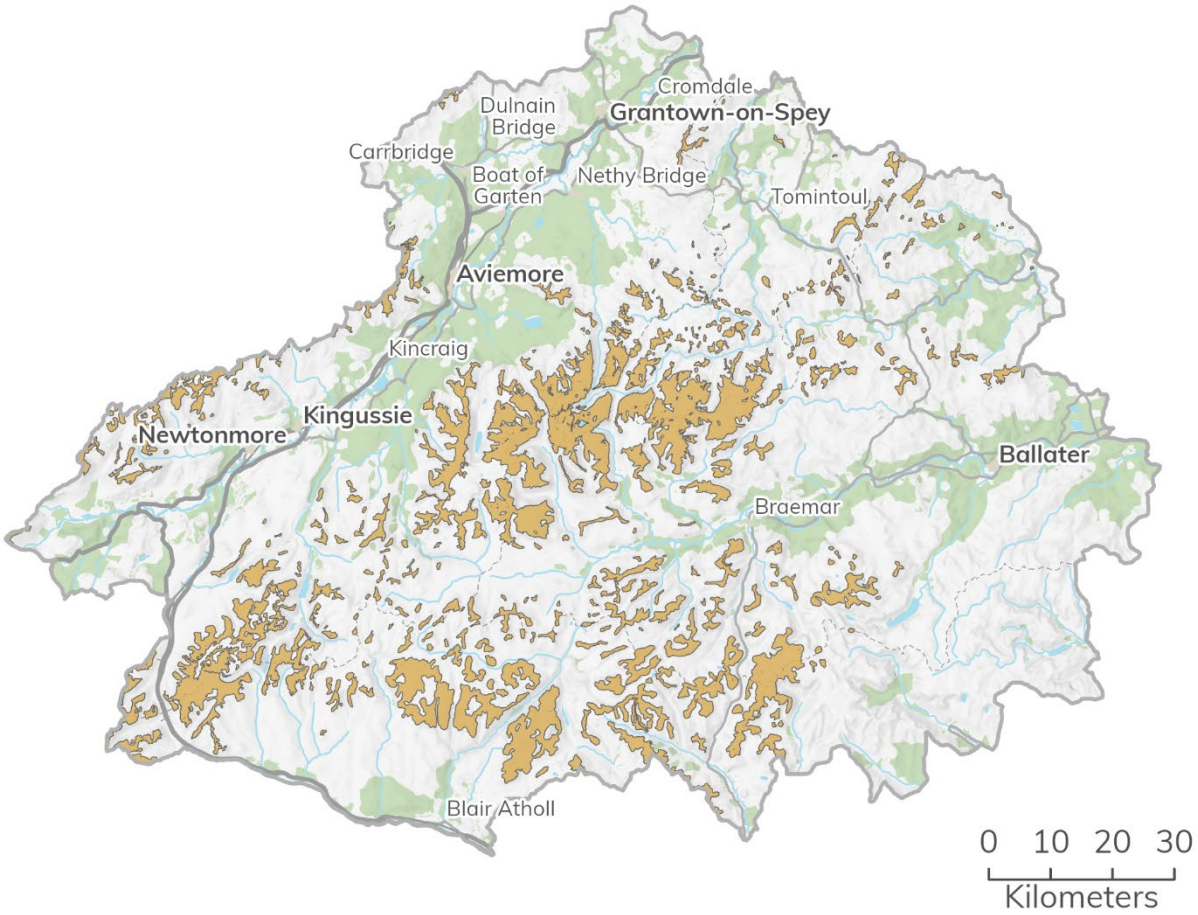

Figure 54 Montane habitats found in the Cairngorms National Park as identified by the European Nature Information Systems (EUNIS) (CNPA273). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Data © NatureScot 2026.

Pressures from recreation and disturbance, and climate change are the main threats these habitats in the National Park. There are few pressures for development beyond specific locations, for example those associated with the ski resort at Cairngorm Mountain[40]. The pressure for telecommunications masts may also present issues at certain locations[41]. These matters are unlikely to impact on the spatial strategy of the Proposed Plan, but may require consideration at the site assessment stage, should proposals within or close to these habitats be proposed through the call for sites process. The local development plan may also support the integrity of montane habitats through its support for nature networks.

[40] The management and development of Cairngorm Mountain is covered in Schedule 23: Tourism.
[41] Matters relating to telecommunications masts are covered in Schedule 6: Landscape and Schedule 9: Digital infrastructure.

Priority species

There are around 1,200 species considered to be important for nature conservation within the National Park. By virtue of their size, rarity and / or appeal, some of these species have a much higher public profile than others, including prominent conservation 'flagship' species like the osprey and red squirrel. Yet the bulk of the nationally important species are made up of plants, fungi, lichens, bryophytes and insects. These nationally important species are mainly associated with woodlands (39% of species), rock (20%) and montane habitats (15%), and most will benefit significantly from the landscape scale conservation priorities. However, there are some priority species with very specific and sometimes urgent management needs that demand focused conservation action. These are set out within the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 (CNPA253). Those that are likely be impacted by development are highlighted in this report (Table 14).

Table 14 Screening of Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2021 – 2024 (CNPA253) priory species for consideration in the Evidence Report.

Priority species	Potential to be impacted by development?	What are the potential impacts?
Scottish wildcat	Yes	Disturbance from recreation. Breeding between domestic and wildcat.
Mountain hare	No	Development unlikely to result in loss of habitat or population.
Beaver	Yes	Potential flood risk from dams blocking watercourses running through or beside developments. Potential to use and block culverts and similar structures, which may be required as part of a development's access and egress arrangements and / or sustainable drainage systems.
Capercaillie	Yes	Disturbance from recreation. Loss and fragmentation of habitat.
Curlew	Yes	Habitat loss from development.
Raptors	Yes	Dependant on species. Habitat loss, disturbance and wildlife crime could be associated with development, particularly for species that nest in trees. Certain types of infrastructure development, for example

Priority species	Potential to be impacted by development?	What are the potential impacts?
		power lines and wind farm development, may also have a negative effect on species such as golden eagle and merlin. Note windfarm development is not permitted within the National Park, but single turbines are[42].
Kentish glory	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Dark bordered beauty	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Pine hoverfly	Yes	The last remnant site for the pine hoverfly is in an undesignated plantation woodland and it is found in a neighbouring garden. It is therefore considered vulnerable to habitat loss from development.
Northern silver stiletto fly	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Scabious mining bee	Yes	Habitat loss from development.
Shining guest ant	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Northern February red stonefly	Yes	Development may have a negative impact on water quality. Abstraction may impact water levels.
Northern damselfly	Yes	Habitat loss from development.
Wood ants	Yes	Habitat loss from development and disturbance from recreation.
Pinewood mason bee	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Aspen hoverfly	Yes	Development may benefit aspen hoverfly through the planting and management of aspen in landscape schemes and biodiversity mitigation, compensation and enhancement

[42] Matters relating to windfarm development are covered in Schedule 9: Energy and Schedule 6 Landscape.

Priority species	Potential to be impacted by development?	What are the potential impacts?
		associated development. This should include the protection of deadwood.
Freshwater pearl mussel	Yes	Development may have a negative impact on water quality. Abstraction may impact water levels, leading to a loss of habitat.
Aspen	Yes	Development may benefit aspen through planting it in landscaping schemes and biodiversity mitigation, compensation and enhancement associated development.
Twinflower	Yes	Habitat loss from development.
One-flowered wintergreen	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Marsh saxifrage	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Waxcaps	Yes	Habitat loss from development.
Alpine blue sow thistle	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Oblong woodsia	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Woolly Willow	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Alectoria ochroleuca	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.
Hertelidea botryosa	No	Development not considered likely to cause habitat loss.

Species recovery must be integrated with landscape scale conservation. In order to reach that point we must understand the species' needs and the issues we have to address (diagnosis), have a proven set of management practices in place (solution testing and deployment) and then integrate the management needs into day-to-day business (sustainable management).

The journey of recovery for a species is illustrated in the Species Recovery Curve developed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Figure 55). This sets out a 13-stage action plan for protected species. What each stage means for the priority species varies in detail but overall, it allows a consistent approach for action and reporting. The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNPA253) and National Park Partnership Plan (CNPA010) use species recovery curve to set targets for each species for the next five years. These targets are for the populations within the National Park and not for the whole country. A summary on the progress towards these targets is provided in this report.

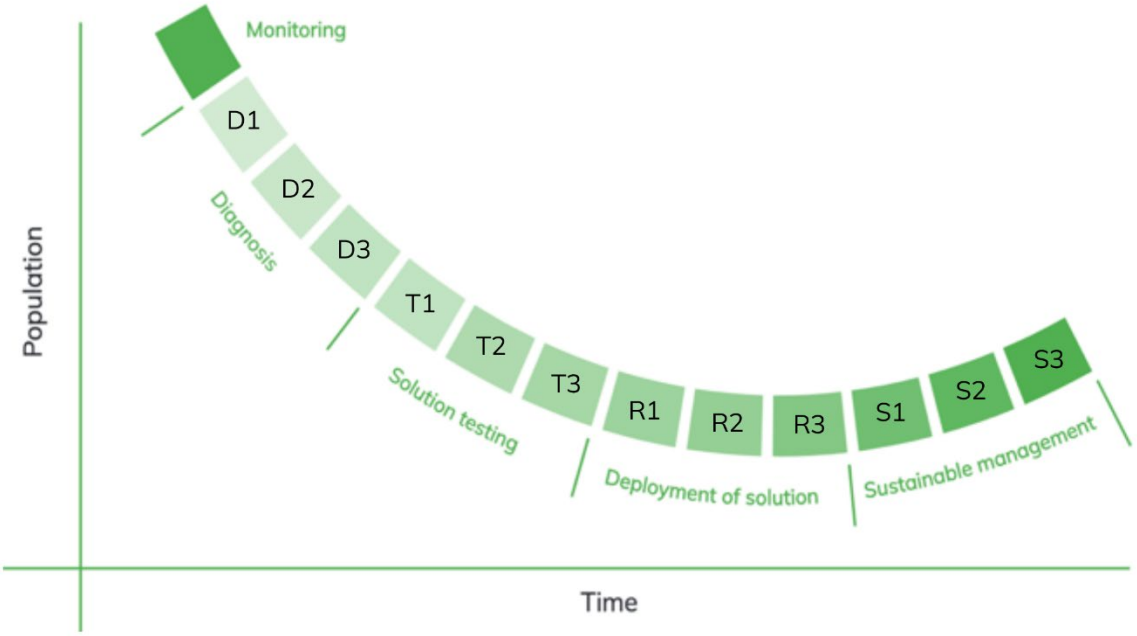

Figure 55 Species recovery curve. The labels D1 – D3, T1 – T3, R1 – R3 and S1 – S3 denote targets for priorities within the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 (CNPA253). Definitions for these are provided on page 26 of the Action Plan[43].

Scottish Wildcat

The wildcat is a Cairngorms Nature Action Plan priority species. Recent evidence suggests that there are only 115 to 314 wildcats found in Scotland. Threats to the population include interbreeding with domestic / feral cats resulting in hybrids, habitat loss / fragmentation, disease. Actions proposed by the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan include working with landowners / communities to reduce hybridisation with domestic / feral cats and looking at releasing captive bred wildcats.

[43] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/CNPA253-CairngormsNatureAction19_24PlanFinal.pdf

In March 2023 NatureScot approved a licence application from the Saving Wildcats partnership to release wildcats in the Cairngorms National Park. The decision marked the first-ever conservation translocation of wildcats in Britain, with the first in a series of trial releases being planned to help restore Scotland's critically endangered wildcat population.

Later that year, the partnership, led by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, released 19 captive bred wildcats into the Cairngorms Connect area, with approximately 40 more being planned for release over the following three years.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with wildcat (Table 15).

Table 15 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for wildcat (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Promote Trap Neuter Vaccinate Release (TNVR), reduce hybridisation, disease and misidentification. Trial captive-bred wildcat releases. 2019 species recovery curve position: T1	Species recovery curve position: R3	All actions underway, including captive bred wildcat releases. Significant progress along recovery curve from T1 to R1 with work ongoing.

Scottish wildcats prefer to live on the woodland edge, in the margins of moorlands and grasslands. National Planning Framework 4 sets a strong basis for resisting woodland habitat loss from development while the local development plan may support the creation of new habitat for wildcats through its support for nature networks, in particular by improving connectivity between existing managed grasslands and woodlands.

Beaver

Changes by the Scottish Government offering protection allowed beaver to be identified within the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan as a priority species.

On 5 December 2023 NatureScot approved the Park Authority's licence application to translocate Eurasian beavers to the upper Spey catchment in the National Park. The first beavers were translocated a few weeks later with plans to translocate a maximum of 50 individuals over the next five years.

Extensive work on mapping the suitability of habitats within the upper reaches of the River Spey has been conducted to assess the best possible locations for translocation efforts (Figure 56) (CNPA303). These locations are some of the best in Scotland. So far (January 2025), beaver have been released on six sites over two release periods; Rothiemurchus Estate, Inshriach, Wildland Ltd, Forestry and Land Scotland's Loch Morlich and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Insh Marshes Reserve. The release sites have been carefully chosen to minimise any potential negative impacts such as flooding from dams affecting transport routes, beavers foraging and damaging habitats within protected sites or damaging important riparian habitats.

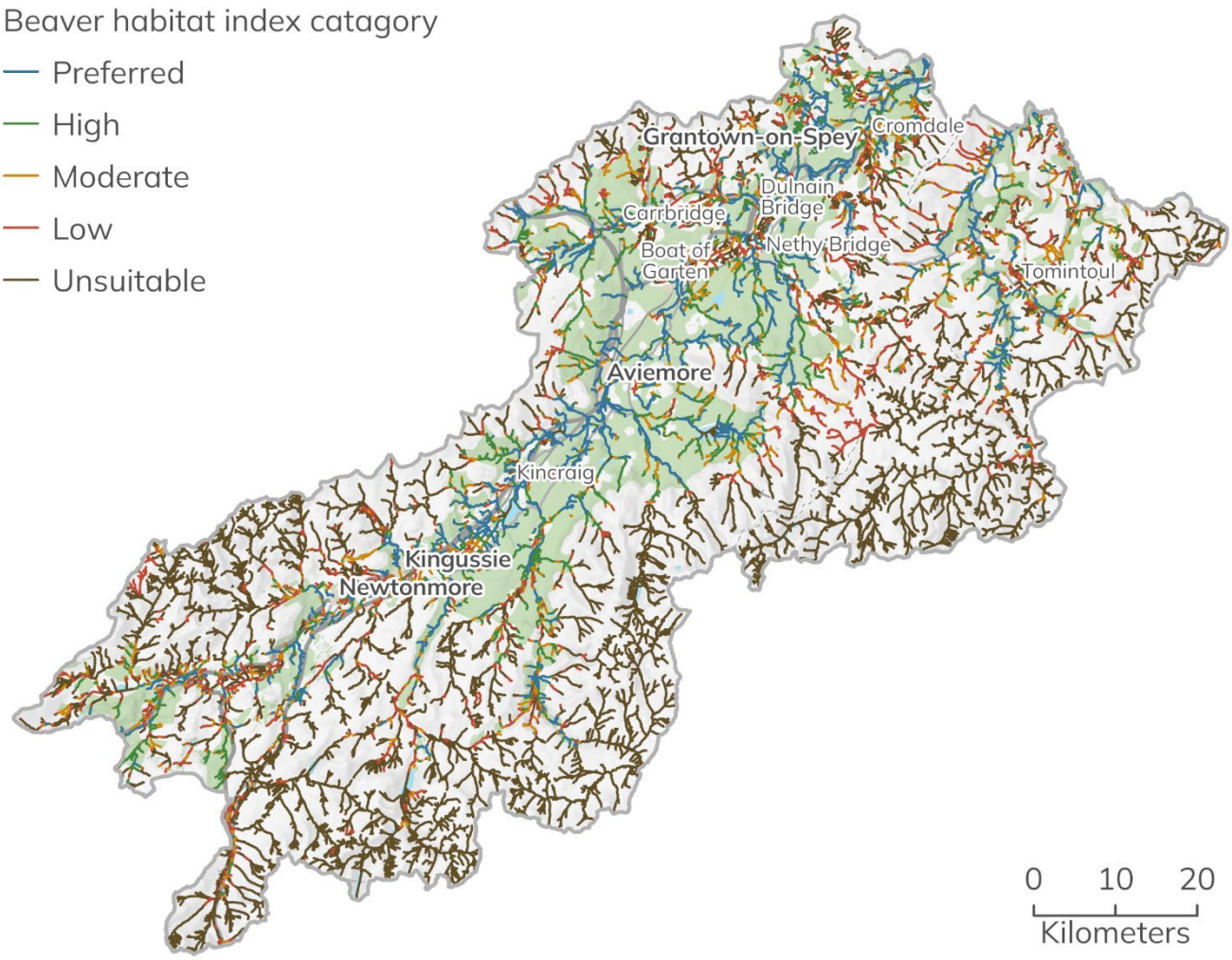

Figure 56 Suitability of habitat for supporting beavers within River Spey catchment (CNPA303). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Beaver Trust and University of Exeter 2026.

The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) therefore highlights the success of the actions associated with beaver (Table 16).

Table 16 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for beaver (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Plan proactively for beaver populations in the National Park.	No species recovery curve target.	Reintroduction underway and year 1 complete. Current species recovery curve position R2.

The potential impacts beaver may have on wetland environments and their management, as well as any implications for the Proposed Plan, are covered in Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (CNPA097).

Capercaillie

In the United Kingdom, capercaillie are only found in Scotland. During the 1970's there was thought to be around 20,000 capercaillie in Scotland, however the population as measured in 2021 / 2022 was estimated to be just 532 (Figure 57) (CNPA309). According to NatureScot's Review of Capercaillie Conservation and Management 2022 (CNPA310), if this trend continues it is likely that capercaillie will become extinct within two to three decades.

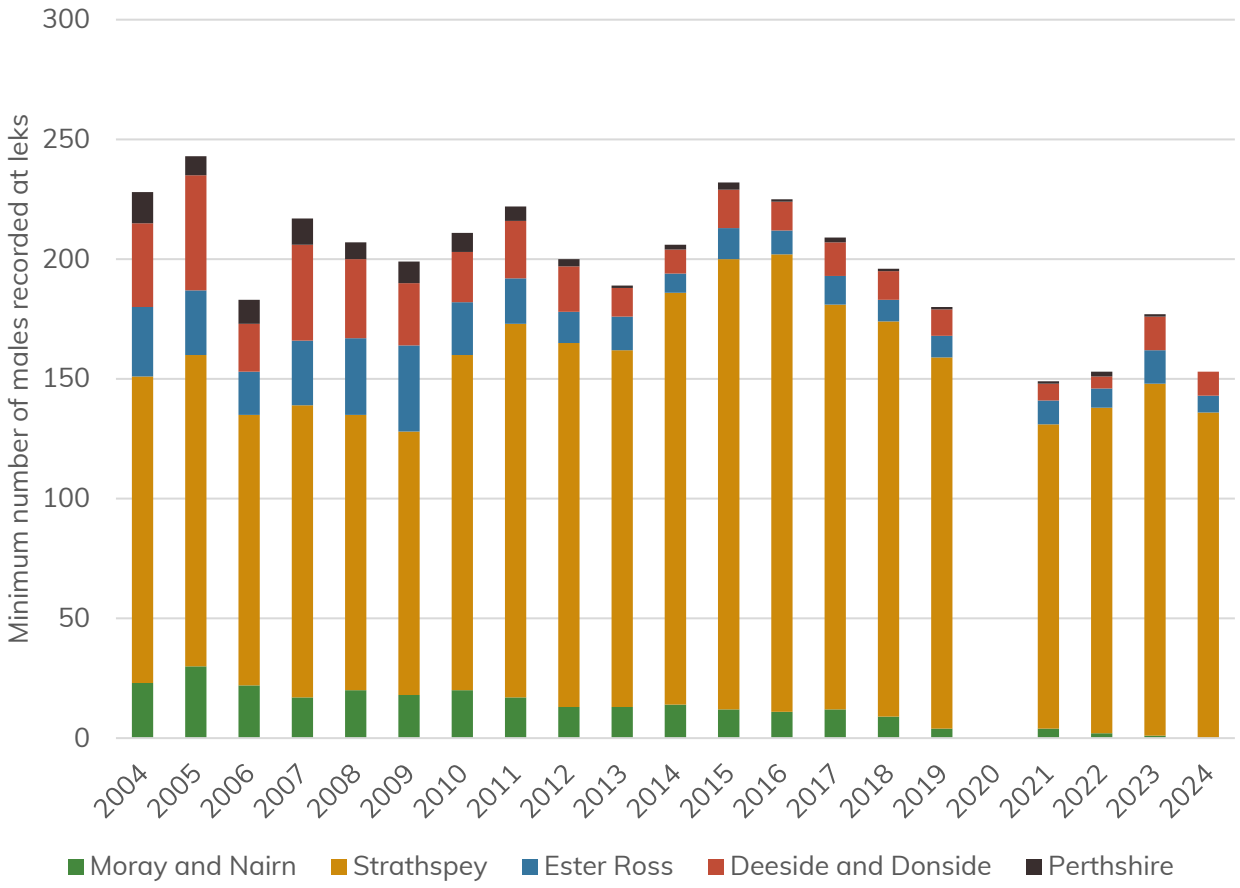

Figure 57 Minimum number of male capercaillie recorded at leks in Scotland 2024 – 2024. No counts were carried out in 2020 (CNPA309) (Source: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, 2024).

