



Cairngorms
National Park Authority
Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh

Liveable places

Schedule 20: Digital infrastructure

Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan: Evidence Report

March 2026





Schedule 20: Digital infrastructure

March 2026

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Requirements addressed in this schedule

Table 1 Information required by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended (CNPA003), regarding the issues 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)(d)	The infrastructure of the district (including communications, transport and drainage systems, systems for the supply of water and energy, and health care and education facilities).
Section 15(5)(e)	How that infrastructure is used.
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— <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. The National Planning Framework andii. 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 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).



Links to evidence

International documents

- CNPA002 - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Legislation

- CNPA003 - Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997
- CNPA004 - National Park (Scotland) Act 2000
- CNPA634 - Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill as passed
- CNPA1231 - Communications Act 2003
- CNPA1232 - Digital Economy Act 2017
- CNPA1233 - Electronic Communications (Broadband) (Universal Service) Order 2018 (SI 2018/445) (The Universal Service Order)

National documents

- CNPA008 - National Planning Framework 4
- 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
- CNPA107 - A National Mission with Local Impact: Infrastructure Investment Plan for Scotland 2021 – 2022 to 2025 – 2026
- CNPA156 - A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world
- CNPA157 - Digital telecommunications: planning guidance
- CNPA158 - Connected Growth: Manual for Places – Digital Infrastructure
- CNPA159 - The Universal Service Obligation (USO) for Broadband
- CNPA163 - Rural mobile coverage in the UK: Not-spots and partial not-spots
- CNPA164 - Digital progress in local government
- CNPA171 - Scotland's Full Fibre Charter
- CNPA172 - Scottish 4G Infill Programme: Location Map of Programme sites
- CNPA480 - UK Government: Update on Shared Rural Network total not-spots project
- CNPA1234 - House of Commons Library. The Universal Service Obligation (USO) for Broadband
- CNPA1235 - Scottish Government: Digital strategy for Scotland: vision statement
- CNPA1240 - UK Government: Project Gigabit guidance



- CNPA1241 - UK Government: Project Gigabit framework agreement – Openreach

National Park Authority documents

- CNPA010 - Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022 - 2027
- CNPA027 - Cairngorms Youth Action Team Place Standard Tool Engagement 2024
- CNPA028 - Cairngorms National Park Gypsy / Traveller Engagement Report 2024
- CNPA058 - Grantown Grammar School Place Standard Tool Engagement 2024
- 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
- CNPA836 - Highland Council Place Planning engagement - Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey 2025
- CNPA1360 - Topic: Digital infrastructure - engagement version

Local authority documents

- CNPA165 - Digital Perth and Kinross
- CNPA166 - Perth and Kinross: Economic Wellbeing Plan 2020 – 2028
- CNPA167 - Angus Council Digital Strategy
- CNPA168 - Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy 2020-2025
- CNPA170 - The Highland Council: Digital Strategy
- CNPA636 - Aberdeenshire Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017 – 2027 (website)
- CNPA237 - Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee Item 6: Badenoch and Strathspey Area Plan
- CNPA637 - Angus Community Plan 2022 – 2030
- CNPA638 - 2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan



- CNPA639 - Moray Local Outcomes Improvement Plan v2
- CNPA640 - Perth and Kinross Community Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) 2022 – 2032
- CNPA1091 – 2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan – Delivery Plan
- CNPA1236 - Moray Council Digital Strategy and Plan 2025 - 2028

Community action plans

- CNPA063 - Aviemore, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA064 - Blair Athol Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA065 - Grantown-on-Spey Community Action Plan 2025
- CNPA066 - Kingussie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA119 - Ballater and Crathie Community Action Plan 2023
- CNPA121 - Braemar Community Action Plan
- CNPA122 - Carrbridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA123 - Cromdale and Advie Community action Plan
- CNPA125 - Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA127 - Kincaig and locality Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA129 - Laggan Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA130 - Mount Blair Community Action Plan
- CNPA131 - Nethy Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA132 - Newtonmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA133 - Strathdon Community Action Plan 2025
- CNPA331 - Dulnain Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA374 - Boat of Garten Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Other relevant documents

- CNPA983 - Connected Nations 2022 Annex 1: Methodology
- CNPA984 – The future of fixed telephone services - Policy positioning statement
- CNPA985 – Public Switched Telephone Network charter
- CNPA986 – UK transition from analogue to digital landlines
- CNPA987 – Network Operator Charter
- CNPA1237 - Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme: Registered suppliers
- CNPA1238 - Ofcom Connected Nations Scotland Report 2025



Data sources

- CNPA162 - Shared Rural Network
- CNPA173 - Ofcom Research, statistics and data
- CNPA174 - Cellmapper
- CNPA988 – Our Full Fibre Broadband Build Plans
- CNPA989 – Cairngorm Broadband
- CNPA990 – Highland Broadband
- CNPA1239 - Openreach Full Fibre Broadband Programme Build (2025)
- CNPA1242 - Project Gigabit framework agreement: Scotland Contact Map
- CNPA1243 - Scottish Government Reaching 100%
- CNPA1244 - Scottish 4G infill programme: progress update
- CNPA1245 - Shared Rural Network: Forecast Coverage Improvements by Region

Consultation material

- CNPA1340 - Evidence report engagement responses
- CNPA1415 - Aviemore and Vicinity Community Council response - Digital infrastructure

Summary of evidence

Policy context

National Planning Framework 4

National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008) sets out the national spatial strategy for Scotland. Its focus on the three main policy themes of sustainable, liveable and productive places aligns with Scotland's aim of delivering on the United Nations Sustainable Goals (CNPA002). National Planning Framework 4 aims to deliver an infrastructure first approach to land use planning.

Policy 24 covers Digital infrastructure. Policy 24 sets out the criteria upon which development proposals will be supported, this includes development which:

- Incorporates appropriate future proofed digital infrastructure.
- Delivers new digital services or provide technological improvements, particularly in areas with no or low connectivity capacity.
- Includes proposals which are clearly aligned to the delivery of local or national programmes for the roll out of digital infrastructure.



- Delivers new connectivity where there are benefits for communities and the local economy.

Policy 24 further states that development will only be supported where:

- The visual and amenity impacts have been minimised through careful siting, design, height, materials and landscaping, taking into account cumulative impacts and relevant technical constraints.
- It has been demonstrated that before erecting a new ground based mast the possibility of erecting antennas on an existing building, mast or other structure, replacing an existing mast and / or site sharing has been explored.
- There is no physical obstruction to aerodrome operations, technical sites or existing transmitter / receiver facilities.

National Planning Framework 4 has designated the 'Digital Fibre Network' as a national development to support the continued roll out of world class broadband across Scotland. National Planning Framework 4's spatial strategy refers to this national development as a: 'fundamentally important utility, required to support development, community wellbeing, equal access to goods and services, and emissions reduction from reduced demand for travel'.

The Local Development Plan needs to support the delivery of digital infrastructure in the National Park. This should include supporting improvements in mobile connectivity in areas there they are gaps in connectivity. The Proposed Plan should therefore support new appropriate, universal future proofed digital infrastructure where it will benefit the local community and economy.

Legislation and national documents

National Park (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, the four aims will be amended by the Natural Environment Scotland (Scotland) Bill (CNPA634) once enacted. The aims, once amended through the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill, will be:

- 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).

Infrastructure Investment Plan 2021 – 2022 to 2025 – 2026

The Infrastructure Investment Plan (CNPA107) outlines the strategic approach to delivering Scotland's National Infrastructure Mission to increase economic growth by increasing annual investment in Scotland's infrastructure. In delivering this vision, the Infrastructure Investment Plan focuses on three core strategic themes for guiding investment decisions in Scotland namely:

- Enabling the transition to net zero emissions and environmental sustainability
- Driving inclusive economic growth
- Building resilient and sustainable places.