The Cairngorms National Park is thought to hold approximately 85% of that population (CNPA304), with the majority found within Badenoch and Strathspey (423 in 2021 / 2022), mostly in areas protected for nature conservation (Special Protection Areas) but also within non-designated woodlands associated within the protected areas (Figure 58) (CNPA261 and CNPA263). Capercaillie are found within Deeside (37 in 2021 / 2022) and other areas out with the National Park boundary but these populations are more fragmented, with lower numbers and poorer breeding success. The Strathspey populations are considered to be crucial to the long-term survival of the species in the United Kingdom.

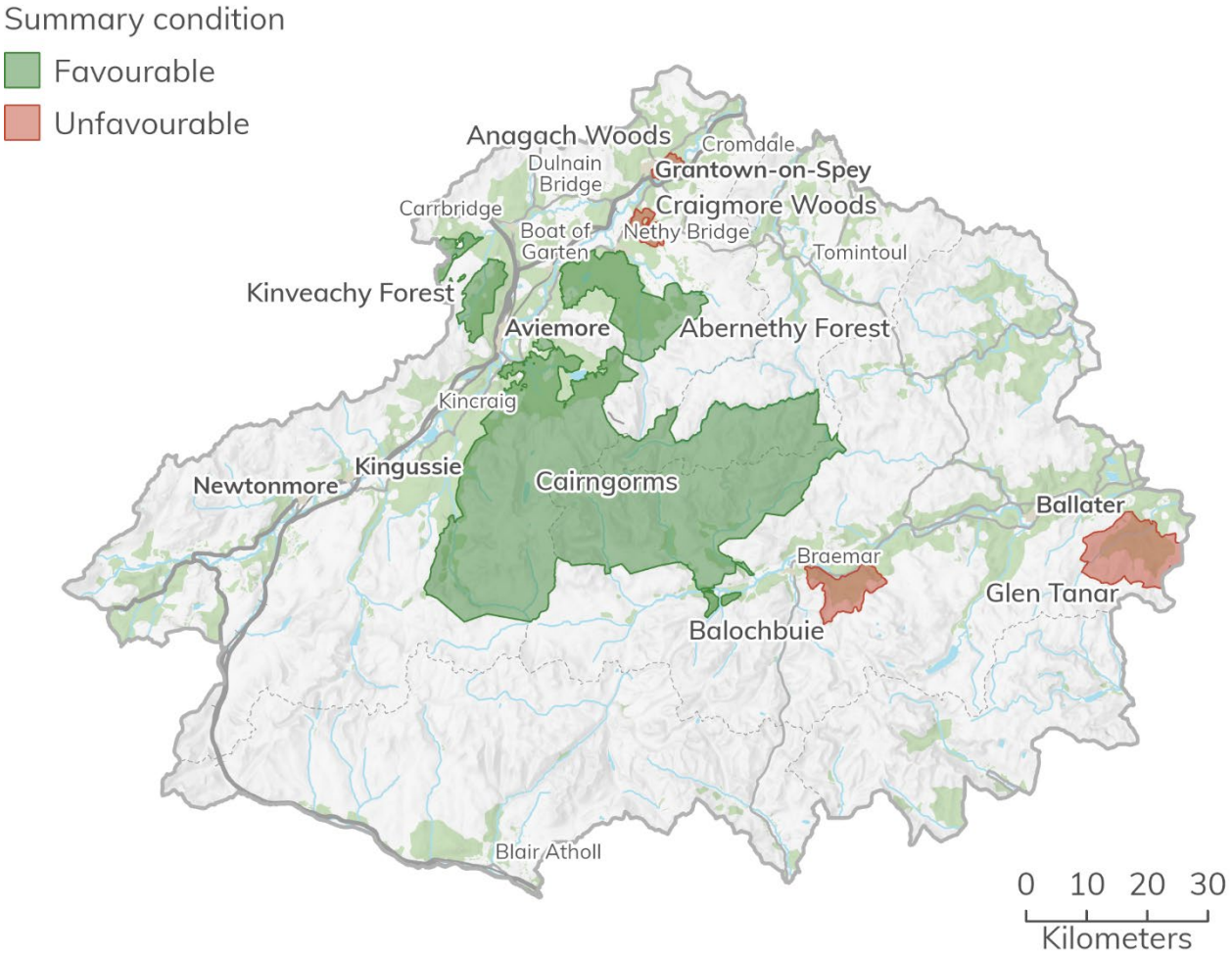

Figure 58 Special Protection Areas that have breeding capercaillie as qualifying features and their condition as of September 2024 (CNPA261). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © NatureScot 2026.

2024 lek count data indicates that there was a decrease of 15 lekking males in 2024 compared to 2023, with a total of 153 lekking males counted (CNPA311). This was due to an absence of recorded lekking males in Perthshire and Moray / Nairnshire and a decline in lekking males in Strathspey and Easter Ross. In Deeside however, recorded lekking males doubled from 5 to 10 (Figure 57).

Capercaillie numbers have fallen for lots of reasons including lack of habitat, low productivity, predation, collisions with unmarked fences and disturbance. These specific habitat needs make capercaillie particularly vulnerable. Limited and fragmented habitat is a recognised cause of population decline and can lead capercaillie populations to become isolated. This can increase the likelihood of inbreeding and leave the birds more prone to the impacts of predation and human disturbance.

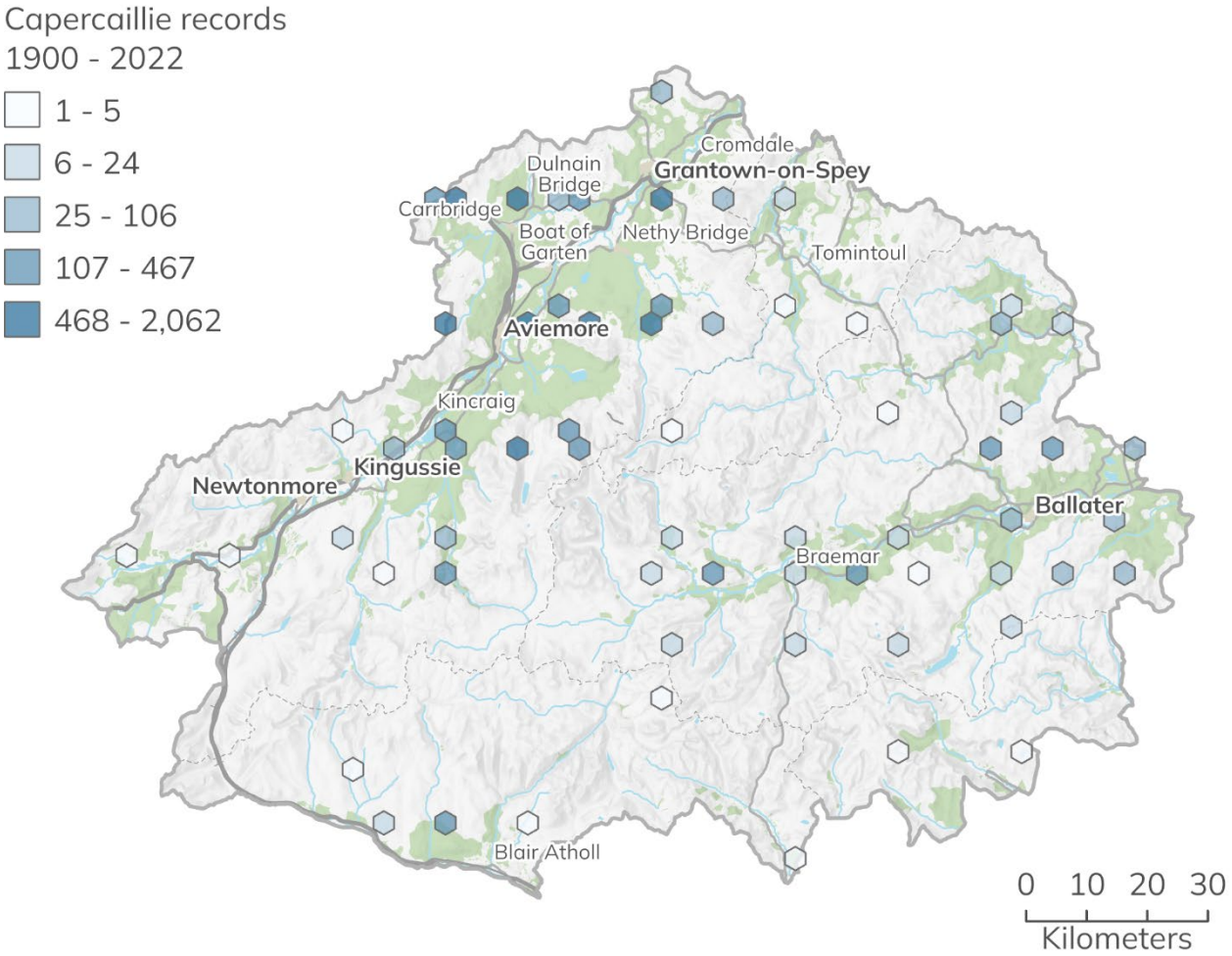

Figure 59 Capercaillie records 1810 – 2020 in the Cairngorms National Park. Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map (CNPA304). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

Capercaillie are a Scottish biodiversity list species and additionally are a named species within the Cairngorms National Action Plan. Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with capercaillie (Table 17).

Table 17 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for capercaillie (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Coordinate management solutions Deliver National Lottery Heritage Lottery Fund (NLHF) funded Cairngorms Capercaillie Project to reduce impact of recreational disturbance. 2019 species recovery curve position: T1 – T3	Species recovery curve position: R3	National Lottery Heritage Lottery Fund project delivered reducing impact of recreational disturbance at key sites and greater coordination of management. Species recovery curve position progressed from T1 to R1 with deployment of solutions ongoing.

The Cairngorms Capercaillie Project led by the Park Authority, sought to improve the outcome for the remaining population of capercaillie by working with stakeholders and landowners to provide solutions to the current threats to the capercaillie population, for example, habitat loss and fragmentation. The project's work involved five essential actions delivered across the Cairngorms National Park:

- Helping communities to create and deliver their own community-led actions for capercaillie.
- Raising awareness of the plight of capercaillie and how people can help.
- Researching the genetic diversity of capercaillie in the National Park to help inform action.
- Improving and creating more habitat for capercaillie and controlling predators in key areas.
- Strengthening capercaillie monitoring to enable more informed decisions.

The Project ended in July 2024 having delivered a number of key projects including (CNPA312):

- Delivering aspects of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy, including:
  - Purchasing and installing an all-weather Carrbridge Nature noticeboard to provide a central hub for sharing information about nature around the village.
  - Working with the Park Authority Ranger Team and land managers to install seasonal signage around Carrbridge (developed and tested as part of the 2021 Action Plan) to promote responsible access and dog walking in capercaillie areas during the 2023 breeding season.

    - Supporting more habitat creation and predator control for capercaillie on Seafield Estate.
- Working with the mountain biking community to deliver a Mountain Bike Recreation Management Plan for Badenoch and Strathspey[44] (CNPA652).
- Working with agency Genoa Black to develop, test and produce targeted, positive and engaging online visitor facing content that promotes behaviours that will be of benefit to the area's natural heritage, including capercaillie. In the previous quarter the work was not fulfilling objectives. A review meeting took place and changes were made to ways of working and the work itself.
- As part of the Visitor Community Action Plan, Colin Mulberg Consulting completed a visitor experience audit. The audit identifies where and how Abernethy, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore 'speak' to the different visitor segments identified through the project's visitor research.
- Building on the listening sessions conducted with canine professionals in 2022, 265 dog owners and canine professionals completed an online survey to identify the views held in the wider dog walking community in Badenoch and Strathspey. Members of the resident dog walking community attended the workshops and used the survey results to identify the following vision and areas of action to take forward:
    - Vision: Dog friendly Cairngorms where wildlife can thrive
    - Areas of action to help achieve the vision: dog friendly spaces throughout Badenoch and Strathspey to help wildlife thrive, building a dog owning community in Badenoch and Strathspey, and positive and consistent signage for local and visiting dog walkers in Badenoch and Strathspey.

The Park Authority and NatureScot have worked with stakeholders to develop a Capercaillie Emergency Plan, which sets out targeted activity for capercaillie conservation. The Emergency Plan was agreed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to be the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project's Legacy Plan. In June 2024 the Park Authority Board agreed on the scope of activity in the Emergency Plan and a funding strategy for its delivery (CNPA313 and CNPA314). The key areas of work scoped into the Emergency Plan are:

- Habitat expansion
- Habitat enhancement
- Reducing impacts of predation
- Fence removal and marking

[44] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/CNPA652-Badenoch-and-Strathspey-MTB-Recreation-Management-Plan-2023-2026-6.pdf

- Reducing disturbance
- Research and monitoring.

The Capercaillie Emergency Plan was published in September 2024 following consultation with stakeholders.

In December 2025 an updated core capercaillie area map (Figure 60) was published to effectively support action for the species, including the delivery of the Capercaillie Emergency Plan (CNPA1330 and CNPA1331). The core areas are defined as follows:

Core areas:
- The forest / woodland of Special Protected Areas where capercaillie is a qualifying feature.
- Where multiple capercaillie records from 2019 – 2024 exist.

The boundaries of a core area should be defined by:
- The forest / woodland boundaries of Special Protected Areas where capercaillie is a qualifying feature
- The forest / woodland edge of a 5km buffer around a capercaillie record where there are multiple capercaillie records from 2019 – 2024.

The data may be used to inform the Proposed Plan by highlighting areas in which capercaillie may be negatively affected by the impacts of development, informing both the site assessment process and habitats regulations appraisals process.

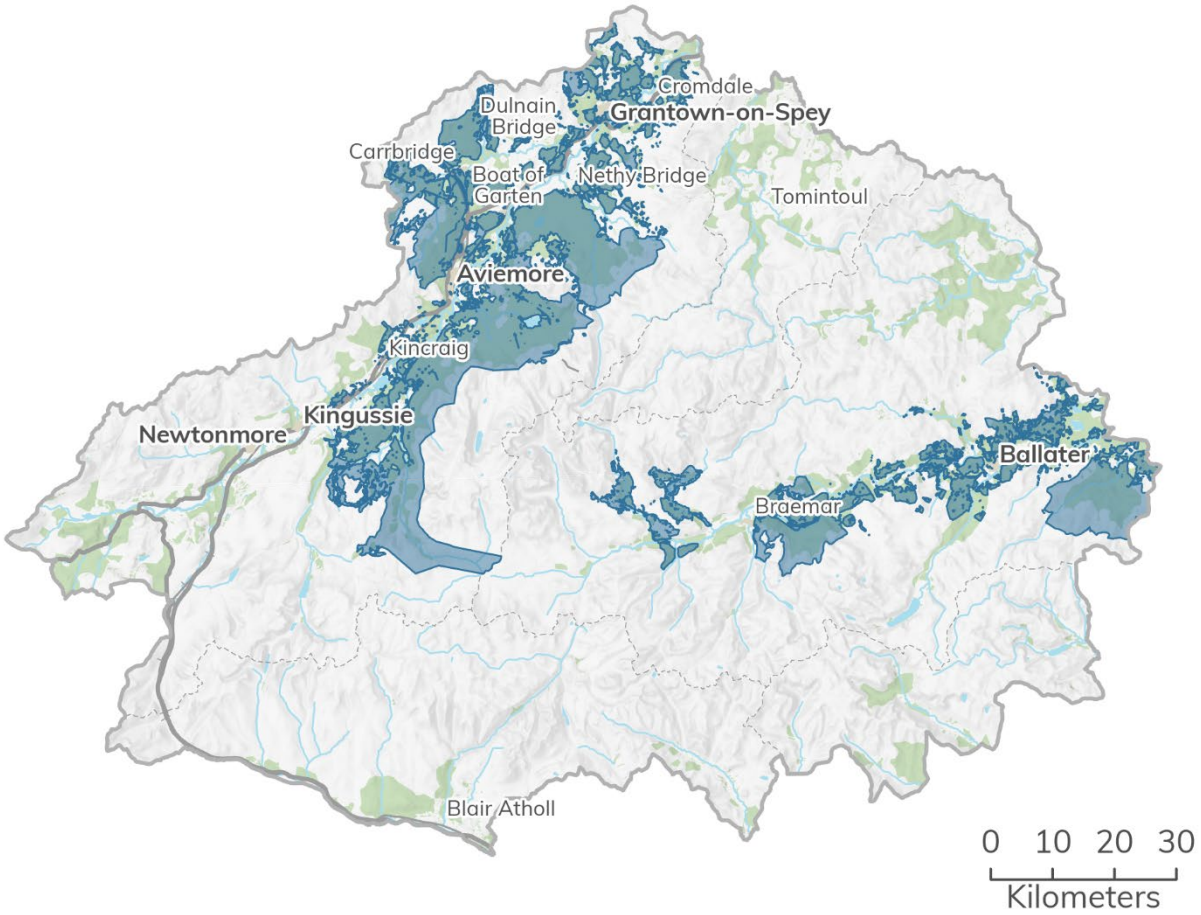

Figure 60 Core capercaillie areas in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 2026 (CNPA1330).

Due to the sensitivity of capercaillie to disturbance, the species is already a key consideration in planning decisions. All proposed developments within the constraint area identified on Figure 61 need to be screened for Habitats Regulations Appraisal, with their potential impact considered on a woodland basis. To ensure that adverse effects are unlikely to arise from its implementation, the Proposed Plan will be subject to the Habitats Appraisal. This will need to be considered both in terms of the Proposed Plan's spatial strategy and the site assessment process. In this way, the Proposed Plan should also support the delivery of the Capercaillie Emergency Plan. Furthermore, the local development plan may support the population within the National Park, through its support for nature networks.

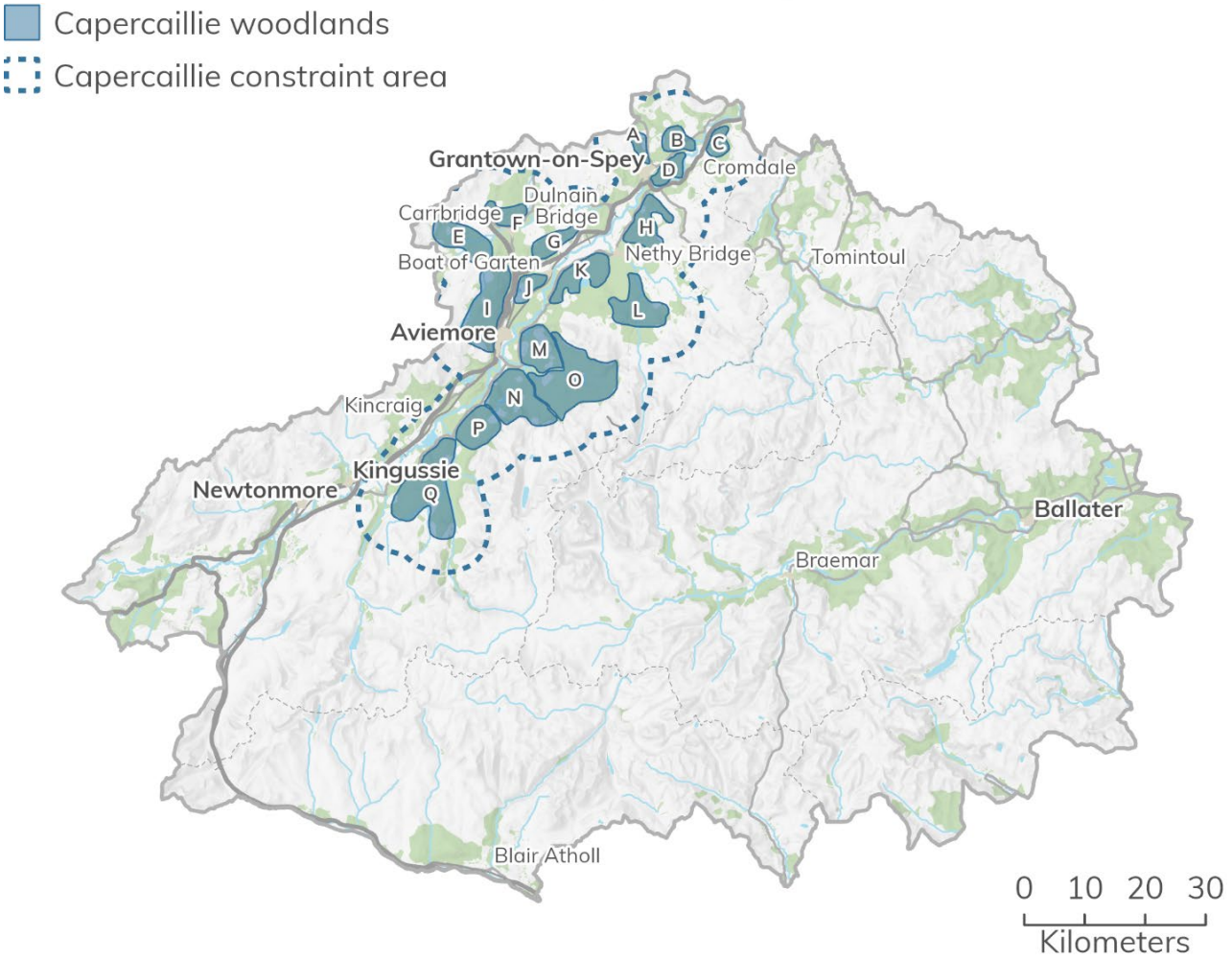

Figure 61 Woodlands associated with capercaillie activity within the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

The woodlands identified on Figure 61 are:

A – North Grantown
B – Castle Grant & Mid Port
C – Tom an Aird
D – Anagach Woods
E – Slochd
F – North Carr-Bridge
G – Drochan & Drumuillie
H – Craigmore Woods
I – Kinveachy Forest
J – Loch Vaa
K – Garten Woods
L – Forest Lodge
M – North Rothiemurchus
N – South Rothiemurchus
O – Glenmore
P – Inshriach
Q – Uath Lochans area

Curlew

The National Park is one of the most important UK mainland sites for breeding wading birds. Curlew, along with other waders have seen their numbers decline throughout the United Kingdom (Figure 62) (CNPA304).

Curlew are a priority species identified by the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with curlew (Table 18). It shows that while wader populations have been in decline in recent years (Table 12), there has been success around curlew, which have moved up the Species Recovery Curve.

Table 18 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for curlew (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Assess upland breeding productivity, monitor nests, Create sensitivity maps for curlew sites. 2019 species recovery curve position: D2	Species recovery curve position: T1	Upland surveys and hotspot mapping undertaken to inform ongoing habitat improvement. Exceeded target, progressing from D2 to T2.

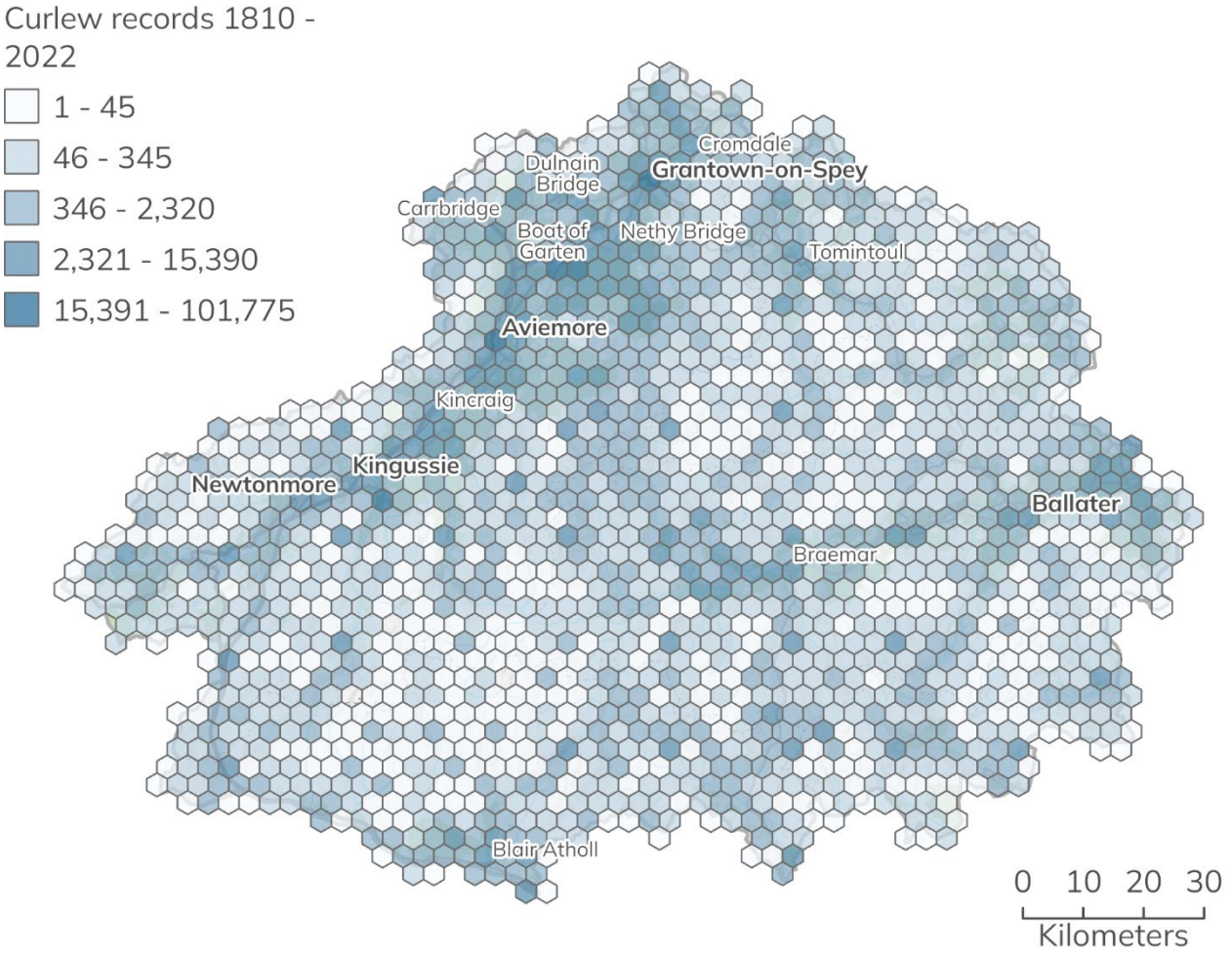

Figure 62 Curlew records 1810 – 2020 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

The British Trust for Ornithology's predictive model for curlew abundance shows that there are many 'hot spots' for the species within the National Park. Many of these areas correspond with protected sites, however there are also areas of predicted abundance that lie outside these areas, connecting them via wetland habitats. The east of the National Park has the greatest abundance. The data offers a good means of identifying areas for positive action, including those delivered through delivered through the local development plan. The site assessment process will need to consider the presence of breeding curlew to ensure the species is not adversely affected. Furthermore, the local development plan may support the population within the National Park, through its support for nature networks.

This data was extracted 26 November 2024 when it's most recent update was 22 July 2021 (CNPA307).

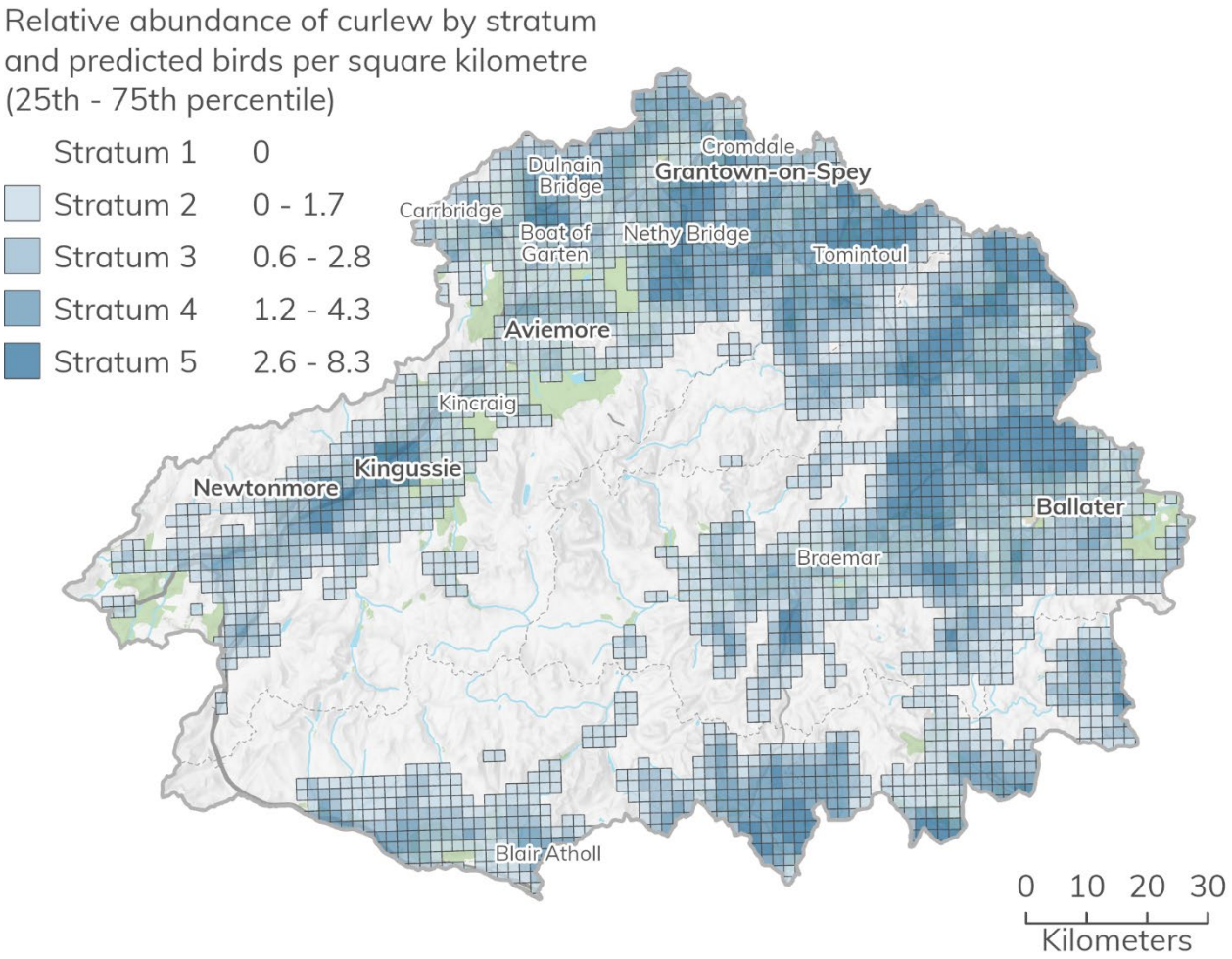

Figure 63 Relative abundance of curlew in the Cairngorms National Park as predicted by British Trust for Ornithology's wader sensitivity mapping (CNPA307). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © British Trust for Ornithology 2026.

Raptors

The National Park is home to a number of important raptor species such as, golden eagle, hen harrier and peregrine. Raptor conservation is perhaps the highest profile of all the priority species and is frequently a contentious and impassioned issue. Land managers in the Cairngorms National Park play a key role in the national debate. Cairngorms Nature partners are committed to increasing home range (re)occupancy and breeding success of golden eagle, hen harrier, merlin and peregrine falcon. These are the three Schedule 1 / Annex 1 species whose status and trends in the National Park are unfavourable. The Park Authority and its partners are also committed to working with Police Scotland to eliminate illegal persecution of all raptors.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with raptors (Table 19). The bird population data quoted in this paper comes from the Partnership Plan's Monitoring Framework update 2024[45] (CNPA302 and CNPA333).

Table 19 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for raptors (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Collaboration on population monitoring and positive management, wildlife crime enforcement and wildlife tourism opportunities. 2019 species recovery curve position: T2	Species recovery curve position: R3	Raptor Officer recruited. Work underway to establish baseline populations, identify unoccupied territories, undertake collaborative mapping and monitoring and reduce illegal killing. All species of raptor remain at T2 as work ongoing.

Currently golden eagle (Figure 64) (CNPA304) are considered to have favourable conservation status and are a green list species under Birds of Conservation Concern 5 and there is thought to be around 39 pairs (data from 2019 – 2021) within the National Park. Threats to golden eagle are thought to be collisions with human disturbance, powerlines, starvation, disease and illegal persecution, with the 2017 NatureScot report, 'Analyses of the fates of satellite tracked golden eagles in Scotland'[46] (CNPA315), stating that:

'Corroborative information points to the perpetrators of the persecution of tagged eagles being associated with some grouse moors in the central and eastern Highlands of Scotland'.

NatureScot's earlier report (2008) 'A conservation framework for golden eagles: implications for their conservation and management in Scotland' highlights that 'further

[45] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/CNPA333-National-Park-Partnership-Plan-Annual-Update-2024.pdf
[46] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA315-Publication-2017-SNH-Commissioned-Report-982-Analyses-of-the-fates-of-satellite-tracked-golden-eagles-in-Scotland.pdf

studies of the impacts and role of unintentional disturbance are needed'[47] (CNPA316). While most forms of development are unlikely to lead to disturbance, consideration may be given to the creation of new hill-tracks, which may be proposed in areas inhabited by nesting golden eagles. Further information on hill-tracks and the policy implications for the Proposed Plan is set out in Schedule 6: Landscape.

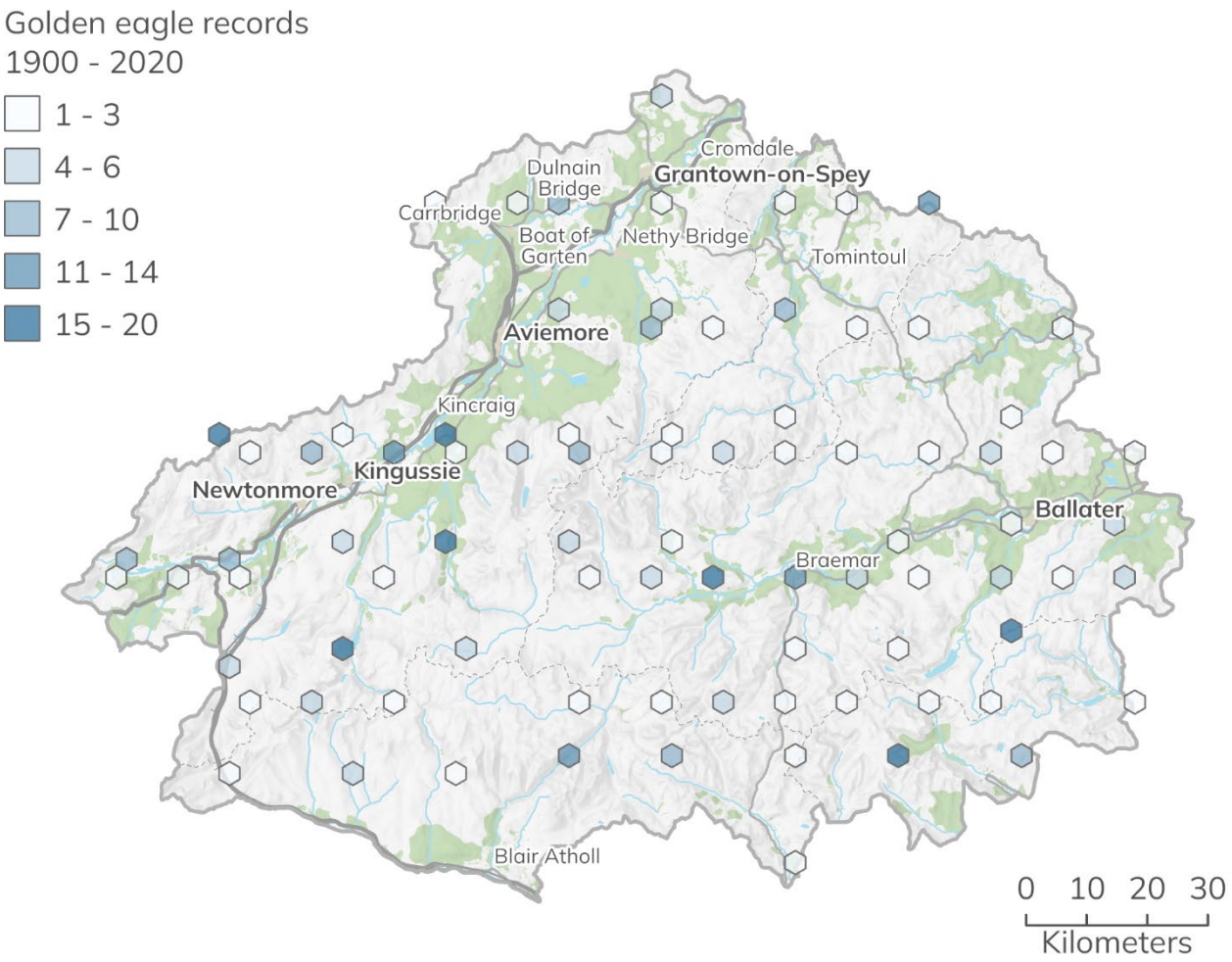

Figure 64 Golden eagle records 1900 – 2020 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

Hen harrier (Figure 65) (CNPA304) are a red list species under Birds of Conservation Concern 5 with approximately 21 breeding pairs (2019 – 2021), within the National Park. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee's 2011 report, 'A Conservation

[47] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/External-documents/CNPA316-Publication-2008-SNH-Commissioned-Report-193-A-conservation-framework-for-the-golden-eagle.pdf

Framework for Hen Harriers in the United Kingdom' (CNPA317) identifies a range of constraints acting on hen harriers: agriculture, grazing, persecution, predation, the prey base, weather / climate change, wind farms, and woodland. The report identifies, two main constraints: persecution, and, in one Scottish region, prey shortages. Other constraints associated with the availability of nesting / foraging habitat, and predation pressures may also be locally important.