The second theme addressing Digital Infrastructure; Driving inclusive growth aims to:

- Create a world class digital system
- Strengthen creativity
- Boost competitiveness
- Support long term inclusive and sustainable growth.

A changing nation: how will Scotland thrive in a digital world

This strategy (CNPA156), published in March 2021, sets out Scotland's approach to ensuring services are designed and delivered to meet the needs of the user, to deliver and aid economic recovery, to meet climate change targets and to ensure that people in Scotland have the skills, connectivity and devices required in today's digital climate.

The document aims to embrace three key opportunities: designing and implementing technology in a secure, efficient and user centred way, realising the potential of data to improve services, increase efficiency and deliver better outcomes, and transforming Scotland's culture and the way Scotland works through digital thinking, with its emphasis on openness, networking and agility. It supports the vision (2017) that 'Scotland is recognised throughout the world as a vibrant, inclusive, greener, open and outward looking digital nation'¹

¹ Realising Scotland's full potential in a digital world: a digital strategy for Scotland (2017).



The strategy aims to ensure that geography, background or ability is not a barrier to getting online and benefiting from digital technology, and Scotland capitalises on the potential of digital technology to sustain and invigorate rural and island communities. This includes ensuring that every part of Scotland and every community within it can have access to good quality connectivity now and in the future.

The £25m Scottish 4G infill programme aims to address mobile 'not spots' (areas where no mobile coverage is available) in remote communities across Scotland, from the Scottish Borders to Shetland and Orkney.

Despite telecoms being reserved to the UK Parliament, Scottish Government's £600 million investment through the Reaching 100% (R100) programme aims to deliver future proofed and resilient broadband infrastructure in some of the most rural areas of Scotland, which include some areas within the Cairngorms National Park. The strategy highlights the need and benefits in rural investment in digital infrastructure to Scotland's rural communities.

Digital strategy for Scotland: vision statement

Published in November 2025, the strategic vision (CNPA1235) sets out Scottish Governments ambition to build a nation where digital connects Scotland's people to opportunities, creates economic growth and delivers improved public services. It contributes to public service reform and is a collaboration between the Scottish Government and local government. The vision is a long term goal. In relation to the residents and businesses in the National Park, the vision aims to ensure:

- Everyone has the chance to thrive in the digital world – whether it's staying connected with friends and family, pursuing education, or accessing essential services. Scottish Government are committed to ensuring that no one is left behind; every individual should be empowered to seize all available digital opportunities and enjoy the benefits they bring.
- There is a vibrant tech ecosystem, where businesses work with academia, the public sector and each other to start, scale and expand internationally.

The vision highlights key barrier contributing to digital exclusion is remote and rural living. This is particularly relevant to the context of the National Park. The vision confirms Scottish Governments commitment to expanding access to the internet in Scotland's communities, with a strong focus on reaching rural, remote, and under served areas that face unique connectivity challenges. The Proposed Plan should support



development in the right locations which prevents digital exclusion by means of not having access to adequate broadband and mobile services.

Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018 – 2032: Securing a Green Recovery on a Path to Net Zero

The document (CNPA060) updates the 2018 Climate Change Plan. 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.

As part of the green recovery, Scottish Government are developing its digital communications to maximise the impact of national advice and support schemes to build public awareness and understanding of heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency solutions.

To support the aims to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030 the Update highlights that digital connectivity and flexible working approaches will play a key role. In terms of business specific actions, the Update asks businesses to support employees to reduce the number of flights taken for business purposes and to enable digital connectivity solutions in place of these meetings. These actions rely on reliable and accessible digital infrastructure being in place.

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

The Strategy (CNPA084) sets out a clear ambition: for Scotland to be Nature Positive by 2030, and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045. To deliver the Vision set out in Strategy, Scottish Government have identified a detailed set of Outcomes which help define what success will look like across the land, rivers, lochs and wetlands in the National Park (and across Scotland broadly). The Outcomes set out in the Strategy generally relevant to the National Park are:

- Ecosystems will be diverse, healthy, resilient and deliver a wide range of ecosystem services.
- Protected areas will be larger, better connected and in good condition.
- The abundance and distribution of species will have recovered and there will be no loss of diversity within species.



- Scotland's internationally important species will have increased in numbers and have healthy resilient populations.
- Natural capital will be embedded in policy making.
- Nature based solutions, such as tree planting, peatland and blue carbon habitat restoration, will be central to Scottish Government's efforts to deliver NetZero and adapt to climate change.
- Harmful invasive non native species (INNS) will be managed so that established invasive non native species no longer degrade native habitats and species or impede their restoration and regeneration and new introductions are managed quickly and effectively.
- Biodiversity as a concept will be understood and valued across the population and embedded in educational curriculums.
- Nature networks across Scotland's landscapes will underpin the resilience and health of species and habitats.
- Farmland practices will have resulted in a substantial regeneration in biodiversity, ecosystem and soil health and significantly reduced carbon emissions while sustaining high quality food production.
- Management of deer ranges, grouse moors and upland agriculture will be contributing to the regeneration of biodiversity in upland areas.
- Forest and woodland management will have led to sustainable natural regeneration; a greater diversity of woodland species; increased woodland cover with a healthy understorey, enhanced woodland connectivity; and improved integration of trees into other land uses.
- Soil health will have been improved by tackling loss of organic carbon, erosion, compaction, and the impacts of grazing, air pollution and climate change, and will function as a nature based solution to flooding, erosion and biodiversity loss.
- The actions Scotland takes to improve biodiversity will create new green jobs and economic opportunities to supporting thriving communities.
- Towns and cities will include nature rich environments close to all communities, contributing to Nature Networks and measurable increases in urban biodiversity.
- Multi functional urban nature based solutions will enable people and biodiversity to adapt to Scotland's changing climate by cooling the urban environment and managing extreme rainfall events, with blue and green infrastructure designed and managed to benefit biodiversity, provide habitats and allow wildlife to move through urban areas.

Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2024 – 2030

The Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2024 – 2030 (CNPA085) is a series of rolling Delivery Plans which form part of Scottish Governments Strategic Framework for



Biodiversity, in conjunction with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. It includes actions needed to ensure Scotland is on track to achieving the vision and outcomes in the Strategy.

The Strategy Delivery Plan contains the most urgent priority actions which are aimed at putting Scotland on track to halting the loss of biodiversity and being nature positive by 2030. These actions will:

- Accelerate restoration and regeneration.
- Protect nature on land (and at sea), across and beyond protected areas
- Embed nature friendly farming, fishing and forestry.
- Recover and protect vulnerable and important species.
- Invest in nature.
- Take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss.

The Local Development Plan will have regard for the strategy and its delivery plan and take it into account when designating land for digital infrastructure use which may directly or indirectly impact biodiversity. Matters relating to biodiversity are covered in Schedule 5: Natural heritage.

Scottish Government planning guidance: digital telecommunications

The guidance document (CNPA157) is not planning policy but may be considered as a material consideration in planning applications and appeal decisions, so needs to be considered in relation to the development of the next local development plan. In relation to local development plans the guidance states that plan need to take into account the overall policy approach of National Planning Framework 4, Policy 24 (CNPA008).

The guidance states that – planning authorities (including National Park authorities) when preparing their local development plans should ensure connectivity ambitions are recognised in line with the National Planning Framework 4's overall policy approach for digital communications infrastructure, set out in Local development planning guidance. Local authorities should take account of existing and future provision of digital infrastructure in developing their spatial strategy. Preparation of the local development plan is a collaborative activity, and the communications industry is an important stakeholder in this. The Evidence Report stage offers an opportunity for early engagement particularly with relevant local authority departments, operators and providers in relation to programmed investment in digital within their area.

The guidance specifically addresses rural and remote areas which is applicable to the National Park.