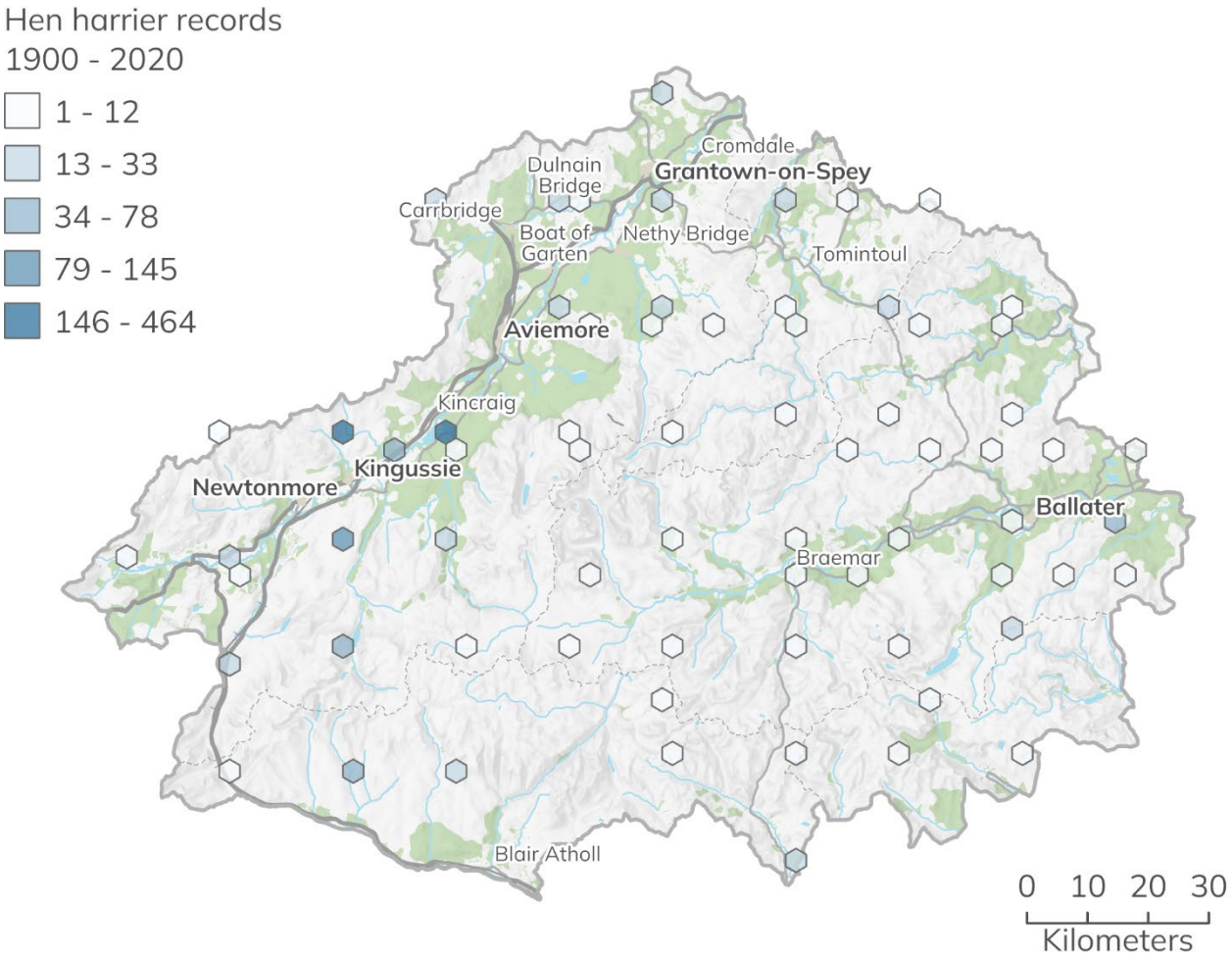

Figure 65 Hen harrier records 1900 – 2020 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

Merlin (Figure 66) (CNPA304) are a red listed species under Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (CNPA318). Their population within the National Park is unknown as to date there has not been a comprehensive survey of their numbers. Threats facing merlin include climate change, changes in land use, prey populations, collisions with power man-made objects, pesticides, and illegal persecution.

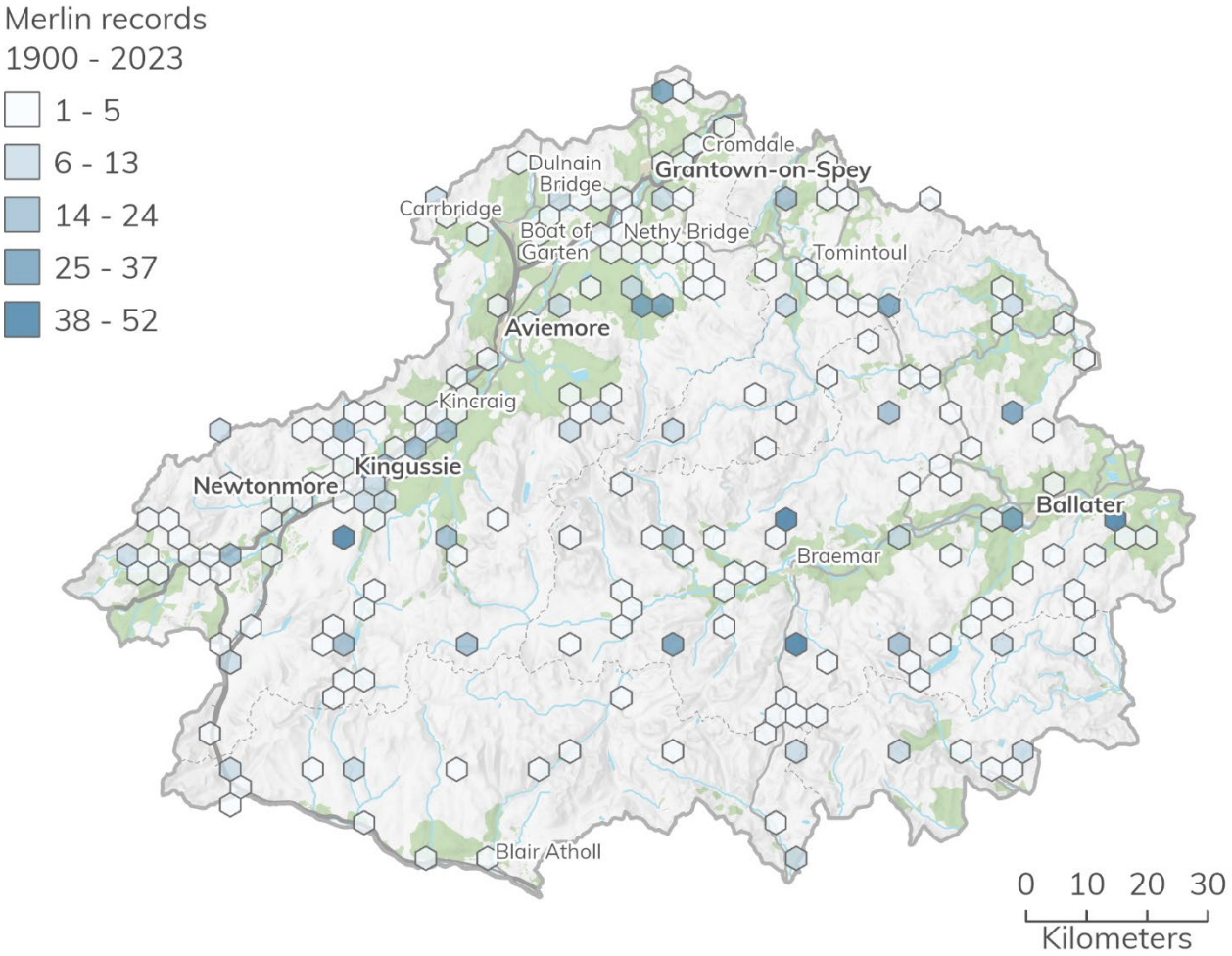

Figure 66 Merlin records 1900 – 2023 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

Peregrine falcon (Figure 67) (CNPA304) are a green listed species under Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (CNPA318). In 2024, the breeding population of peregrines in the Cairngorms National Park was estimated to be 31 pairs (CNPA1085). This was 56% less than the population of 70 pairs estimated from the results of the 2002 survey. In the Highland area of the National Park, where data were available from 1964, the number of peregrine breeding pairs recorded declined by 68% between 1981 and 2024. The downward trend in the National Park population is consistent with decreases observed in the Scottish peregrine population in the last two national surveys and the widespread, strong decline reported for UK upland peregrines between 1994 and 2023. Factors likely to be contributing to the long-term decline in the National Park peregrine population include wildlife crime, reduced food availability and, more recently, avian influenza and potentially interspecific competition (i.e. competition for resources between individuals of different species).

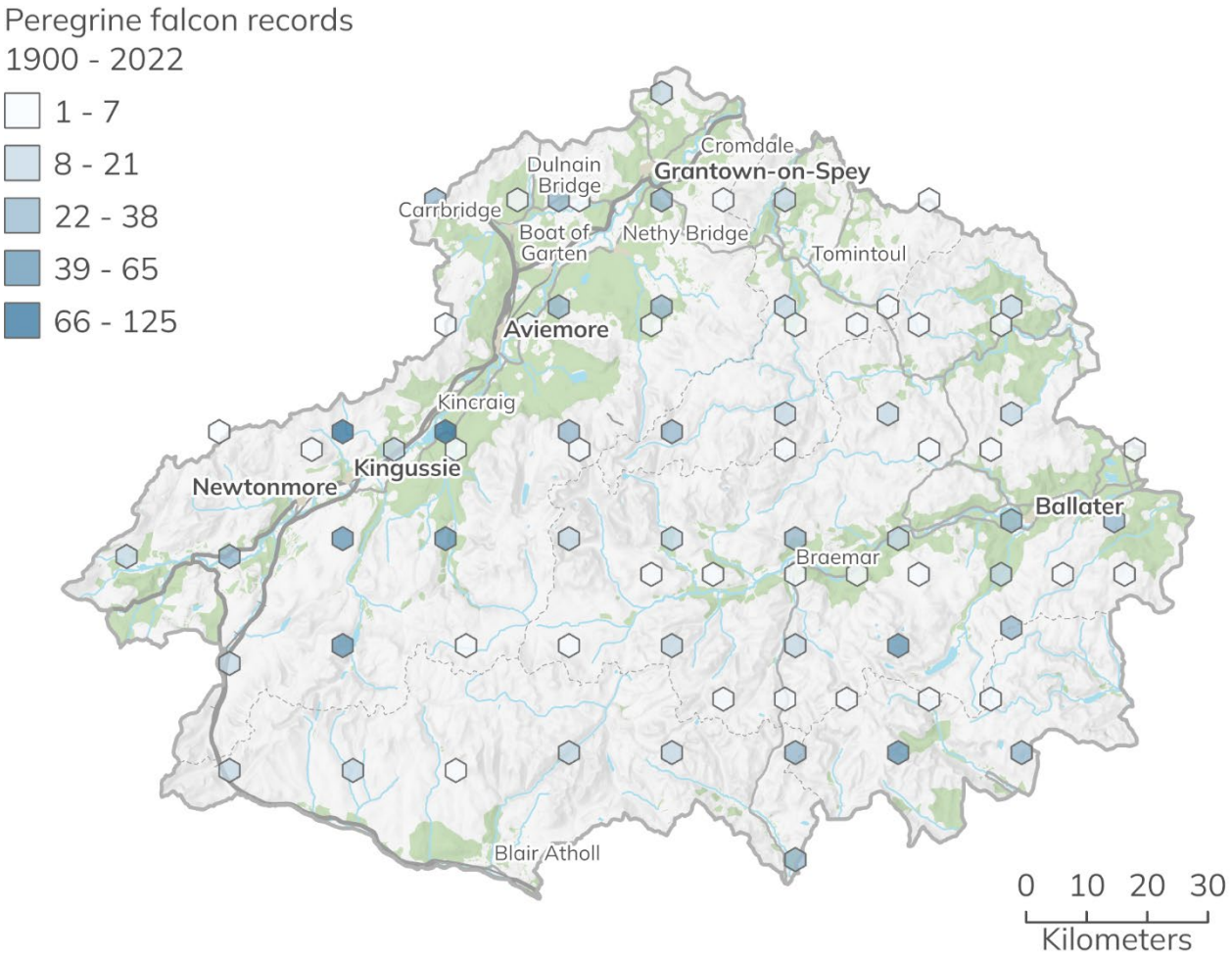

Figure 67 Peregrine falcon records 1900 – 2022 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

The relationship between raptors, most of which are Schedule 1 species, and development is dependent on species and development type. Habitat loss, disturbance and wildlife crime could be associated with development, particularly for species that nest in trees. It should be noted that while raptor persecution incidents have been recorded within and in close vicinity of the National Park (for example, 49 confirmed incidents between 2007 – 2023 are known to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) (CNPA305), there is no evidence linking them to proposed development.

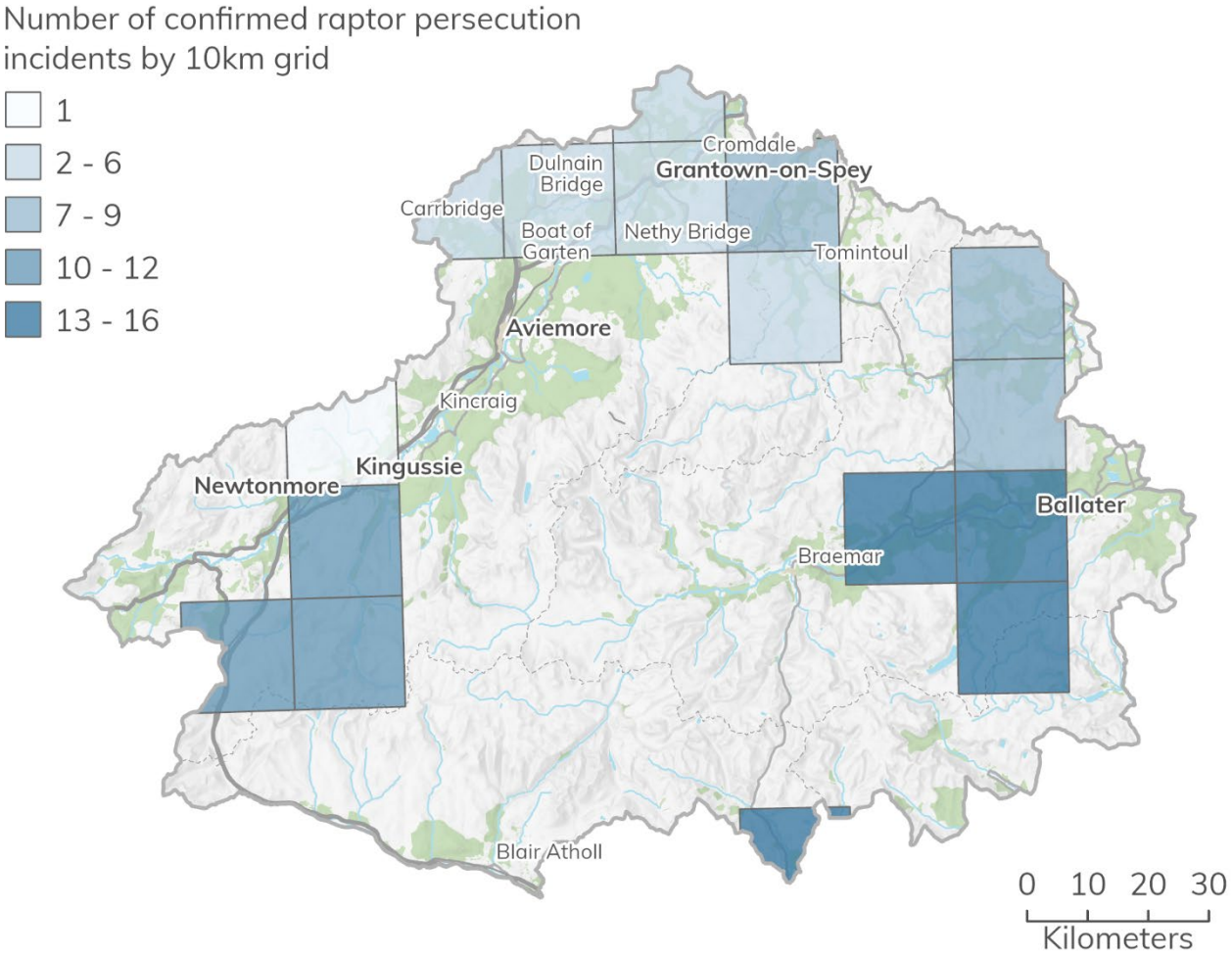

Figure 68 Confirmed raptor persecution incidents known to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 2007 – 2023 in 10km grid squares covering the Cairngorms National Park[48] (CNPA305). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 2026.

Certain types of development, for example wind farm development, may also have a negative effect on species such as golden eagle. Note windfarm development is not permitted within the National Park, but single turbines are[49]. The presence of raptors will need to be considered through the site assessment process, while the local development plan may also support the populations within the National Park, through its support for nature networks.

[48] Information on what is defined as a confirmed raptor persecution incident is available on the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' datahub. See https://opendata-rspb.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/RSPB::confirmed-raptor-persecution-incidents-public/about

[49] Matters relating to windfarm development are covered in Schedule 9: Energy and Schedule 6: Landscape.

It is therefore unlikely that the local development plan will have a negative impact on raptors, however, their presence is worth considering in relation to site assessment. Information to inform the assessment will need to be collected through site visits.

Pine hoverfly

The pine hoverfly was once more widespread in pine woodlands across the United Kingdom, but in 2024, this critically endangered insect was found to be living in a single patch of forest in the Cairngorms National Park. It's so rare that a sighting of one in 2022 was the first recorded in a decade. Note, the records presented in Figure 69 (CNPA304) may be unconfirmed.

The main reason for the pine hoverfly's decline is loss of habitat for its larval stage. The pine hoverfly has specific needs when it comes to egg-laying and larvae success, and there are very few sites that meet all of these requirements.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with Pine hoverfly (Figure 19).

Table 20 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for Pine hoverfly (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Surveying and mapping habitat, captive breeding and translocation programmes, working with land managers and volunteers. 2019 species recovery curve position: R1	Species recovery curve position: R2	The Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms Project enabled delivery of all actions including a trial captive breeding and release programme. The programme is still ongoing, so the current position on the recovery curve is T3 (solution testing).

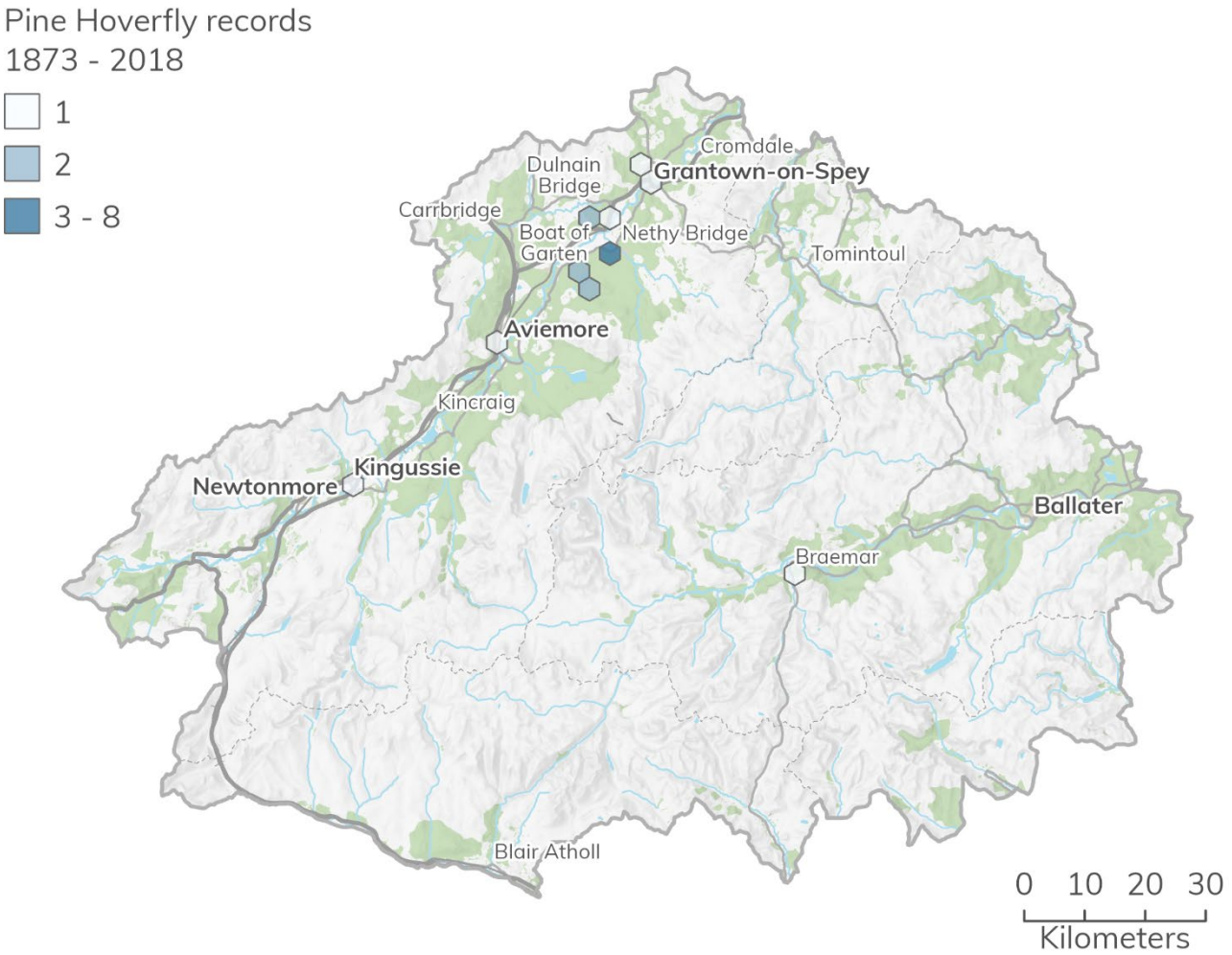

Figure 69 Pine hoverfly records 1873 – 2018 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

Regenerating and linking complex woodland habitats will support the pine hoverfly's future, and a breeding programme is underway to try to boost their population. The local development plan may support the population within the National Park, through its support for nature networks, particularly through the protection and expansion of woodland habitats.

Small Scabious Mining Bee

The small scabious mining bee (Figure 70) (CNPA304), one of the rarest bees in Scotland, belongs to this group. It's found in only a few places in the Scottish Highlands, as well as in a few places in south and southeast England and south Wales. These habitats don't link up with each other, however, so the small scabious mining bee's

future could be at risk if individual colonies don't do well. This is one of the reasons this tiny invertebrate is on the Scottish Biodiversity List.

Little more is known about the scabious mining bee due to its short flight period and restricted range. Experts generally agree that its numbers are suffering due to a decrease in the spread of devil's-bit scabious: since the second world war, the United Kingdom has lost 97% of its wildflower habitats.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with small scabious mining bee (Figure 20).

Table 21 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for small scabious mining bee (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Surveying and mapping habitat and working with land managers and volunteers. 2019 species recovery curve position: D2	Species recovery curve position: T3	The RIC Project enabled delivery of all relevant actions. Progress made from D2 to T1 with work ongoing.

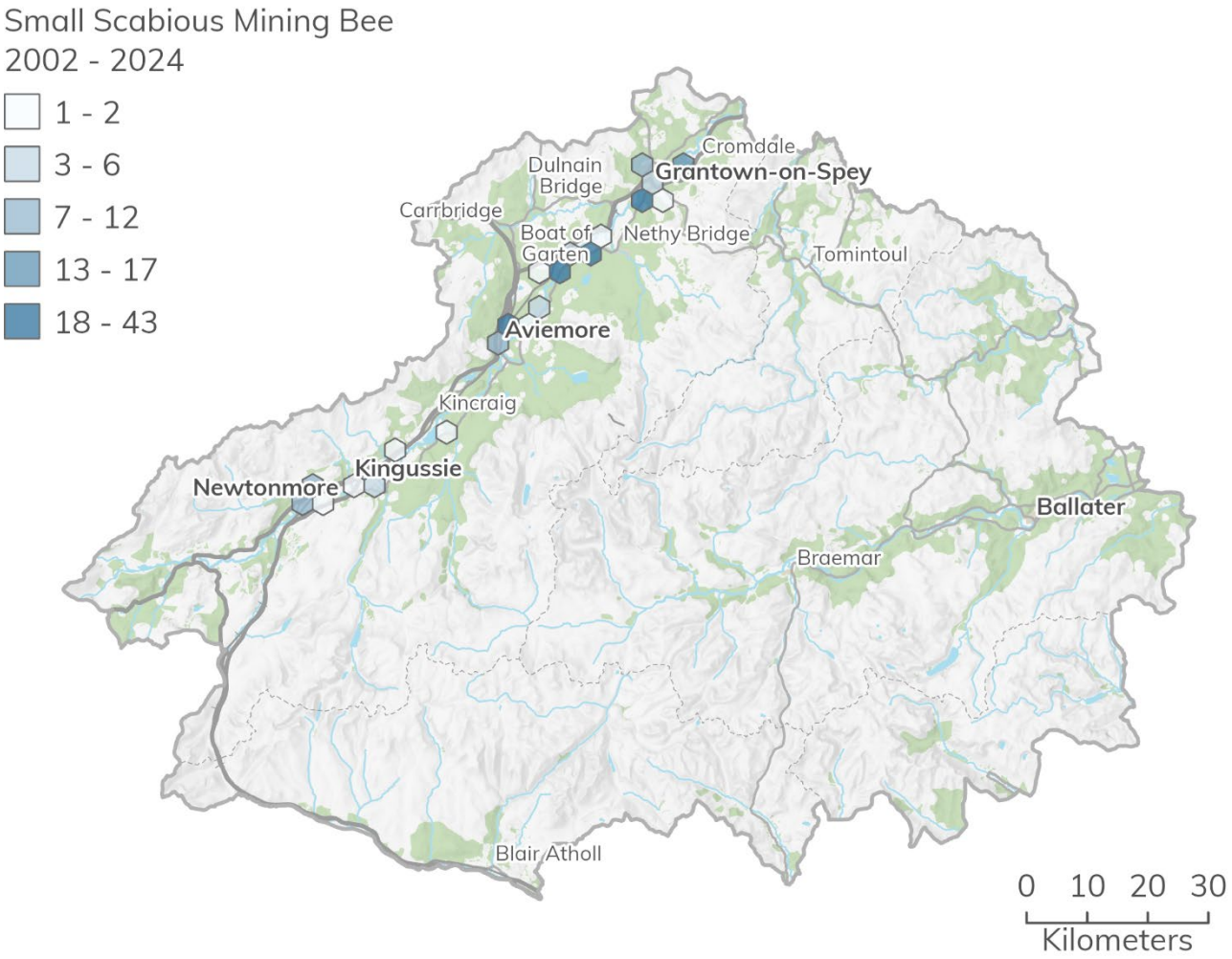

Figure 70 Small scabious mining bee records 2002 – 2024 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

The local development plan may support the population within the National Park, through its support for nature networks, particularly through its aim to protection and enhance of grassland habitats. The local development may also support the species through biodiversity enhancement schemes that include management techniques such as reduced grass-cutting and the prioritisation of wildflower growth.

Northern February red stonefly

The northern February red is a freshwater species endemic to Britain, found mainly in Scottish upland streams, including those in the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 71) (CNPA304). This stonefly thrives best in highly oxygenated rivers with a shallow or moderate gradient on open heaths or upland pastures.

The main threat facing the northern February red stonefly is primarily down to poor water quality, leading to the deterioration of its habitat. The issue of water quality is covered under the freshwater and wetland habitats section of this schedule (see page 133). The local development plan may support the population within the National Park, through its support for nature networks, particularly through the protection and creation of freshwater, mire and wetland habitats.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with northern February red stonefly (Table 22).

Table 22 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for Northern February red stonefly (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
National Park-wide survey Raise awareness of species' needs with land managers and planning authorities 2019 species recovery curve position: D2	Species recovery curve position: D3	National Park-wide survey undertaken and awareness raising ongoing with land managers and planning authorities. Progressed from D2 to D3.

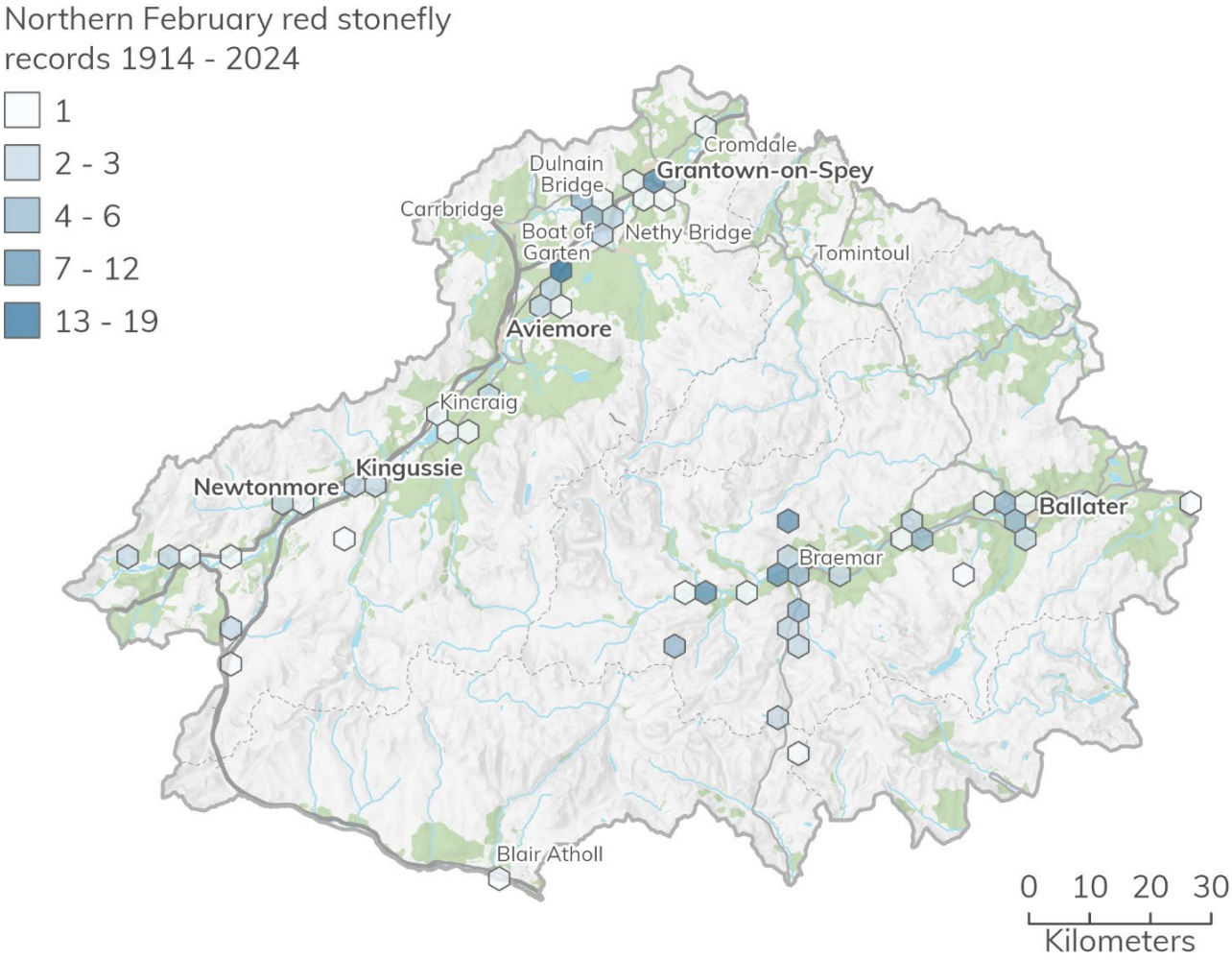

Figure 71 Northern February red stonefly records 1914 – 2024 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

Northern Damselfly

The northern damselfly is a rare invertebrate which is found within the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 72) (CNPA304), it is Scottish Biodiversity List species and it is listed as endangered in the UK Red Data Book.

Northern damselflies are members of the Odonata order, just like dragonflies. Damselflies, however, have smaller, slimmer bodies and equal-sized and shaped wings. They also bring their wings together over their back in rest, unlike dragonflies, which spread their wings.

Their limited flight ability means they prefer emergent vegetation (plants found close to the shoreline), typically remaining 20 to 60cm above water.

Habitat loss and peat cutting are primary factors in the species' decline. But recent research shows the northern damselfly's population is now increasing, perhaps helped by warmer temperatures and new ponds created by recently reintroduced beavers.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with northern damselfly (Table 23).

Table 23 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for northern damselfly (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Surveying new and historic sites with volunteer support. Habitat management advice for land managers. 2019 species recovery curve position: D2	Species recovery curve position: T2 – T3	National Park-wide survey undertaken and habitat management and creation ongoing at key sites. Progressed from D2 to T3.

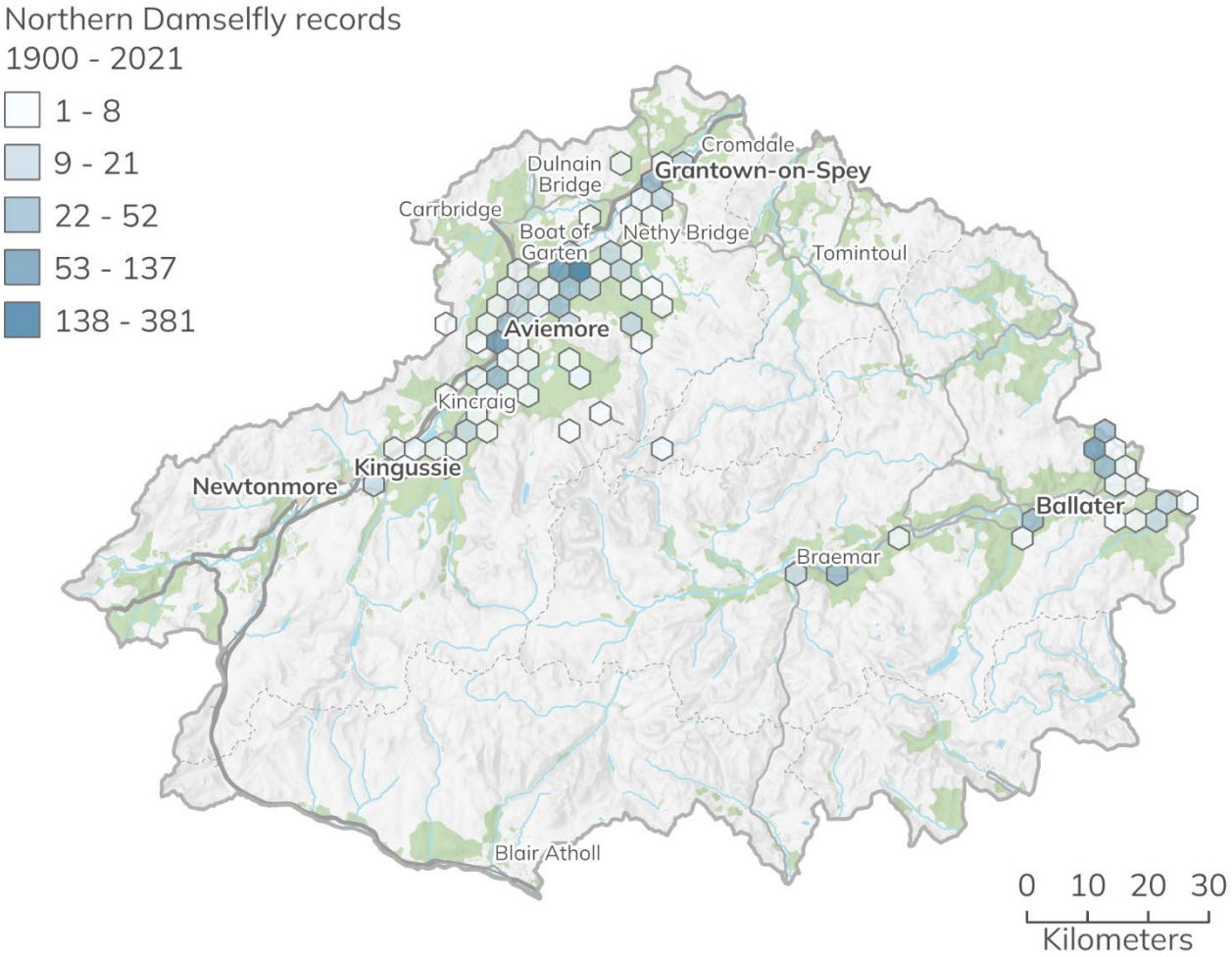

Figure 72 Northern damselfly records 1900 – 2021 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

The site assessment process will need to consider the presence of northern damselfly to ensure the species is not adversely affected. Furthermore, the local development plan may support the population within the National Park, through its support for nature networks, particularly through the creation of new ponds as part of the wetlands habitat network.

Wood ants

The Scottish wood ant (Figure 73), hairy wood ant (Figure 74) and the narrow headed ant (Figure 75) (CNPA304) are all found within the National Park. Both the Scottish wood ant and the hairy wood ant are considered Near Threatened and narrow headed ants are considered endangered. All species of wood ants within the National Park are

considered priority species and subject to action to safeguard the populations from the risks of habitat fragmentation, disturbance and development.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with wood ants (Table 24).

Table 24 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for wood ants (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Safeguard existing populations, integrate with wider woodland work. Investigate translocation opportunities. 2019 species recovery curve position: T1	Species recovery curve position: R2	Data collection and translocation feasibility work underway. Progress made from T1 to T3 with work ongoing.

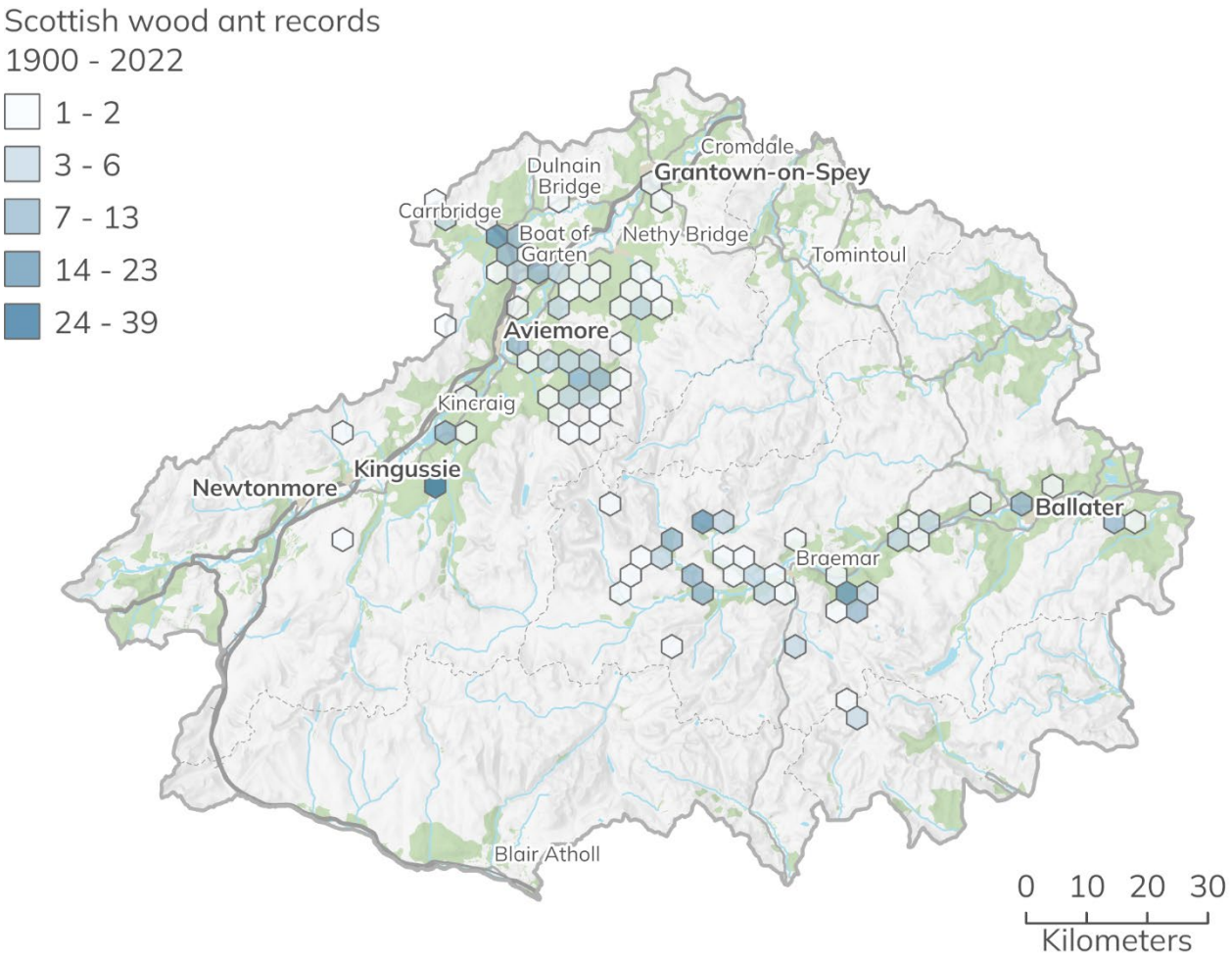

Figure 73 Scottish wood ant records 1900 – 2022 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