Connected Growth: Manual for Places – Digital Infrastructure

Published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in 2019, the Connected Growth manual (CNPA158) addresses the need for the UK to boost its digital connectivity. The document sets out the ambitious aim for the UK to be a world leader in 5G with most of the UK's population having access to 5G by 2027. Interventions include encouraging planning authorities to adopt de minimis provisions with regard to small cell mobile infrastructure and working with Mobile Network Operators to proactively identify possible sites for infrastructure deployment / improvement. National Progress is monitored through the Ofcom Connected Nations Reports.

The Broadband Universal Service Obligation

The Universal Service Obligation (CNPA159) is a research briefing, published in 2022, presented to the House of Commons as a UK wide measure intended as a 'safety net' to deliver broadband to those premises that do not have access to a decent and affordable connection.

The UK Government have defined a decent connection as one that can deliver 10 megabits per second (Mbps) download speed and 1 Mbps upload speed (along with other defined quality parameters).

Ofcom has defined an affordable connection as one that costs less than £45 per month (£48.90 cited in the House of Commons Parliament research briefing (CNPA1234)). The Universal Service Obligation provides a legal right to request a decent broadband connection, up to a cost threshold of £3,400 per premises.

To be eligible for funding the applying property cannot be due to be connected by a publicly funded roll out scheme within the succeeding 12 months.

The briefing paper highlights the issues surrounding the excess costs which have to be met by the applicant. Ofcom has stated there remains a "small but significant" number of premises for which the costs of building a connection are very high, mostly in remote rural areas.

Within the National Park there are still a significant number of postcode areas where 75 - 100% of the premises are below the universal service obligation (Figure 1) meaning they cannot receive decent broadband connection. It should be noted that within many of the worst affected areas (Figure 1) are sparsely populated with large areas of undeveloped natural landscape.



Proportion of premises below universal service obligation for broadband

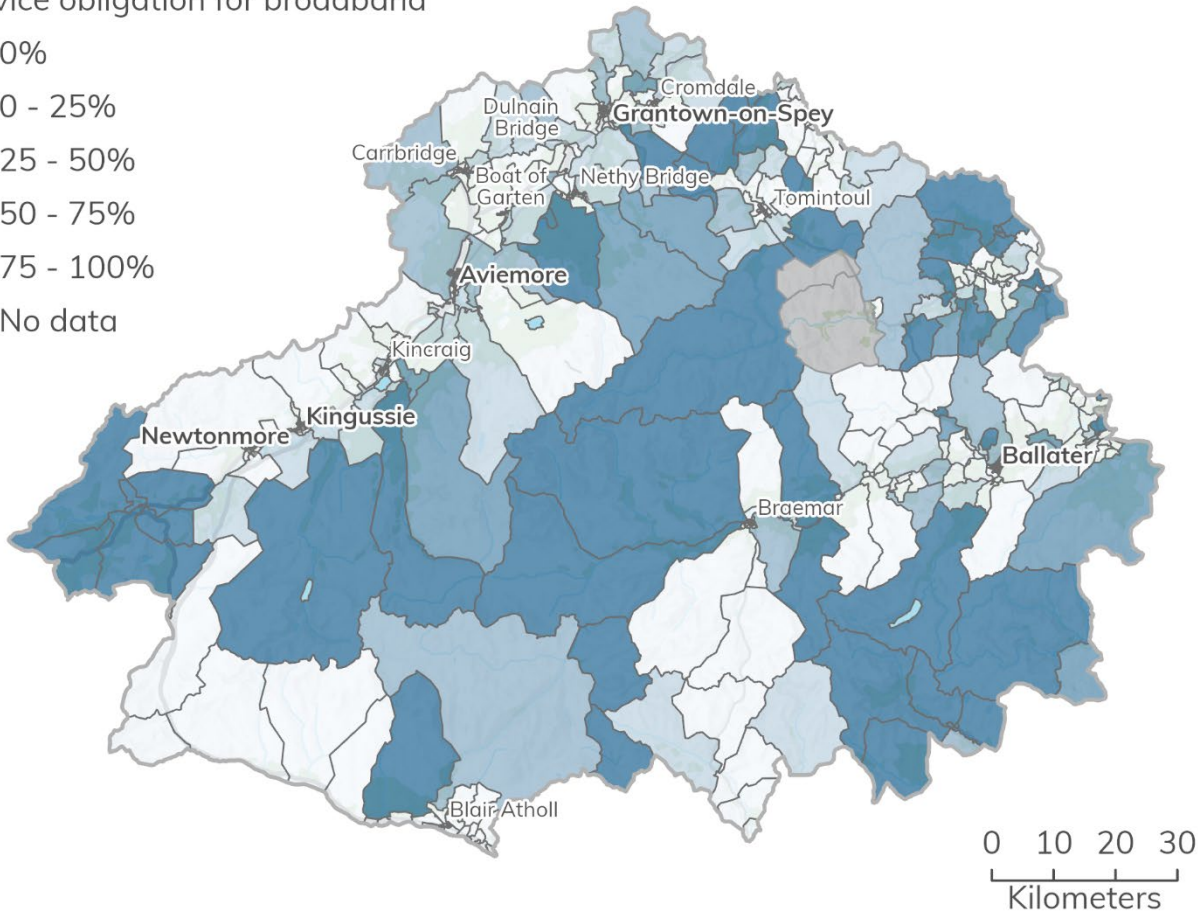
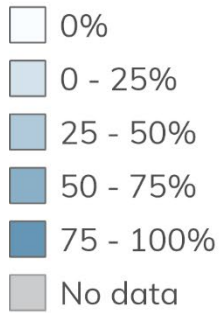


Figure 1 Proportion of premises by postcode area within the National Park which are below the universal service obligation. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of His Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright and database right 2026. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number AC0000821810, Cairngorms National Park Authority. Contains data © Ofcom 2026. (CNPA173)

The Broadband Universal Obligation Service is intended to fill the gaps in left by other programmes, past and present, which include, the Better Broadband Scheme, Superfast Broadband Programme and the Gigabit broadband voucher schemes.

The Digital Economy Act 2017 (CNPA1232) amended section 65 of the Communications Act 2003 (CNPA1231) and gave the Secretary of State powers to introduce a broadband Universal Obligation Service through secondary legislation. The specifications for the Universal Obligation Service – the Electronic Communications (Broadband) (Universal Service) Order 2018 (SI 2018/445) (The Universal Service Order) then came into force in 2018 (CNPA1233).



Project Gigabit

Project Gigabit (CNPA1240) is the government's programme to enable hard to reach communities to access lightning fast gigabit capable broadband. It targets homes and businesses that are not included in broadband suppliers' plans, reaching parts of the UK that might otherwise miss out on getting the digital connectivity they need. The UK Government is committed to achieving nationwide gigabit coverage and expects 99% of premises to have access to a gigabit capable connection by 2032.

The Scottish Government will play a key role in delivering Project Gigabit procurements in Scotland, working closely with the UK Government to deploy funding committed to connect some of the hardest to reach geographies across the United Kingdom. The procurements are categorised under Type A, B and C.

Type A and B activity

The Scottish Government will lead delivery of local (Type A) and regional (Type B) activity. These procurements will provide opportunities for alternative network suppliers in Scotland.

The first local and regional procurements launched in May 2024, with further procurements expected to follow in the coming months.

Type C activity

The Scottish Government and the UK Government will jointly manage the UK wide (Type C) framework in Scotland. The Project Gigabit framework agreement² (CNPA1241) will be delivered by Openreach across the UK, opening up new opportunities to drive efficiencies between R100 and Project Gigabit in Scotland – enabling even more access to gigabit capable broadband.

Building Digital UK has signed a cross regional framework agreement with broadband provider, Openreach, to deliver gigabit capable broadband to across Great Britain which includes parts of the National Park (CNPA1241).