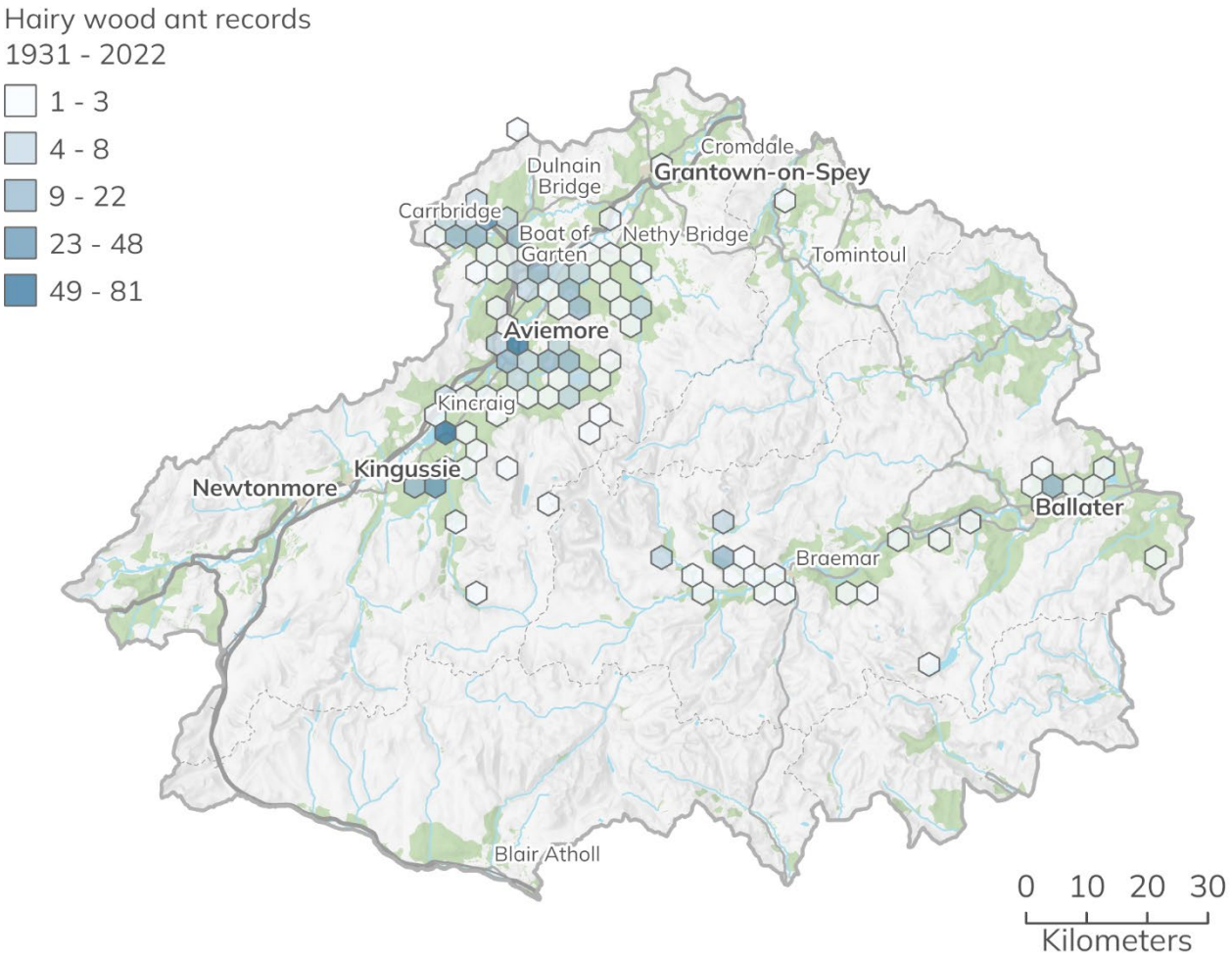

Figure 74 Hairy wood ant records 1931 – 2022 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

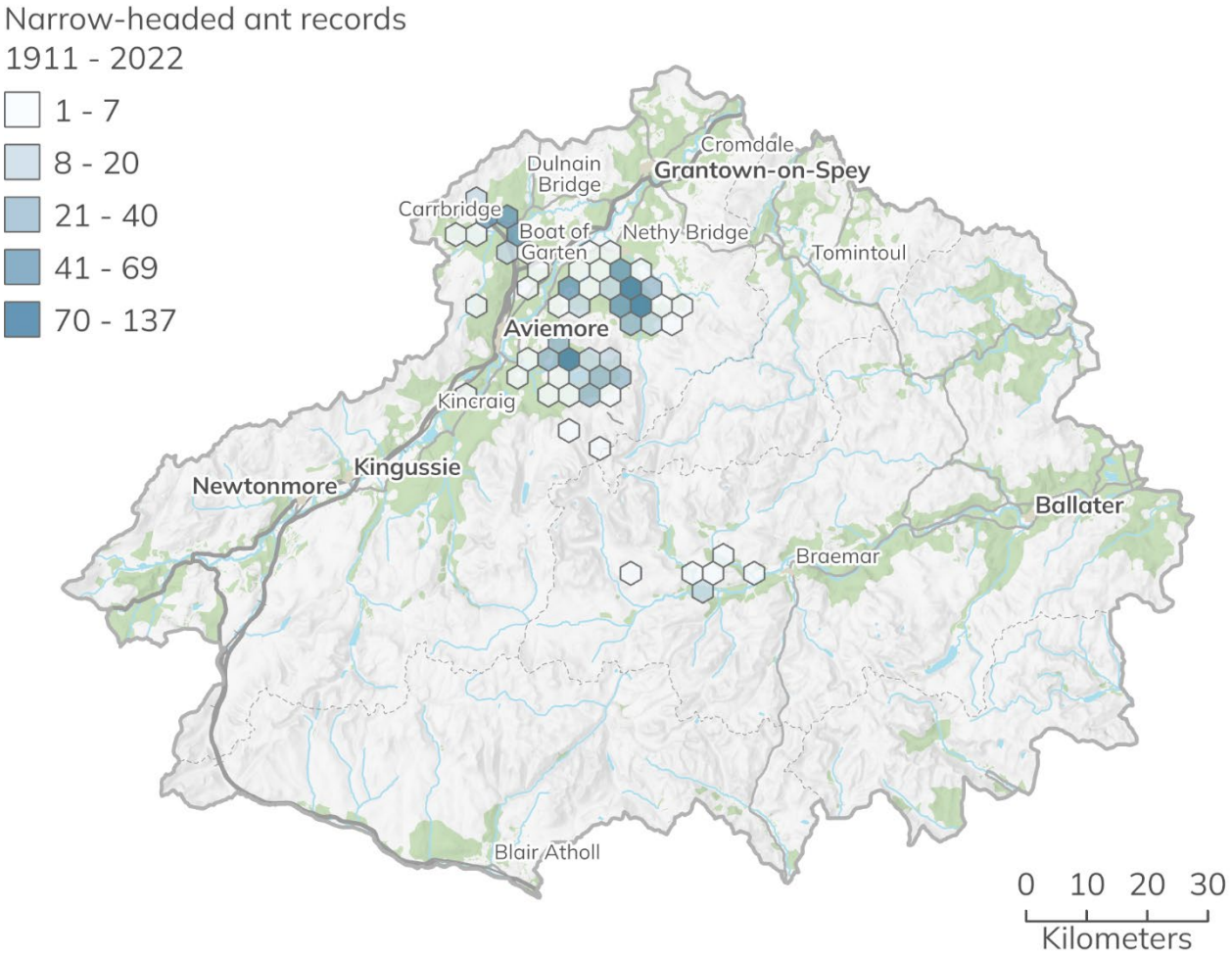

Figure 75 Narrow headed ant records 1911 – 2022 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

National Planning Framework 4 sets a strong basis for resisting woodland habitat loss from development while the local development plan may support the creation of new habitat for wood ants, through its support for nature networks.

Aspen Hoverfly

The aspen hoverfly belongs to a large group of insects called Diptera. This group also includes houseflies, mosquitoes and craneflies. Scotland has the entire population of the aspen hoverfly and it is only found in a few sites in the Highlands, making it one of Britain's rarest hoverflies. The aspen hoverfly's stronghold is in Badenoch and Strathspey, with populations found along the Strath between Kingussie, Easterness and Grantown on Spey (Figure 76) (CNPA304). Insh Marshes National Nature Reserve is notable for its population. There is also a small population at a single site on Deeside

near Dinnet. Their breeding habitat is qspen woodland, including birch or pine woods with an aspen component. See page 182 for information on the distribution of aspen in the Cairngorms National Park.

The Proposed Plan may benefit the aspen hoverfly by promoting the planting and management of aspen in landscape schemes and biodiversity mitigation, compensation and enhancement associated development, thereby increasing its breeding habitat and the connectivity between existing habitats. This should include the protection of dead wood. Furthermore, the local development plan may support the population within the National Park, through its support for nature networks.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with aspen hoverfly (Table 25).

Table 25 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for aspen hoverfly (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Sustainable management suitable for population expansion and integrate with wider work for aspen woodland 2019 species recovery curve position: T2	Species recovery curve position: R3	Survey work undertaken, engagement with landowners and integrated into beaver monitoring programme. Progress made from T2 to R1 with work ongoing.

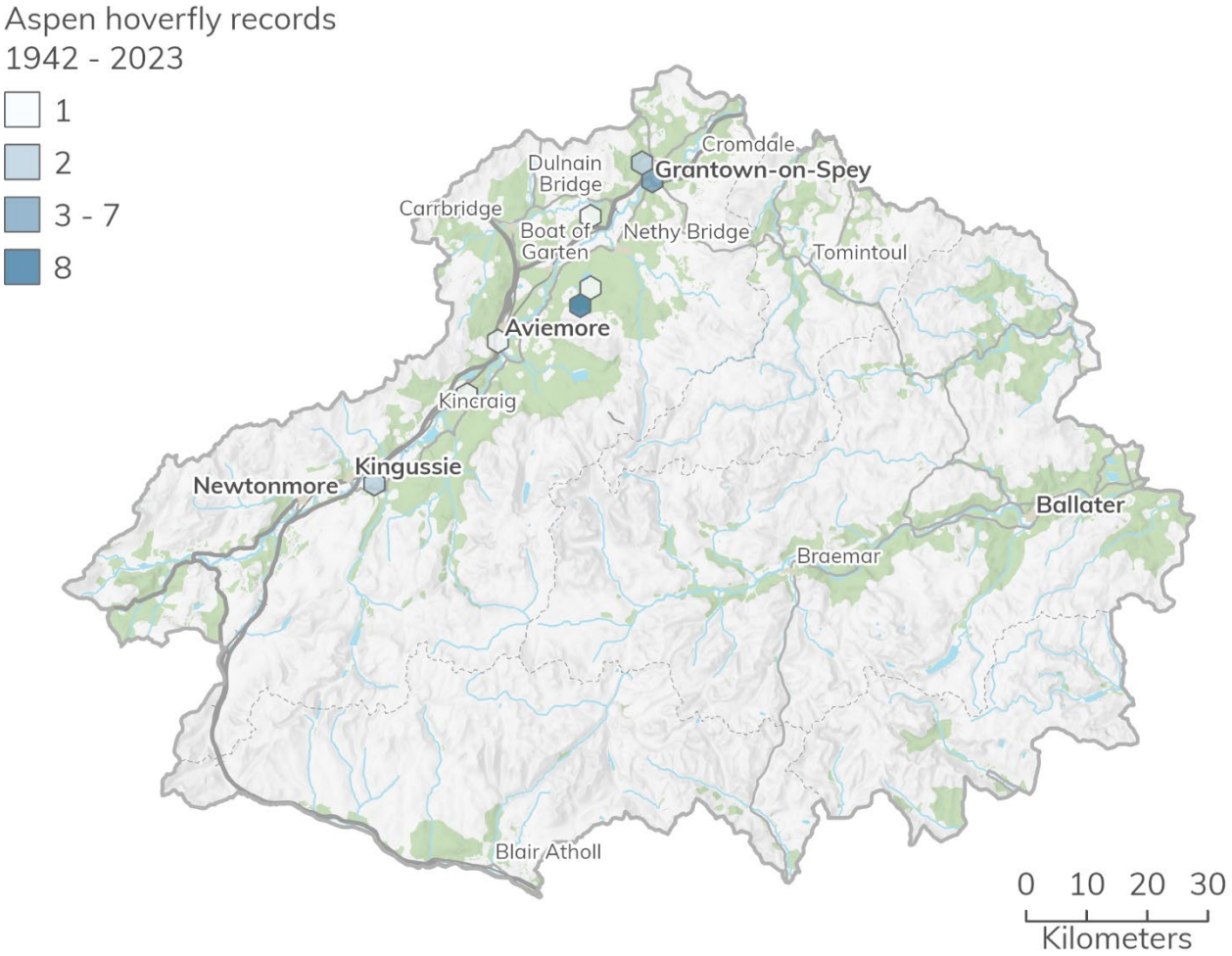

Figure 76 Aspen hoverfly records 1942 – 2023 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

Freshwater Pearl Mussel

Freshwater pearl mussel is classified as critically endangered and approximately 115 watercourses within Scotland have a population. Most of the population is found in rivers located in the Highlands (and Western Isles). Populations are threatened by illegal pearl fishing, poor water quality and habitat damage.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with freshwater pearl mussel (Table 26).

Table 26 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for freshwater pearl mussel.

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Improve riparian management. Survey suitable habitat. Support a reintroduction / translocation project. 2019 species recovery curve position: R1	Species recovery curve position: R2	Targeted habitat improvement and extensive survey work undertaken. Survey data informed recovery plan including population reinforcement project. Position remains R1 with work ongoing.

Working closely with the Spey Fisheries Board and the Spey Catchment Partnership, the Park Authority are developing plans to move threatened populations of pearl mussels from the main stem of the River Spey to safer habitats in the upper tributaries of the river. Subject to licencing, it is hoped this work could begin as early as spring 2025.

On the River Dee, innovative techniques such as eDNA monitoring are being used to identify remnant populations and help pinpoint where action is needed (CNPA320). Led by the James Hutton Institute, this work is taking place following a report, commissioned by NatureScot and the Park Authority through the Dee Catchment Partnership, which revealed an approximate 90% reduction in the population of freshwater pearl mussels in the River Dee since 2002. The decline is thought to be caused primarily by the devastating effects of Storm Frank in 2015, where the violence of the storm not only swept much of the population away but also tore up the riverbed, leaving it highly unstable for mussels to anchor on. The current condition of the Dee makes it unsuitable for translocation of the mussels and alternative approaches are being considered.

A feasibility study commissioned by the Park Authority and undertaken by the James Hutton Institute has suggested that conservation breeding could be a suitable step towards reinforcing the mussel population on the Dee. As pearl mussels take five to ten years to reach maturity, this will form part of a long-term Cairngorms freshwater pearl mussel recovery strategy, allowing time to work alongside land managers and the River Dee Trust to undertake extensive habitat restoration to prepare the River Dee for the adult mussels to be reintroduced.

Due to the sensitivity of freshwater pearl mussel to water quality and river levels, the Proposed Plan will need to ensure that proposed development is unlikely to have any

adverse effects on these factors. This may be judged through the site assessment and Habitats Regulations Appraisal processes. Site assessment may be carried out with regard for NatureScot's standing advice on freshwater pearl mussel for planning applications (updated August 2024) (CNPA321). The level of site related information required to inform the Proposed Plan is less than a planning application (for example, site specific surveys are not required), however the advice's measures to minimise impacts are largely applicable.

The advice states that measures to minimise impacts on freshwater pearl mussels should follow a hierarchy of avoidance and mitigation (there are no tried and tested compensatory / enhancement measures for offsetting impacts on freshwater pearl mussels):

- Avoidance
  - Design the development and construction methods to avoid impacts on freshwater pearl mussels.
  - Avoid crossing through any watercourses close to a freshwater pearl mussel bed, or, where unavoidable, constructing temporary bridges.
  - Maintain natural water levels in areas occupied by freshwater pearl mussels.
- Mitigation
  - Manage site drainage using appropriately sized settlement ponds and/or silt traps to avoid direct entry into watercourses.
  - Treat appropriately any discharge arising from the development.
  - Create buffer strips along watercourses to exclude construction work or vehicle movements.
  - Lay down protective matting across any damp ground likely to be churned up by vehicle movements, and avoid carrying out any works resulting in ground disturbance during or immediately following wet weather.
  - Put sediment trapping barriers in place, such as bunds or dams, to prevent any sediment entering watercourses.
  - Brush roads regularly to keep free of dust and mud.
  - Store chemicals and fuels in a safe place.
  - Minimise the amount of topsoil stripped or stockpiled at any one time.

In accordance with the hierarchy, the primary aim of the Proposed Plan will be avoidance. It is also possible that the local development plan may support the population within the National Park, through its support for nature networks.

Further matters relating to water management, including overall water quality, natural flood management, and infrastructure capacity are covered in Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management.

Aspen

Aspen trees are a key component of natural boreal forests and support a number of rare species such as the aspen hoverfly. Aspen is threatened by development and changes in land use and as such has been identified as a priority species within the National Park.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with aspen (Table 27).

Table 27 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for aspen (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Manage and improve conditions of key sites. Improve connectivity. Create new aspen stands and develop a Deeside Aspen Management Plan. 2019 species recovery curve position: R1	Species recovery curve position: R3	Survey work and mapping undertaken to identify extent of aspen woodland. Targeted management at priority sites ongoing. Aspen Officer in post to develop strategic aspen network plan. Progressed from R1 to R3.

The survey and mapping work undertaken for the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (Figure 77) indicates that while fragmentary, there may be opportunities to improve connectivity between aspen stands. The local development plan may support this, for example, through its use in landscaping and biodiversity enhancement schemes associated with development. Furthermore, the local development plan may also support the species within the National Park through its support for nature networks.

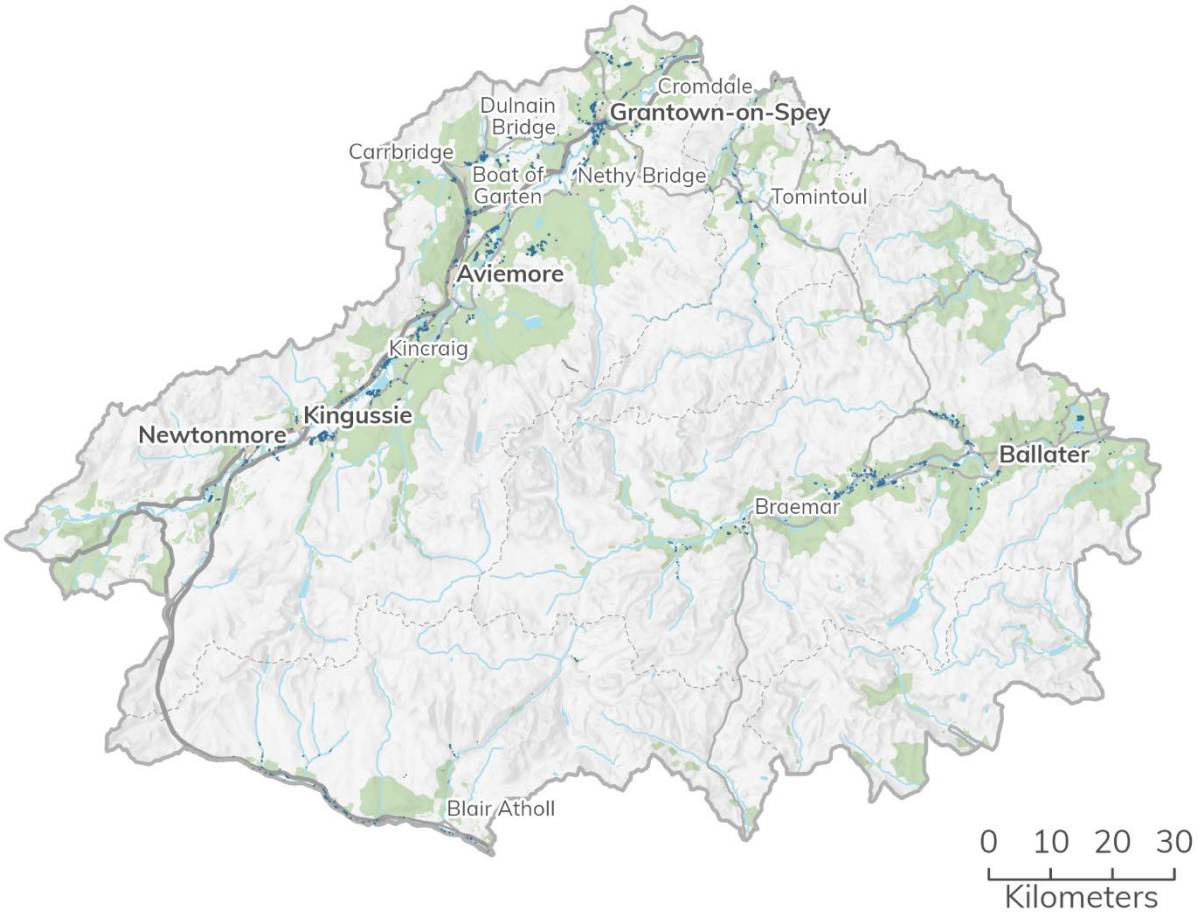

Figure 77 Aspen stands in the Cairngorms National Park identified in survey work published in 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Cairngorms National Park Authority 2026.