² Building Digital UK (BDUK) has carried out significant market engagement across the UK to identify potential areas for government intervention to roll out gigabit capable broadband. Seven call off contracts have been awarded under the framework, which includes Scotland (£157million, 65,000 premises) (CNPA1241)



Reaching 100% Programme

Reaching 100% (R100) is a £600+³ million Scottish Government programme that has been bringing faster broadband to homes and businesses across Scotland. It aims to connect around 113,000 properties in North, South and Central Scotland. It is made up of three strands:

- R100 contracts being delivered by Openreach.
- Planned commercial investment by a variety of broadband providers.
- The R100 Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (SBVS) which offers a subsidy of up to £5,000 for premises not covered by R100 contracts or commercial build.

Almost all of the R100 contract build will be Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) which is capable of delivering download speeds 30 times faster than the Scottish Government's original commitment of 30 Megabits per second. R100 contract build is expected to be completed in 2028.

Alternative solutions

Subsidised support for broadband in the UK is also available through The Gigabit Broadband Scheme. The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) is a UK wide subsidy scheme for groups of individuals or businesses based in rural areas with broadband speeds less than 100 Mbit/s. Applicants may be able to combine R100 Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (SBVS) vouchers with an additional contribution through the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

Scotland's Full Fibre Charter

Scotland's Full Fibre Charter (2020) (CNPA171) consists of a series of pledges that both the Scottish Government and industry have signed up to with the aim to extend full fibre broadband across Scotland.

Scotland's Full Fibre Charter is a significant commitment by the Scottish Government and commercial providers to extend full fibre broadband access across Scotland. The key points of the charter are as follows:

1. Purpose and Importance: The charter aims to create a future proofed, national fibre network that supports economic recovery from the impacts of Covid 19 while ensuring inclusive long term economic development and growth. Good digital connectivity is highlighted as essential to enabling access to the internet, supporting

³ The R100 programme is funded primarily by the Scottish Government (£591m), with investment from the UK Government (£52m), and BT (£53m) who appointed Openreach to deliver the network. These figures are rounded to the nearest million



health services, and facilitating remote work and study in a changing digital landscape.

2. **Inclusive Growth and Economic Development:** The telecoms sector plays a critical role in creating and protecting jobs across Scotland and is especially important in rural settings. Access to high speed digital connectivity fosters economic development, especially for people with disabilities, caregivers, and rural communities. It broadens access to education, public services, and participation in democracy.
3. **Resilience and Green Economy:** Future proofed digital infrastructure is crucial for inclusive growth and a low carbon economy. High speed connectivity is needed to support businesses to expand into new markets, innovate, and enhance exports.
4. **Delivery:** The Scottish Government is investing £600 million in the Reaching 100% (R100) program, with the aim of extending superfast broadband access to every home and business in Scotland. Commercial investment is encouraged by non domestic rates relief on newly laid and 'lit' fibre for 10 years. The Full Fibre Charter aims to act as a mechanism to encourage commercial providers to collaborate to deliver more and faster broadband.

The Full Fibre Charter aims to create a robust digital infrastructure, enhance economic resilience, and ensure Scotland remains an attractive place for digital investment.

Digital progress in local government

The document (CNPA164), prepared by Audit Scotland (2021), the key messages and recommendations are primarily aimed at the operations of local authorities, but to be implemented rely on the local populations also having sufficient bandwidth and connections to engage. The Covid 19 pandemic has highlighted the risk of digital exclusion – not having the skills or resources to access vital public services, maintain learning, and stay connected with others. As the document sets out the priorities for using technology to support democratic functions such as hosting committee meetings and surgeries online, local community digital access is essential to support this objective.

National Park Authority documents

Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027

Good connectivity is key to delivering the outcomes in the Partnership Plan (CNPA010), and through its strategic diagram, it identifies priority areas for digital connectivity (Schedule 1: Plan outcomes, Figure 4).



While the Partnership Plan must be considered as a whole, the following policies are of particular relevance to this topic:

Policy B5 addresses the need to support under represented groups to visit, work and live in the National Park by addressing any barriers to participation which may include a lack of connectivity that hinders access to essential services online. Part I of Policy 5 sets out the need to improve digital accessibility and deliver inclusive communications which include video and streamed content, publications and improvements to the National Park Authority website.

Policy C1 addresses the need to enable sustainable patterns of settlement development, infrastructure and communications which includes the planning and supporting improvements to the information technology network. It also includes the planning and supporting improvements to the mobile communications network that improve access to next generation technology and minimise the need for visually intrusive infrastructure.

Local authority documents

Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy 2020 – 2025

Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy (CNPA168) sets out their priorities and commitment to optimising digital technology to improve the regions business, enable economic growth, support the environment and benefit residents whilst ensuring no one is left behind. Of relevance to the Cairngorms National Park is the aim to ensure residents in Aberdeenshire have fast, reliable internet access at home and / or at a public building. At the time of writing the Strategy had not been updated, however should an updated Strategy be published during the preparation of the Proposed Plan this will be taken in to account. The Proposed Plan should support the aims of Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy.

Angus Council Digital Strategy

Angus's Digital Strategy (CNPA167) has been developed to support the Delivery of the Angus Council Plan 2023 – 2028 and the Angus Community Plan 2022 – 2030 (CNPA637), and with a clear focus on ensuring technology is a key enabler, supporting the delivery of the Council's vision and priorities. The strategy is not solely about digital technology; it is about supporting the delivery of people centred services in a digital age. The Strategy is primarily aimed at improving user focused digital services, and as such has no direct implications for the preparation of the Proposed Plan. It should be noted that the provision of adequate digital connectivity in the Angus Council area of the



National Park, is however key to supporting the outcomes of the Angus Council Digital Strategy and Plan in terms of service users.

The Highland Council: Digital Strategy

The Digital Strategy supports Highland Councils requirements to effectively operate in a challenging environment and continue to deliver high quality services in an ever changing world. There are no implications for the Proposed Plan arising from the Highland Council: Digital Strategy. It is included here as it has been considered in its evidence gathering stage due to the significant population of the National Park living in The Highland Council region.

Moray Council Digital Strategy and Plan 2025 – 2028

The Digital Strategy (CNPA1236) sets the vision and direction for how Moray Council will review and redesign their services using a digital first approach with a strong customer focus alongside workforce development to ensure the council enable and embed the cultural shift and efficiencies both within the community and their workforce. The Plan is primarily aimed at improving Council operations and as such has no direct implications for the Proposed Plan. It should be noted that the provision of adequate digital connectivity in the Moray Council area of the National Park, is however key to supporting the outcomes of the Moray Council Digital Strategy and Plan in terms of service users.

Digital Perth and Kinross 2023 – 2027

The Strategy (CNPA165) aims to deliver connected places through:

- Fibre and superfast broadband delivering improved connectivity to drive growth in digital business.
- Tay Cities Deal delivering a better connected Perth and Kinross digital infrastructure.
- Reaching 100% Programme improving connectivity / broadband speeds.
- Open Data supporting digital business growth and development.
- Vibrant Perth and Kinross digital marketplace initiative delivering virtual and physical networks, incubators, and meet-ups for exchanging ideas, influencing change and making connection.

The Strategy also aims to support community projects through the Local Digital Inclusion Fund and seeks to deliver external sources of funding to tackle digital exclusion. There is a commitment to:

- Continuing participation in national schemes to deliver reliable fibre broadband and 4G / 5G coverage for everyone in Perth and Kinross.



- Identify people / communities at risk of digital exclusion and provide targeted support.

Perth and Kinross Economic Wellbeing Plan 2020 – 2028

Within the Wellbeing Plan (CNPA166), projects under the 'Place' theme, the Digital Connections Programme aim to enhance rural digital connectivity by continuing the Rural Broadband Fund to support groups of rural businesses / residents to improve connectivity in remote rural areas through the:

- Department for Digital.
- Culture, Media and Sport Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme.
- Openreach Community Fibre Partnerships.
- Local wireless schemes and other appropriate technology utilising Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Rural Gigabit Vouchers and accessing new rounds of UK Government funding for gigabit connectivity.

Badenoch and Strathspey Area Plan

The Plan (CNPA237) is an overview of local priorities and opportunities expressed in existing plans, strategies and recent community engagement, it aims to provide a clear statement of identified priorities, strengths, challenges, opportunities and community aspirations within one consolidated 'Plan', which can be referred to by Council services, public services, groups and organisations operating in Badenoch and Strathspey. This will help to ensure service provision, funding and developments reflect collective community wants, needs and priorities.

The Plan is split between three headings: People, Place and Prosperity. In relation to this schedule, under the Prosperity heading the plan addresses the sets the following priority:

- Digital connectivity

The Plan does not set out any specific actions arising from this priority at present.

The Area Place Plan will serve as a foundational framework from which more detailed and targeted actions can be developed. The intention is that this will be an evolving plan, and this is the first version of an area plan for the Badenoch and Strathspey region. In the first instance an action plan will be created to set out the route for delivery of the priorities within the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Place Plan. The action plan will seek to:

- Further understand and develop priorities, in discussion across all sectors
- Set out to identify the best mechanism for delivery and the range of partners to be involved



- Assess potential barriers
- Assess potential funding opportunities

The Proposed Plan will take into consideration the Action Plan once it has been published and this will inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

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 (CNPA636) 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 (CNPA637) has a vision for 2030 that Angus is a great place to live, work and visit. 'Caring for our Economy' is one of three priorities to achieve the vision. Under this priority, the plan notes that digital access has improved through recent investment. The plan states that the partnership continues to support economic development via access to digital platforms. The plan notes that the partnership needs to look at mobile technologies to improve broadband accessibility in rural areas and that they are working with local providers and farm based businesses to help develop wider coverage.



2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan

Digital infrastructure issues are not considered in the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (CNPA638).

2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan Delivery Plan

There are no references to digital infrastructure issues in the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan Delivery Plan (CNPA1091).

Moray Local Outcome Improvement Plan v2 (2016 – 2026)

Moray Community Planning Partnership's 10 year Outcome Improvement Plan (CNPA639) has an overarching priority to raise aspirations. 'Empowering and connecting communities' is one of four main priority areas to direct the Partnership's work. The plan recognises that Moray's rurality creates challenges for digital connectivity through limited availability of fast broadband speeds and mobile connectivity is also an issue and that tackling these issues will make Moray a more thriving community and a better connected place. The plan notes that the development of digital infrastructure will be progressed through the Moray Growth Bid and Moray Economic Strategy. The main focus for the partnership is the development of more resilient and self reliant, empowered communities. The plan identifies that, in terms of outcomes, success would mean 'a thriving and well connected place, where more people will live well in their communities'.

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

Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership's Community Plan (CNPA640) has an ambition to be the best place in Scotland for everyone to live life well, free from poverty and inequality. Five priorities are identified, all of which focus on inequalities. One of the priorities is digital participation. The plan recognises that there is limited local data on digital connectivity and participation and the plan aims to better understand the issues and includes year one actions to:

- Commission research to develop an evidence base on barriers to digital participation in Perth and Kinross to inform future investments and initiatives.
- Take forward actions identified in research to improve levels of digital participation in Perth and Kinross.

Performance indicators for digital participation include bi-annually measuring the percentage of households who are able to digitally participate and annually measuring the percentage of households with access to broadband.



Community action plans

The following action plans identified issues and / or priorities relating to digital infrastructure in the National Park. Several of the Action Plans include actions or suggestions for better EV charging provision (see Schedule 11: Sustainable Transport) which also often require Wi-Fi or sufficient mobile connectivity to access services. Access to public transport is also often dependent on digital connectivity to access service information and purchase tickets.

Actions supporting better business opportunities in the settlements (see Schedule 21: Economic Development) will also require adequate broadband services. The Baseline of digital infrastructure section of this schedule presents data on both availability of decent broadband (page 37) and mobile connectivity (page 50).

Advie and Cromdale Community Action Plan

The Action Plan (CNPA123) highlights the need for faster broadband in the area.

Aviemore, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA063) does not specifically highlight any priorities related to improvements to digital connectivity; however, it does include an action for new small business spaces and the creation of office or workshop spaces for small businesses. For this priority to be delivered successfully it would rely on good digital connectivity.

Ballater and Crathie Community Action Plan 2023

The Action Plan (CNPA119), in focus area five, sets the operation goal to work with the relevant agencies to ensure the community have optimal telephone and broadband connections to ensure:

- The community infrastructure is the best in the country for all digital activities.
- There are alternative analogue solutions to provide resilience in times of hardship or crisis.
- There are available facilities to educate all the community to keep abreast of digital developments.
- Cybersecurity education with regular updates is available to the community.

Under the strategic goal of resilience there were also concerns about the loss of telephones and communications in emergencies, and the inability to check on remote properties.



Blair Athol Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA064) includes the priority: Sustainable community spaces, delivering community needs. An action set out by the Plan under this priority includes the need to provide internet connection in the community hall. Under the theme of an economically thriving community, the Plan sets the priority of improving opportunities for local employment / business which include the action of continuing upgrades of digital connectivity for residents and businesses.

Boat of Garten Community Action Plan 2025

The Action Plan (CNPA374) highlights the need for an elderly support network inclusive of IT support, for those without access who could face difficulty in its utilisation. The plan also highlighted the community's priority for new small business units to attract new start ups. For this priority to be delivered successfully it would rely on good digital connectivity.

Braemar Community Action Plan

The Plan includes a table providing a guide to what it is intended to deliver over the short and long term. Item 41, under the theme: housing and economic development; covers mobile signal, broadband and radio reception. The aim is to ensure the local communications infrastructure delivers the best possible service for business and the community. In the Plan the intended outcome is to deliver improvement to digital services in the area.

Braemar's community action plan is currently under review, and an updated version is expected to be published in 2026. The Proposed Plan will take into account any updates to this or any of the Community Action Plans during its preparation.

Carrbridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Although no specific priority aimed at improving digital infrastructure was identified, one of the survey responses from local residents listed in the Action Plan (CNPA122) did include the desire for superfast broadband for enterprise and employment opportunities.

Dulnain Bridge Community Action plan: looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA133) itself does not contain any direct mention to digital infrastructure. However, in relation to the topic of the village email system being underused, which could suggest the need for better digital communication tools or an increase in digital literacy support.



Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA125) sets out an action (under the economically thriving community theme) for fibre broadband to be installed throughout village, for improved homeworking / business use, this includes the need to investigate options and potential funding routes. When local residents were asked what they would like to see happen in Dalwhinnie they responded that they would like to have faster broadband.

Mount Blair Community Action Plan

One of the comments listed in the Action Plan (CNPA130) was that the area suffers poor broadband, mobile phone, TV and radios services. One of the main priorities under the infrastructure and renewable energy theme is the need to improve broadband. This would need to include exploring ways of upgrading the telephone exchanges and cable systems to deliver high speed broadband.

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

Although no specific priority aimed at improving digital infrastructure was identified in the Action Plan (CNPA065), one of the survey responses from local residents included the suggestion for improvement for 'broadband in Speybridge'.

Kincraig and locality Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA127) does not list any priorities or actions specifically aimed at improving digital infrastructure in the area. However, the priority to find a use for the old A9 complex beside the garage includes the suggestion of business units which will potentially require adequate provision of decent broadband

Kingussie Community Action Plan 2025: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan for Kingussie (CNPA066) does not list any priorities or actions specifically aimed at improving digital infrastructure in the area. However, the priority to provide support for small business start ups will be dependent on adequate provision of decent broadband.