Twinflower

The twinflower's natural habitat is native woodland and is found within the National Park predominantly in its ancient Caledonian forests (Figure 78) (CNPA304). Actions proposed by the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan include translocations of the twinflower into sites across the National Park and over 900 cuttings are being planted across the National Park area in 2023.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with twinflower (Table 28).

Table 28 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for twinflower (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Monitor existing populations. Provide advice and support for land managers. Identify translocation sites in the National Park. 2019 species recovery curve position: T2	Species recovery position: T3	The Cairngorms Rare Plants and Wild Connections Project, along with work from many landholders and support from the Scottish Twinflower group enabled delivery of all actions. Target exceeded. Recovery curve position progressed from T2 to R3.

Twinflower are at risk from habitat loss, fragmentation and changes in land use. National Planning Framework 4 sets a strong basis for resisting habitat loss, including woodland habitats, from development while the local development plan may support the pollination and spread of twinflower in the long term through its support for nature networks.

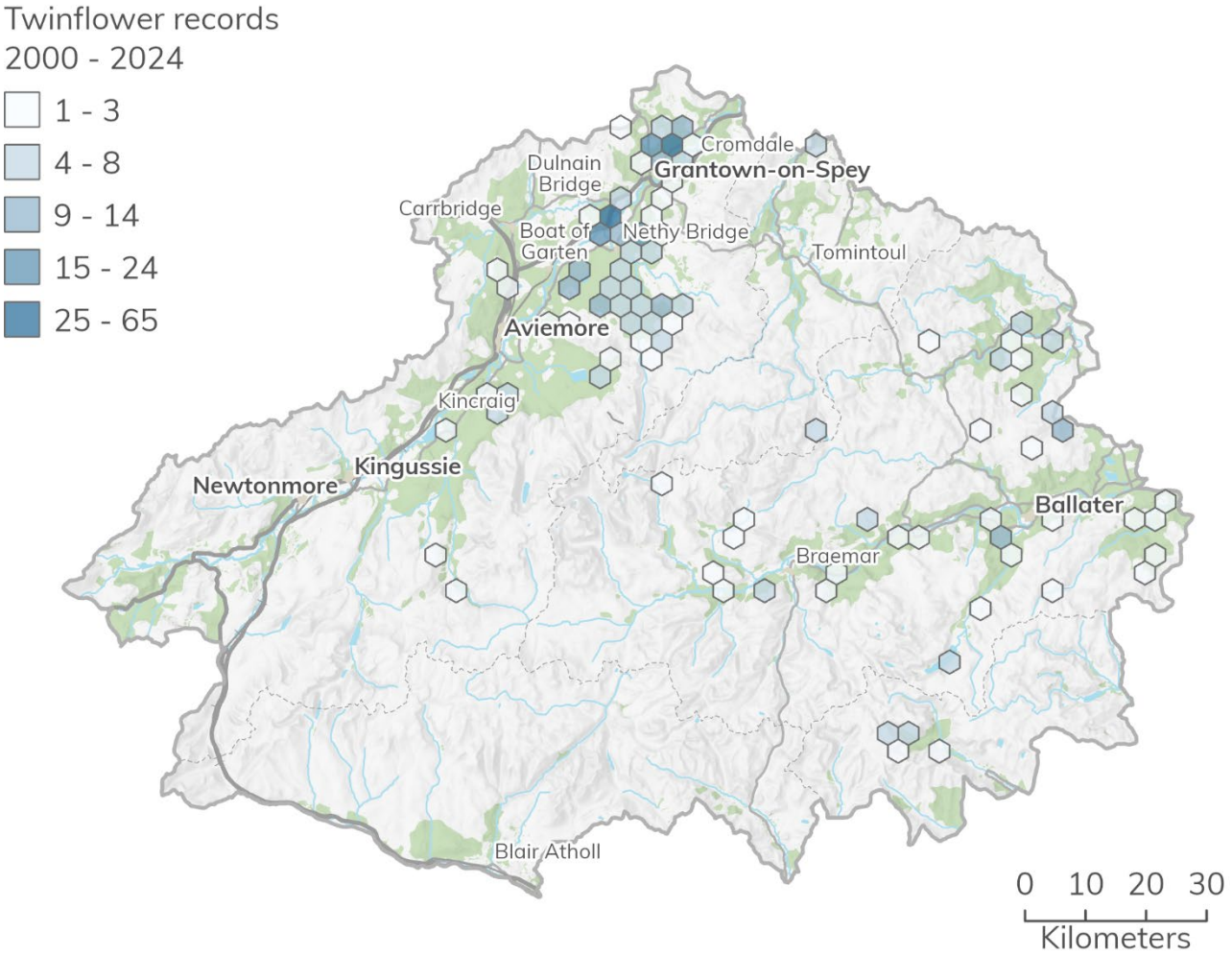

Figure 78 Twinflower records 2000 – 2024 in the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA304). Note many record locations are imprecise and may not relate exactly to the location on the map. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © National Biodiversity Network 2026.

Waxcaps

Waxcaps are found in nutrient poor grasslands and are recognised as being excellent indicators of the conservation value of this habitat. Despite efforts by the Park Authority, Plantlife Scotland, NatureScot and landholders to improve data availability, grassland fungi and waxcap grasslands are under recorded. No comprehensive survey works identifying waxcap grasslands have been undertaken within the National Park boundary but they are identified as a priority species within the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Grassland mapping of unimproved grasslands to find species-rich grassland has taken place for Livet / Avon, Deeside and Badenoch and Strathspey and this data could be used to narrow down the search for waxcap grasslands and help understand the main threats to unimproved grasslands in general.

Figure 79 provides information on the records held by the Grassland Fungi Mapping Database for Scotland (CNPA322 and CNPA323). This database and mapping tool aims to highlight areas of fungal interest so that areas with high diversity and threatened species can be avoided early on in the planning process. The database contains information on 294 sites in the Cairngorms National Park, according to which Duackbridge by Nethy Bridge is the top site for fairy clubs in Scotland with 11 species and Morrone by Braemar is the top site for grassland Entolomataceae in Scotland with 36 species. The sites have been given a Red / Amber / Green (RAG) score according to the following criteria:

- Red: Any site passing any of the Site of Special Scientific Interest thresholds.
- Amber: Any site not passing any of the Site of Special Scientific Interest thresholds but with more than 11 species of Hygrocybe s.l. or with more than 4 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) species or with more than 4 indicator species.
- Green: Any other site that has records of grassland fungi.

Detailed information on waxcap sites within the Cairngorms National Park may be found in Waxcap Survey Work 2024: Report to the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA324):

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/CNPA324-Report-CNPA-Waxcap-Survey-Work-2024.pdf

Waxcaps are at risk from grazing pressure (too high or too low), fertiliser input, ploughing / re-seeding, changing land use and development as they are predominately found in grasslands, including those in close proximity to settlements that may be suitable for development. This will need to be considered through the site assessment process. Furthermore, the local development plan may support species of waxcap present within the National Park, through its support for nature networks, particularly through the protection and creation of managed lowland grasslands.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 Final Report (CNPA254) highlights the achievements of the Action Plan (CNPA253) associated with waxcaps (Table 29).

Table 29 Achievement against Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 – 2024 actions and targets for waxcaps (CNPA254).

Actions	Target	Progress and overall status
Monitor existing populations. Provide advice and support for land managers. 2019 species recovery curve position: D3	Species recovery curve position: T2	The Cairngorms Wild Plants Project enabled delivery of all relevant actions. Recovery curve position progressed from D3 to T2 with work ongoing.

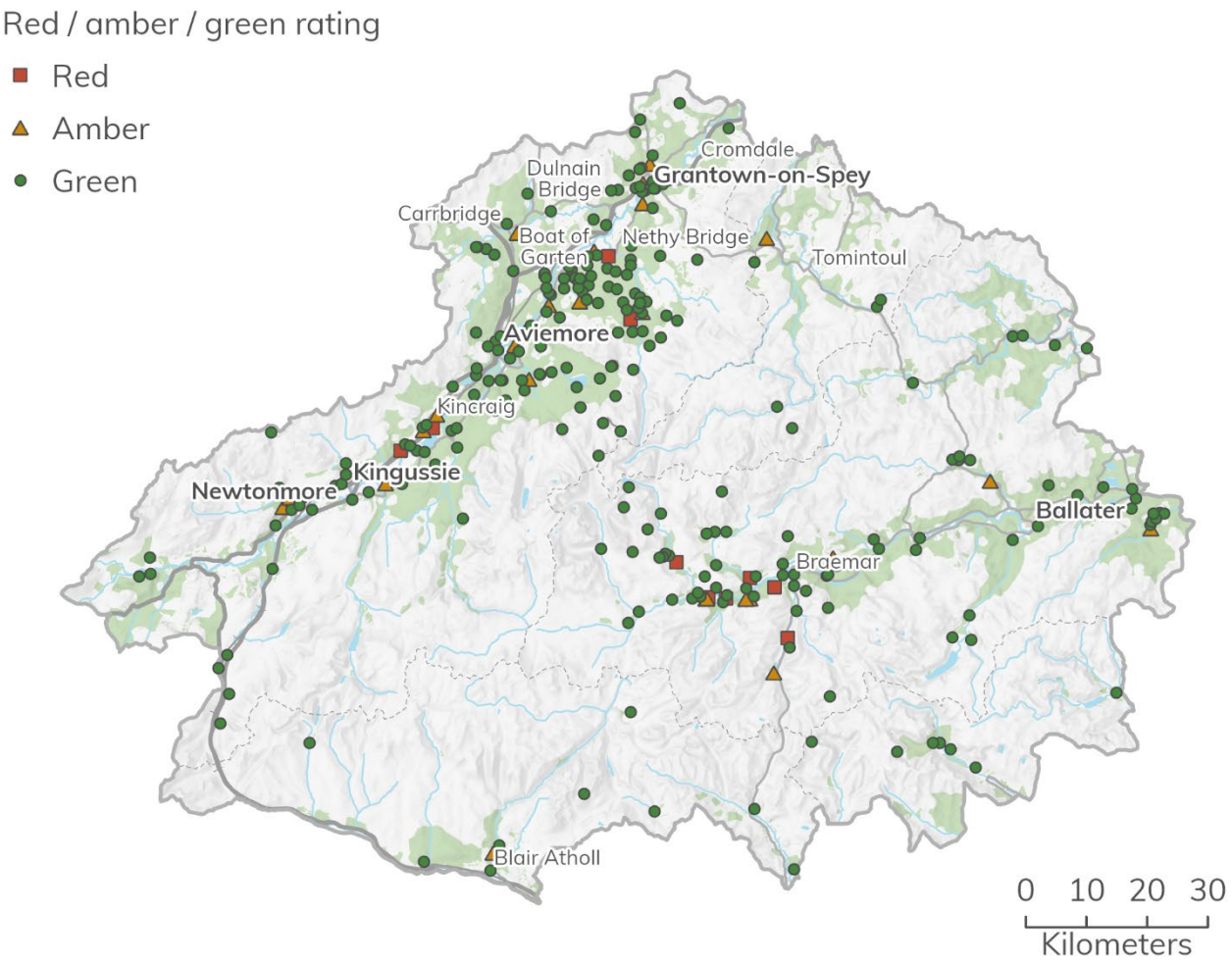

Figure 79 Waxcap sites in the Cairngorms National Park recoded on the Grassland Fungi Mapping Database for Scotland (CNPA322 and CNPA323). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © NatureScot 2026.

Cross cutting matters

Biosecurity

The spread and control of invasive non-native species, pathogens and disease affects a wide range environment-based economic activities, including fishing, farming and forestry and is a key issue for conservation of biodiversity.

Non-native species can kill, harbour disease, or compete with native species. A number have been recorded in the National Park, including:

- Japanese knotweed (Fallopia japonica).
- Giant hogweed (Heracleum mantegiazzanum).
- Himalayan balsam (Impatiens glandulifera).
- American Skunk Cabbage (Lysichiton americanus).
- American Mink (Mustela vison).
- Grey Squirrel (Sciurus carolinensis).
- Rudd (Scardinius erythrophthalmus).
- Roach (Rutilus rutilus).
- Tench (Tinca tinca)
- Golden orfe (Leuciscus idus).
- Bream (Abramis brama).

The Park Authority is a partner in the Scottish Mink Initiative which aims to have river catchments within the Cairngorms (and throughout Scotland) free from mink to enhance water vole and ground nesting bird populations. The Park Authority also supports the Cairngorms non-native fish project to stop the deliberate or accidental release of non-native fish into the Dee or Spey catchments.

Pathogens can cause death or reduce viability of populations which has great implications for habitat connectivity.

Red band needle blight (also known as Dothistroma Needle Blight) is a fungus which causes the premature loss of pine needles. Currently in the National Park planting of Scots Pine next to existing stands is discouraged which could have long term impacts on woodland structure and species composition.

Ash die back or Chalara (Hymenoecyphus fraxineus) is a fungus causing dieback and mortality in Ash trees. In 2023, records show it within the Badenoch and Strathspey area of the National Park (Figure 80) (CNPA325).

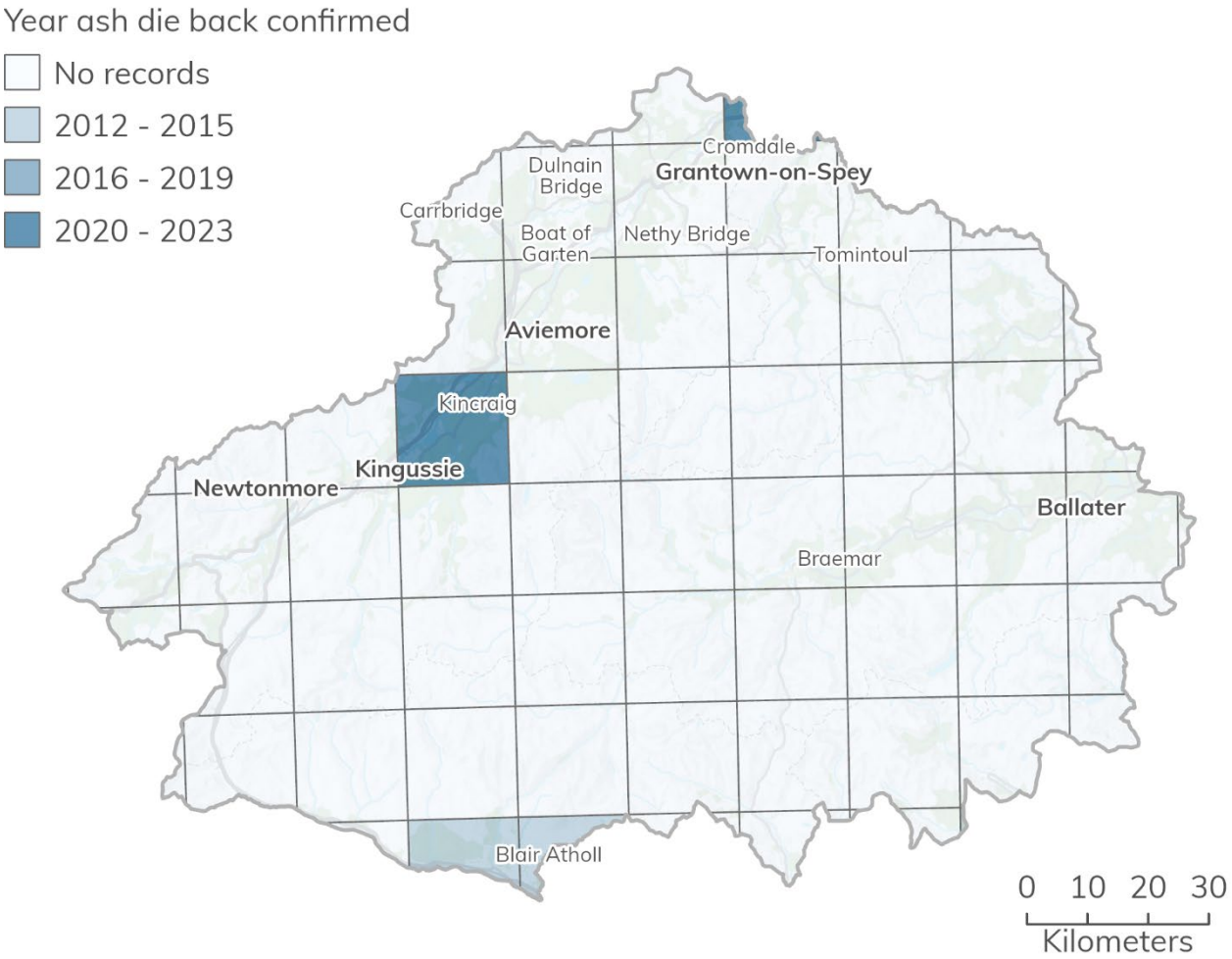

Figure 80 Ash dieback confirmed infection areas by 10km^2 grid (CNPA325). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Forestry Commission 2026.

Phytophthora ramorum is a fungal disease of Larch, the highest incidence is in the south west of Scotland but it has been recorded on the southern and eastern fringes of the National Park between 2016 and 2022 (Figure 81) (CNPA326).