Laggan Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA129) lists the community broadband initiative as a recent success in terms of projects delivered by the Action Plan process. As such no direct priorities were identified in the Plan aimed at improving the existing digital services. However, a key issue raised in the infrastructure section was the need for: measures and / or new equipment provisions to increase security of essential services for example mains water, electrical power supply and broadband service.



Nethy Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

In the Action Plan (CNPA131) there were no specific actions put forward by the community with regard to digital connectivity. However, the action to create spaces for co-working / hot desking would require at least decent connections, preferably superfast to make it viable for people to work from.

Newtonmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA132) doesn't set out any specific priorities or actions for Newtonmore, however in the participation section one comment on potential improvements for the village included improvements to the quality of Internet / Wi-Fi in the village. Secondary pupils and under 25's also called for better phone coverage in the village.

Strathdon Community Action Plan looking to 2030

The Action Plan (CNPA133) sets out the priority to improve opportunities for local employment and businesses under the theme 'an economically thriving community'. This includes the action to improve broadband for effective home working. The Plan reports there are still areas within the locality which have poor Wi-Fi capabilities and poor signal.



Baseline of digital infrastructure matters

This section provides baseline information on the following matters: broadband connectivity, mobile network coverage including mast data and other digital infrastructure in the Cairngorms National Park.

There are links between this policy area and:

- Schedule 1: Plan outcomes
- Schedule 3: Site assessment methodology
- Schedule 4: Climate change
- Schedule 5: Natural heritage
- Schedule 6: Landscape
- Schedule 8: Land use, soil and resources
- Schedule 13: Housing
- Schedule 18: Health and safety
- Schedule 21: Economic development

Digital connectivity

Digital connectivity is a key element in the continued economic growth within the Cairngorms National Park as well as being vital to the wellbeing of the local residents. It is also vital to delivering good visitor experiences, with tourism contributing to a significant proportion of the economy of the National Park. Information on visitor experience of digital services in the Cairngorms National Park is available in Schedule 23: Tourism. With an increasing number of public and private services moving to online based platforms it is vital to the life and prosperity of rural communities in the National Park. With an increasing number of people accessing services via their mobile phones 4G availability is arguably just as important as superfast broadband connectivity. With the phasing out of 3G services, 4G connectivity is vital for a number of reasons including:

- Improved access to information
- Economic development
- Enhanced communication (with the recent increase in video communication becoming the norm)
- Agricultural development
- Education and skills
- Access to emergency services

There remain significant gaps in both 4G and superfast broadband availability in the National Park as discussed earlier in this paper. To address this a number of new telecoms masts will have to be installed to improve 4G connectivity.



Alternative technologies such as fixed wireless network and satellite network options are available in the Cairngorms National Park and can be utilised if it is not possible to attain fixed broadband. There are constraints associated with fixed wireless network including the line of sight requirements, weather effects and limited range – factors which present particular challenges in the geography and climate of the National Park. Satellite network connections can also be considered as the last resort if all others fail, however present a financial barrier to accessibility due to their higher installation (set up) and operating costs.

Good digital connectivity is increasingly seen as a basic service that is required by residents, businesses, students, visitors and the public sector. It allows; businesses to function more effectively and expand their reach, people to connect with each other as well as access services such as health care and education from remote areas. Connectivity through digital infrastructure in the Cairngorms National Park remains a challenge.

With the potential increase in systems and processes that utilise the 'Internet of Things' (IoT) concept within the Cairngorms National Park the availability of reliable fast broadband will be crucial to their delivery. The demand for bandwidth has been steadily growing as more applications are developed and rolled out with applications currently being developed for and rolled out for: healthcare, utilities, domestic consumer electronics and smart city products and services.

Ofcom Connected Nations Scotland Report 2025

The Connected Nations report (CNPA1238), prepared and published under the Communications Act 2003 (CNPA1231), helps monitor the availability of these networks and provides data to help stakeholders understand the networks which are available in their area. This year's Connected Nations report for Scotland provides an update on the continued rollout of fixed and gigabit capable networks and 5G mobile networks, including for the first time reporting on 5G standalone coverage. It also includes an update on the take up of full fibre and gigabit capable broadband services and low Earth orbit (LEO) satellite broadband services.



The key highlights from the report are as follows:

Broadband

- 71% of residential premises in Scotland now have full fibre coverage. This is an increase of nine percentage points from last year and represents an additional 250,000 premises having access to full fibre compared to July 2024.
- The rate of expansion in coverage for full fibre and gigabit capable networks is in line with the rest of the UK. However, Scotland still has the lowest level of full fibre coverage of the four UK nations.
- Take up of full fibre broadband by consumers in Scotland continues to increase. Take up rates rose from 35% of Scottish premises where those services are available in July 2024 to 43% in July 2025, an eight percentage point increase following last year's seven percentage point rise. This has brought Scotland in line with the UK average of 42% but remains behind Wales (49%) and Northern Ireland (62%).
- More Scottish households are using satellite connectivity, particularly in harder to reach areas. The number of Starlink subscribers in Scotland has risen to over 15,000 in 2025 from 11,000 last year.
- The reduction in the number of Scottish premises unable to access decent broadband has accelerated. Only 10,000 (0.4%) premises in Scotland cannot access decent broadband from fixed landlines or Fixed Wireless Access (FWA), a decrease of 5,000 premises over the last year. This compares to a decrease of 2,000 premises between September 2023 and July 2024.

Mobile

- 5G standalone (SA) has a notable amount of coverage and deployments. In Scotland, 5G SA coverage outside premises from at least one MNO is at 77% at Scotland's High Confidence level.
- Overall 5G coverage has seen modest but continued growth. The range of 5G coverage outside premises at High Confidence across the four mobile network operators has improved from 54% - 76% last year to 59% - 84% this year. 4G coverage has been sustained across Scotland. 4G geographic coverage from each mobile network operator has risen by one to two percentage points from last year.

Fixed broadband infrastructure

There are four primary types of fixed line connections used to provide fixed broadband access, namely: asymmetric digital subscriber line (commonly referred to as ADSL), fibre to the cabinet (FTTC), hybrid fibre coaxial (HFC) cable and full fibre or fibre to the premises (FTTC) connections.



Asymmetric digital subscriber line

Asymmetric digital subscriber line is the most commonly available type of broadband, delivered through the copper wires of your phone line. Two different types of asymmetric digital subscriber line (ADSL) technology used in the UK are ADSL1 and ADSL2+. ADSL1 is capable of a maximum speed of about 8 Mbit/s, and ADSL2+ a maximum speed of about 24 Mbit/s.

However, the broadband speeds via both types of asymmetric digital subscriber line will depend on how far you live from your telephone exchange – the further away you are, the lower the speeds and the actual speeds you receive will typically be much lower than the maximum speeds shown above.

There are currently 28 telephone exchanges that cover the Cairngorms National Park, not all of which are located within the National Park boundary. Combined, they service around 15,065 telephone connections (not all within the National Park area) of which 13,682 are classed as residential and 1,176 as non residential. All 28 exchanges are enabled to provide asymmetric digital subscriber line broadband, with all but two capable of providing connection speeds of up to eight Mbit/s. (asymmetric digital subscriber line connection is a broadband connection provided over home telephone lines.) The two exchanges that are not equipped for these speeds are Clova and Advie, which only provide speeds of up to 512Kbit/s. Superfast fibre and cable broadband offers significantly faster speeds than Asymmetric digital subscriber line services.

Cable

Cable networks use fibre optic and coaxial cables to deliver superfast broadband services – as well as television and phone services – direct to homes. There is fibre to a street cabinet and coaxial cable from the cabinet to the premises.

Unlike with Asymmetric digital subscriber line, speeds are not lost with distance. Cable technology can deliver very fast broadband speeds, and the fastest cable broadband packages offer speeds of 'up to' 152 Mbit/s.

Fibre ('fibre to the cabinet' and 'fibre to the premises')

Fibre broadband is delivered via clusters of fibre optic cables (each one thinner than a human hair) and speeds are faster than asymmetric digital subscriber line. There are two types of superfast fibre broadband - 'fibre to the cabinet' (commonly known as FTTC) and 'fibre to the premises' (commonly known as FTTP).



With fibre to the cabinet, fibre optic cables run from the telephone exchange to street cabinets before using standard copper telephone wires to connect to homes. Most fibre connections in the UK are fibre to the cabinet services and are typically sold as offering speeds of 'up to' 38 Mbit/s or 76 Mbit/s.

Fibre to the premises broadband – which, as the name suggests, involves fibre optic cables running directly to your home – is faster than fibre to the cabinet but currently only constitutes a minority of broadband connections. Fibre to the premises broadband services can offer speeds of up to 1 Gbit/s.

Broadband connectivity in the Cairngorms National Park

Ofcom categorised fixed broadband connections based on the download speed they can deliver. The following definitions are provided by Ofcom for the categories, which the evidence is structured around:

- Decent
- Superfast
- Ultrafast
- Gigabit capable connections.

Ofcom regularly collect and publish data on available connections and current connection capabilities. The methodology detailing the approach to collecting and analysing coverage data undertaken by Ofcom can be accessed here:

- https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0031/249286/connected-nations-methodology.pdf (CNPA983)

Data from the Connected Nations Update: Summer 2023 (CNPA173) has been used to inform the preparation of this schedule. Ofcom collected and analysed data from over 70 fixed network and fixed wireless access (FWA) providers. This data has been used to examine the current broadband capability of the postcode areas in the National Park (Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6 and Figure 7)

Decent connections

'Decent' connections can provide at least 10 Mbit/s download and 1 Mbit/s upload speeds. It can be delivered by asymmetric digital subscriber line, fibre to the cabinet, hybrid fibre coaxial cable or full fibre. Decent broadband provides sufficient speeds for



making a high definition video call. Over minimum decent broadband, downloading a one hour high definition television episode (1 GB) would take almost 15 minutes.

Figure 2 shows that as of 2024 there are still significant areas of the National Park unable to receive a decent broadband service. This includes some postcode areas in the areas of and surrounding the smaller settlements. Larger more rural postcode areas where availability is higher may not reflect a uniform availability due to the small number of properties surveyed by Ofcom for a given area.

Proportion of premises unable to receive decent broadband

- 0%
- 0 - 25%
- 25 - 50%
- 50 - 75%
- 75 - 100%
- No data

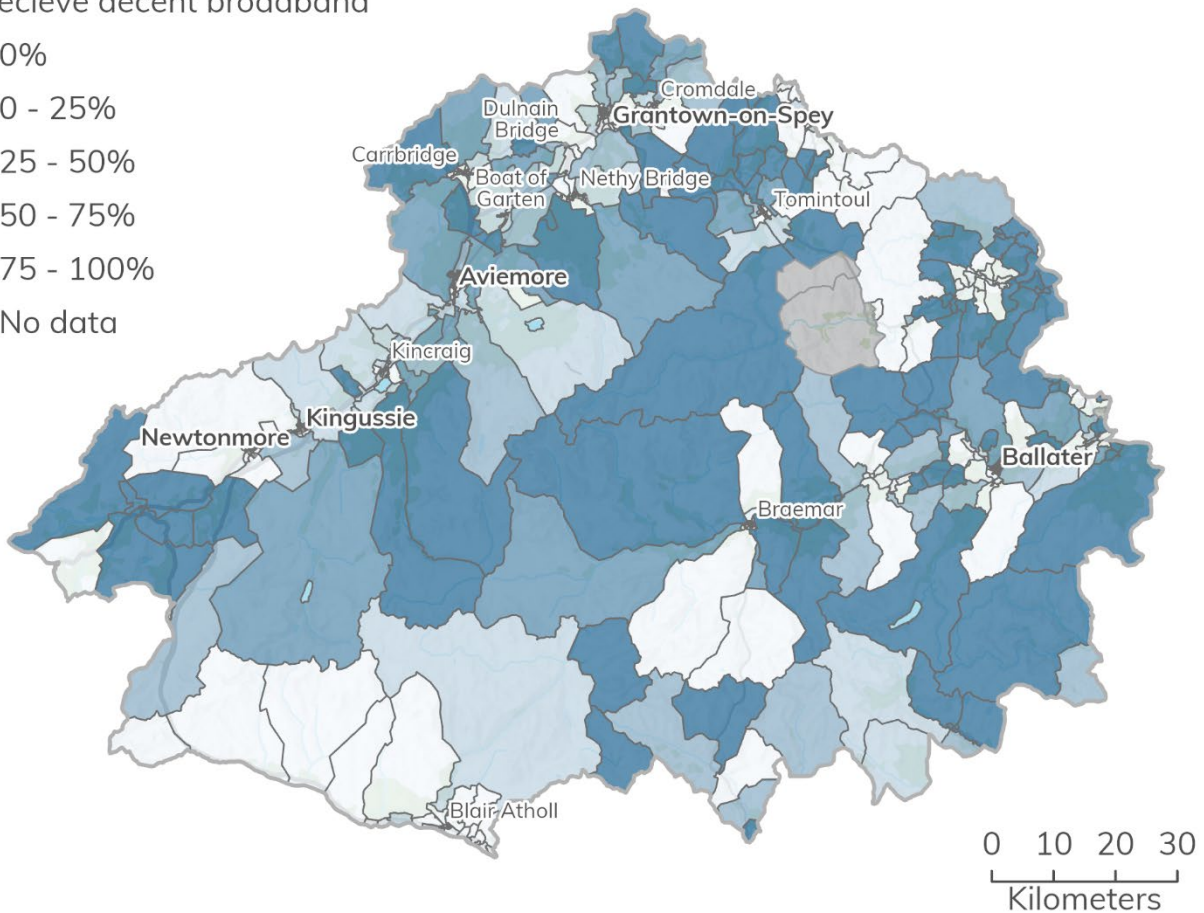


Figure 2 Proportion of premises in the National Park by postcode area unable to receive decent broadband (Ofcom, 2024). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Ofcom 2026. 2024 (CNPA173).

Figure 3 shows a map of the postcode areas showing proportionally how many premises currently (Ofcom, 2024) receive a download speed of between 10 – 30 Mbit/s, which allows a decent connection. This map shows the majority of the areas with a high proportion of premises able to attain decent broadband connections are mainly in or adjacent to settlements (with the exception of Braemar). It is worth noting there are



several areas adjacent and just outwith settlements (in the adjoining postcodes) where connectivity is significantly worse.