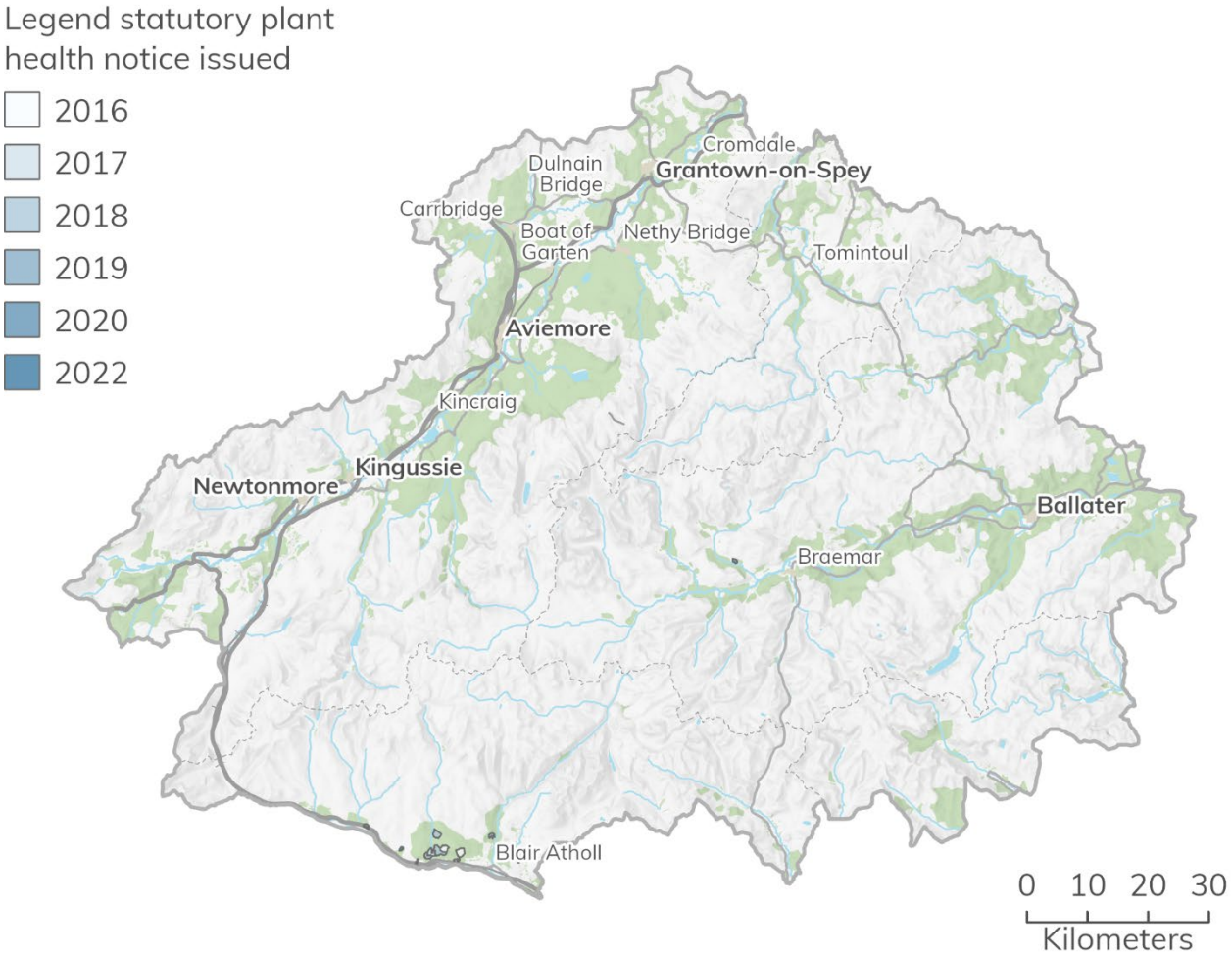

Figure 81 Statutory Plant Health Notices issued to address Phytophthora ramorum (CNPA326). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Scottish Forestry 2026.

Phytophthora austrocedraeon is a fungus which causes dieback and mortality in Juniper when it attacks the roots and stems, it has been found within the Cairngorms National Park and is thought to be transmitted to new areas through movement of sheep (CNPA327).

The available data allows action to be taken on local problem areas but does not provide a systematic survey of invasive non-native species or the occurrence of pathogens and disease. It is clear however from data collected that problems are increasing. Prevention of spread is essential as control is very costly and requires long-term action. For development, control and prevention of spread of invasives, pathogens diseases is associated with specific design and implementation and is unlikely to have an influence on the site selection criteria or spatial strategy for the Proposed Plan. Invasive non-native species, pathogens and disease are therefore not considered further in this report.

Climate change

Climate change projections are covered in Schedule 4: Climate change. However, it is also important to note that within the context of natural heritage, climate change is likely to create a need for species to move northward in their bid to find their 'climate envelope'. It is recognised that the local development plan facilitates this movement, through its support for nature networks (see page 193), which may help species move to a more favourable climate space.

Nature networks

The National Park Authority is currently developing its approach to nature networks. One of the desired functions of the Cairngorms National Park Nature Network is for it to integrate with the Cairngorms Nature Index (CNPA374). The Cairngorms Nature Index has recently been developed as a method of baselining ecosystem health in the National Park and subsequently measuring trends in its condition over time. The Cairngorms Nature Index works with six broad ecosystem types:

- Woodlands
- Freshwater
- Mires and wetlands
- Managed lowland grasslands
- Managed uplands
- Montane.

The delivery of the nature will include improving already existing networks and the creation of new networks and will carefully link with current National Park's conservation aims. Monitoring of the delivery and success of these Nature Networks will be done through the Cairngorms Nature Index.

This approach to identifying a Cairngorms Nature Network is set out in the following document prepared to support the Evidence Report (CNPA330):

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/CNPA330-Identifying-a-Cairngorms-Nature-Network.pdf

The Cairngorms National Park Nature Network is being developed concurrently and in association with the preparation of the next Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Further engagement on draft Nature Network will take part as part of the consultation on the draft Action Plan in late 2025 / early 2026. The final Action Plan is programmed to be

published in April 2026. Therefore, the timescales for the identification of the Cairngorms Nature Network aligns with timescales for the preparation of the Proposed Plan and it will be possible to identify and take account of the network within the Proposed Plan's spatial strategy. The local development plan will seek to support the enhancement the Nature Network and protect it from fragmentation caused by potential development.

Evidence gaps

There are no identified evidence gaps in this schedule.

Summary of stakeholder engagement

Early online public engagement carried out from 9 August – 9 October 2023. Natural heritage did not feature as a theme. Comments were received highlighting the importance of the area's natural heritage, with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds offering comments that focused on four main themes (CNPA026):

- Nature Networks – that the National Park Authority can work with the underpinning Local Authorities to create a system of habitats to support species. Development should be used as a mechanism to facilitate nature recovery by enhancing habitats, creating habitat connections and stepping-stones for species.
- Nature Recover and 30 x 30 – support for the National Park Partnership Plan's ambitious targets for ecosystem restoration of 50% land managed and would like to see nature recovery and enhancement over and above the Scottish Government commitment of 30% by 2030.
- Biodiversity Enhancement – the Cairngorms Local Development Plan has the potential to play a critical role in connecting biodiversity enhancement with the wider planning system, for both nature networks and communities. Suggestions for further guidance from the Park Authority on area-specific biodiversity enhancement are requested to support delivery.
- Capercaillie – from the 2022 survey, the significantly low Capercaillie populations are of particular concern. The National Park plays host to 85% of this population and as such policies and land allocations should reflect this situation as a priority and ensure ongoing protection for the species.

These comments were considered in the drafting of this schedule.

Early engagement on the draft of the schedule was undertaken with NatureScot (CNPA600) and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (CNPA1080) and their comments were incorporated prior to undertaking broader public engagement.

Engagement with children and young people highlighted the National Park's high quality natural environment as a positive contributor the area's sense of identity and the health of its population. (CNPA027, CNPA058, CNPA681, CNPA682, CNPA683, CNPA833, CNPA834 and CNPA835).

Engagement using the Planning Power game showed that participants supported policies that restricted fragmentation of ecosystems, promoted woodland expansion, protected peatlands, and restored rivers. Several groups mentioned the need to create ecological corridors and reverse habitat degradation. Players across multiple groups emphasised that protecting biodiversity is central to the identity and natural appeal of the area, linking it tourism and highlighting its role in attracting visitors and maintaining the area's global image (CNPA1104 and CNPA1105).

Public engagement on this schedule (see CNPA1345 for engagement version) was carried out from 4 June – 11 July 2025. Eight completed responses were received (CNPA1340). Following the public engagement, further direct engagement was carried out with Scottish Environment Protection Agency (CNPA601) and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds agree changes to the schedule based on their comments (CNPA602).

Summary of implications for Proposed Plan

Based on the available evidence and engagement with key agencies and other interested parties, the Park Authority consider this schedule to provide a sufficient evidence base on which to prepare the Proposed Plan.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all public bodies in Scotland, including the Cairngorms National Park Authority, to further the conservation of biodiversity. The local development plan may play a key role in meeting this duty.

The Proposed Plan needs to be prepared in accordance with:

- The four aims of the National Park as set out in The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000), in particular the first aim 'to conserve and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage' and the second aim 'to promote sustainable management and use of the area's natural resources'.
- Section 9(6) of the 2000 Act, which states that while the aims are to be pursued collectively, if there is conflict between the first aim and any of the others, greater weight is given to the first aim.

- The spatial strategy and principles of National Planning Framework 4.

The Proposed Plan should seek to:

- Safeguard the habitats and species protected by international designations, including Ramsar sites, from the potentially adverse effects of development through the site assessment, Habitats Regulations Appraisal and Strategic Environment Assessment process.
- Safeguard national, regional and local designations from the potentially adverse effects of development through the site assessment and Strategic Environment Assessment process.
- Make the most efficient use of development land to ensure that development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Not only is this to ensure that protected sites are safeguarded, but it also aims to ensure that development land is available in the future to meet long term needs.
- Safeguard the ecological status of surface waterbodies in the Cairngorms National Park. This may be achieved through the site assessment, Habitats Regulations Appraisal and Strategic Environment Assessment process.
- Support Scottish Government's 30 by 30 ambitions.
- Support the National Park Partnership Plan 2022 ambitions for 50% of the National Park to me managed for ecosystem restoration by 2045.
- Support projects and developments that support sustainable access and recreational use of international, national and non-statutory sites.
- Safeguard Annex I habitats and Scottish Biodiversity List habitats in the development of its spatial strategy and assessment of sites for allocation, following National Planning Framework 4's mitigation hierarchy.
- Safeguard Annex II, Schedule 2, Schedule 3 and Schedule 4 and Scottish Biodiversity List species in the development of its spatial strategy and assessment of sites for allocation, following the National Planning Framework 4's mitigation hierarchy.
- Safeguard badgers and badger setts in the assessment of land suable for development allocations, following National Planning Framework 4's mitigation hierarchy.
- Support the delivery of the next Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.
- Support the delivery of the Capercaillie Emergency Plan (CNPA313 and CNPA314).
- Support the delivery of community action plan and local place plan priorities and actions through the placemaking process.
- Adopt the Cairngorms Nature Index (CNPA274) as a tool to measure ecosystem health in the National Park.

- Contribute to establishing nature networks according to the approach set out in the supporting document 'Identifying a Cairngorms Nature Network'[50] (CNPA330), to help protect and restore the biodiversity, ecosystems and natural processes of the National Park. This may be achieved through measures such as:
  - Protecting priority habitats.
  - Ensuring allocated sites and windfall developments do not break the connectivity of priority habitats.
  - Ensuring biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures contribute towards the connectivity of habitats.
  - Directing biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures towards delivering the aims and outcomes of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.
- Informed by the National Park Partnership Plan and Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy 2018 and approach to establishing nature networks, identify and protect existing woodland and trees in the National Park and identify potential to enhance / expand to avoid habitat fragmentation and improve ecological connectivity.
- Set out proposals for forestry, woodlands and trees in its spatial strategy, as supported by the National Park Partnership Plan and Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy 2018 (CNPA255).
- Require all forestry-related activity to meet the UK Forest Standard.
- Integrate forestry policy delivery mechanisms such as the Forestry Grant Scheme and Woodland Carbon Code.
- Promote 'designing with nature' and providing nature-based solutions to the provision of open space and infrastructure within new developments.
- Support development proposals where biodiversity loss is reversed and enhanced, along with the restoration of degraded habitats where relevant.
- Support development proposals that demonstrate the intention to provide long-term positive effects for biodiversity over and above those found on the undeveloped site.

Statements of agreement

The following people / organisations agree that the evidence presented is sufficient to inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan:

- Historic Environment Scotland (C002)
- NatureScot (C004)
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (C010)
- Atholl Estates (C031)

[50] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/CNPA330-Identifying-a-Cairngorms-Nature-Network.pdf

- Ann Miles (C068)

NatureScot (C004)

NatureScot are satisfied that their recommendations provided prior to public engagement on the topic have been implemented. However, they requested a further addition at the public engagement stage, which related to the impacts of climate change on species migration.

Park Authority response
The Park Authority agrees that this is a proportionate addition to the evidence base.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency (C010)

Scottish Environment Protection Agency (CNPA1080) request that in line with their Planning Advice Note (CNPA295) on achieving sufficiency of evidence, that the following water environment related evidence to be used, where relevant, to help identify and enhance nature:

- Recommended riparian corridor layer.
- Geomorphic risk layer.
- Riparian vegetation enhancement opportunities.
- Scottish Wetland Inventory layer.
- Obstacles to fish migration.
- Water Environment Fund projects – existing and proposed.
- Natural flood management maps.
- Outputs of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Park Authority response
The Park Authority considered a range of data sets in the development of its approach to nature networks, including the data sets requested by Scottish Environment Protection Agency. The Park Authority's approach to identifying nature networks is ecosystem led and the matters covered by Scottish Environment Protection Agency's datasets are covered through the habitat and water quality datasets set out within the approach. For example, riparian woodland creation opportunities fall within woodland expansion data and obstacles for fish migration and geomorphic risk are covered within the water quality data.

The Scottish Wetland Inventory layer is considered to be too broad for the purposes of identifying the freshwater nature network, however, there is considerable overlap between it and the data sets used.

There are only two existing and proposed Water Environment Fund projects in the National Park and these are minor in scale. They are not considered to be useful in identifying nature networks within the context of the National Park.

Natural flood management maps and outputs from the strategic flood risk assessment do not fit within the ecological approach, because they are opportunities for intervention and indicators of risk, whereas the approach to nature networks is led by ecological connectivity and site / watercourse condition. However, it is recognised that nature networks are likely to support natural flood management techniques, help build resilience against flooding and the natural flood management data may be used to help identify priorities.

The Park Authority does however agree that these datasets are of use for the overall preparation of the local development plan, and have therefore ensured that they are all included within the evidence base. Data from the Recommended riparian corridor layer, Riparian vegetation enhancement opportunities layer, Scottish Wetland Inventory layer, Obstacles to fish migration layer and Water Environment Fund have been added to Schedule 19: Natural heritage.

Natural flood management maps, which are included among the outputs of the Cairngorms National Park Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024, are summarised within Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management. Data on geomorphic risk is also presented in that schedule.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency have confirmed that they are content with the additions and response and that they consider that the evidence on nature networks is sufficient (CNPA601).

Scottish Forestry (C011)

Scottish Forestry requested that evidence be sought from (CNPA1081):

- Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (2009), which establishes a presumption against woodland removal unless there is demonstrable public benefit.
- The UK Forestry Standard (2023), which defines sustainable forestry in Scotland.
- Forest Habitat Networks Scotland.
- Developing Native Woodland Habitat Networks guidance.

Scottish Forestry also request the following additions to the implications for the Proposed Plan:

- To be more explicit that the spatial strategy for woodlands is provided by the Cairngorms Park Forest Strategy 2018.
- Require all forestry-related activity to meet the UK Forest Standard.
- Integrate forestry policy delivery mechanisms such as the Forestry Grant Scheme and Woodland Carbon Code.

Park Authority response

The Park Authority agree that these requests are proportionate and should be added to the evidence report.

The Park Authority also agree to amending the Nature Networks supporting document to place greater emphasis on promoting catchment-scale thinking and cross boundary connectivity beyond the National Park boundary, as suggested by Scottish Forestry.

Scottish Forestry have confirmed that they are happy with this approach and with the sufficiency of the data.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (C053)

While stating that they generally agreeing with the sufficiency of the evidence, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds requested that a number of additional sources / datasets and strategies be included to gain full sufficiency. The Park Authority agree that it is proportionate to include the following additions, either within the natural heritage section of the evidence report, or within the blue and green infrastructure section:

- Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust – Important Invertebrate areas.
- Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017 – 2027.
- Cairngorms National Park Pollinator Strategy, which while not published, may be referenced as something that will be available for the preparation of the Proposed Plan.
- Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust – B-Lines map.
- Black grouse study group data for Deeside and Strathspey.
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds updated wader density maps.
- NatureScot Commissioned Report 193 – A conservation framework for the golden eagle implications for the conservation and management of golden eagles in Scotland.

- Joint Nature Conservation Committee Report No: 441 A Conservation Framework for Hen Harriers in the United Kingdom.
- NatureScot Commissioned Report 982 – Analyses of the fates of satellite tracked golden eagles in Scotland.
- Cairngorms National Park Peregrine report 2025
- NatureScot Guidance Note: Implications of Additional Protection for Hen Harrier, Red Kite and Golden Eagle under Schedules A1 & 1A of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).
- National Trust of Scotland reserves.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds state also that NatureScot has recently undertaken Site Condition Monitoring for capercaillie Special Protection Areas, and the updated assessments should be included in the evidence report. However, at the time of writing the data from this was not yet publicly available and therefore cannot be included within the evidence report. However, when preparing the Proposed Plan, the latest available data will be used, including for site condition reporting.

An updated Capercaillie Lek Report can be provided although it would be more appropriate to refer to CaperMap which is updated with sightings, signs, and broods as well as lek data and will be used to inform mapping of capercaillie sensitivities, this may provide an updated version of Figure 55.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds also stated that they agreed with the majority of the implications within evidence report, with the exception of a number of areas. Those which the Park Authority agree may be included within the evidence report are:

- The potential for development to negatively affect pine hoverfly.
- The potential for development to negatively affect small scabious mining bee.
- That, with regard to aspen hoverfly, the short and longer-term impacts of development relate to management of mature aspen stands, creation, and protection of dead wood.
- That the Scottish Government's position statement on Ramsar sites should be referenced (this was not published when this section of the evidence report was engaged upon).

Park authority response

The Park Authority agree that these are proportional additions to the evidence report, with the exception of the black grouse study, because black grouse are not a priority

species. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds are in agreement with this (CNPA1014).

The Park Authority have also included further detail to the implications for nature networks, to address the Royal Society for the Protection of Bird's comments on these matters.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds also note that Table 8 does not contain a list of Scottish Biodiversity List terrestrial species within the National Park, despite the text indicating that it does. This was an error and has been corrected with the addition of Table 9. The data on the Scottish Biodiversity List has also been updated to reflect the new list, which was published in November 2025.

Peter Sibley (C052)

Peter Sibley made a number of comments about the lack of information about water infrastructure, including the need to reduce demand on water consumption and encouraging more grey water solutions.

Park Authority response

The Park Authority agree these matters should be considerations in the preparation of the Proposed Plan. They are covered in Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management.

Statements of dispute

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (C053)

While the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds agree that the evidence presented in the evidence report correctly identifies the characteristics of the Cairngorms National Park and welcome the strong link to the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, they do not agree with the timeframes used in the maps of species records. They specifically request that the following maps be amended:

- Capercaillie records 1810 – 2020.
- Curlew records 1810 – 2020.
- Golden eagle records 1900 – 2020.
- Hen harrier records 1900 – 2020.
- Merlin records 1900 – 2023.
- Peregrine falcon records 1900 – 2022.

They argue that this is because the wide timeframes show species to be more widespread than they currently are, which may provide context for how widespread these species can / should be but cannot be used to inform the local development plan. They also state that the metadata is not well defined (i.e. is it breeding sites, sightings etc).

They also request the addition of a map of Important Bird Areas.

Park Authority response

The Park Authority understand the Royal Society for the Protection of Bird's concern, particularly with regard to capercaillie, as the maps may be interpreted as showing species as fairly widespread across the National Park. However, the argument for including the full datasets (including the older records) is equally valid. The Park Authority therefore disagree with these points for the following reasons:

- The evidence report is intended to be a summary of the data required to prepare the Proposed Plan. The information presented summarises the extent of record data available for these species. It is not a requirement to present data precisely as it will be used to prepare the Proposed Plan as this, considered across the whole evidence report, would not be proportionate.
- The data presented in these maps (including meta data) is available to officers at a more granular level, and it is this that may be drawn upon to carry out assessments such as the Strategic Environment Assessment and Habitats Regulations Appraisal. This data may therefore be used to show the current extent of species.
- Having data on the historic extent of species is useful as it shows the maximum known range of these species, and therefore could be used as grounds for conservation / reintroduction projects. It may therefore inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan, for example by informing proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, which could create habitat that reestablishes connectivity and enables species to repopulate areas that they have previously retreated from.

The Park Authority does not therefore agree with the changes to species record maps proposed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

The Park Authority also does not agree that a map of Important Bird Areas is needed in the Evidence Report. This is because the data does not provide any information that would aid the preparation of the Proposed Plan beyond the information already identified within the evidence report

It should be noted that the consideration of proportionality does not diminish the importance of species in their own right and they, along with other species protected by legislation and / or sites, will be considered in the site assessment process, Habitats Regulations Appraisal process and Strategic Environmental Assessment process, to ensure the local development plan meets its legal obligations.