Proportion of premises with 10 < 30Mbit/s download speed

- 0%
- 0 - 25%
- 25 - 50%
- 50 - 75%
- 75 - 100%
- No data

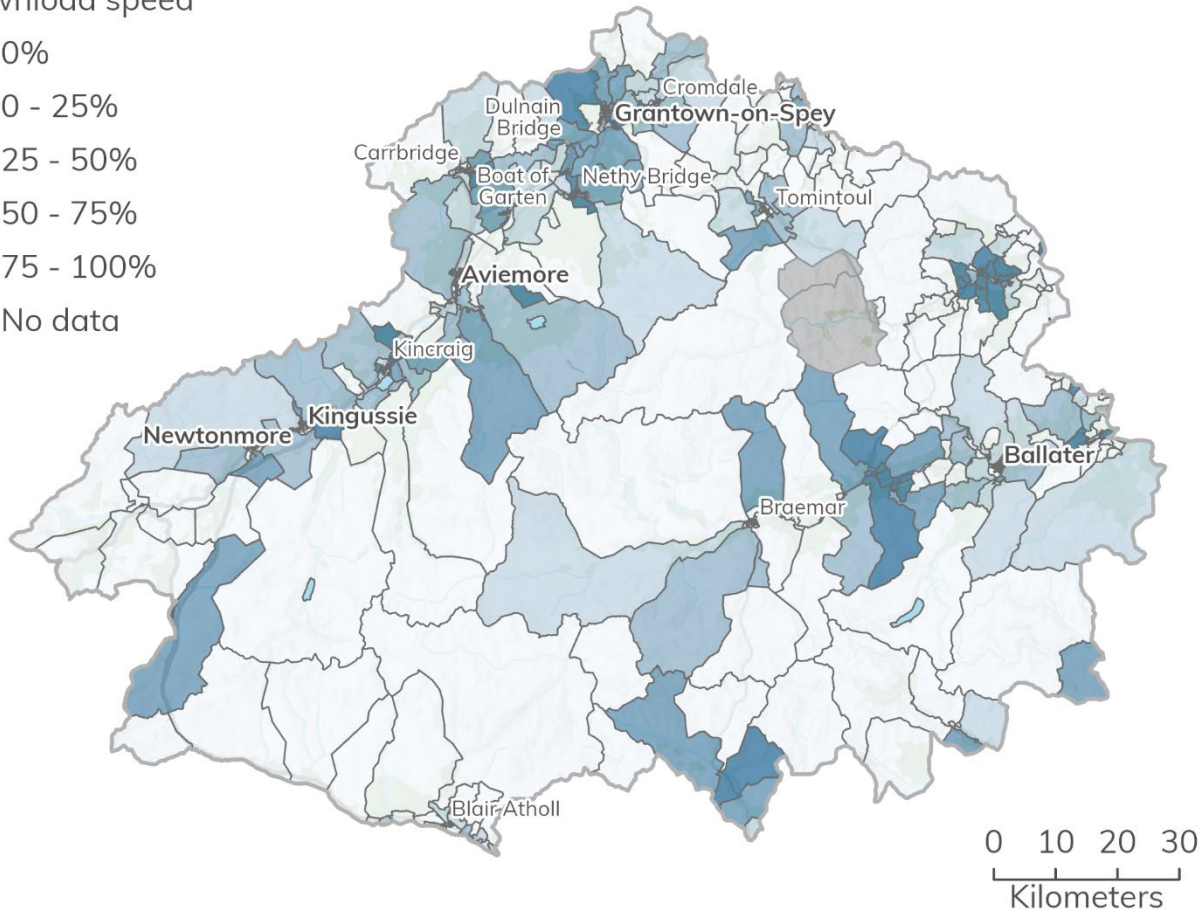


Figure 3 Proportion of properties in the National Park, by postcode area, with 10 – 30 Mbit/s of download (Ofcom, 2023). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Ofcom 2026. 2024 (CNPA173).

Superfast connections

‘Superfast’ connections provide download speeds of at least 30 Mbit/s and can be delivered by fibre to the cabinet, hybrid fibre coaxial, cable or full fibre. Superfast broadband provides sufficient speed for one person streaming 4K ultra high definition video. Downloading a one hour high definition television episode would take under four and a half minutes and several devices can work simultaneously.



Proportion of premises with Superfast Broadband availability

- 0%
- 0 - 25%
- 25 - 50%
- 50 - 75%
- 75 - 100%
- No data

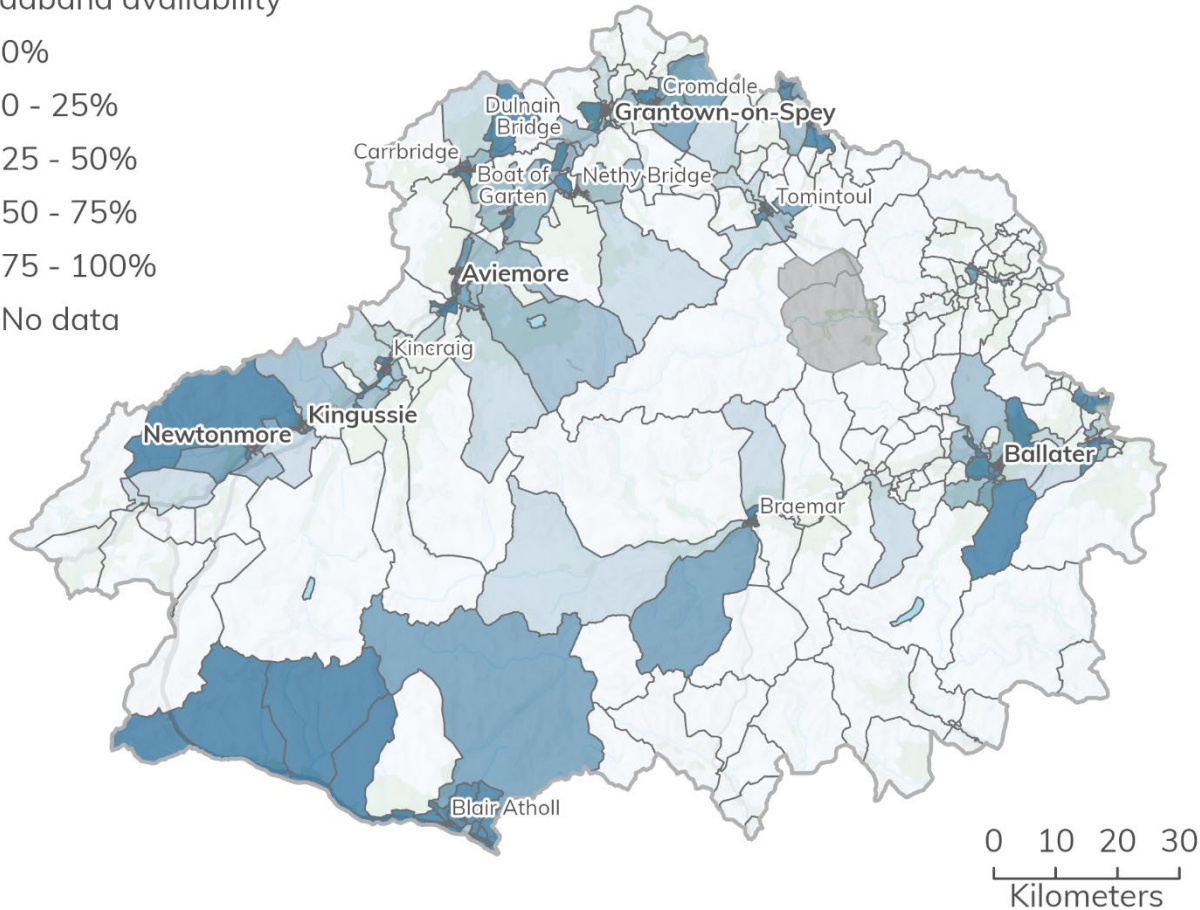


Figure 4 Proportion of premises in the National Park, by Postcode area that have Superfast broadband availability (Ofcom, 2023). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Ofcom 2026. 2024 (CNPA173).

Figure 4 shows the proportion of the premises in the post code areas within the Cairngorms National Park that have Superfast broadband availability. The majority of post code areas with the highest proportion of premises able to attain superfast broadband are in or adjacent to the main settlements with the addition of the areas adjacent to the southern stretch of the A9 in the National Park. It should be noted that this will include areas that may also have ultrafast and gigabit capable connections.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of premises in the National Park, by postcode area that are unable to attain Superfast broadband speeds. The map shows that the areas of the National Park currently unable to access superfast broadband connectivity are predominantly rural postcode areas.



Proportion of premises unable to receive 30Mbit/s

- 0%
- 0 - 25%
- 25 - 50%
- 50 - 75%
- 75 - 100%
- No data

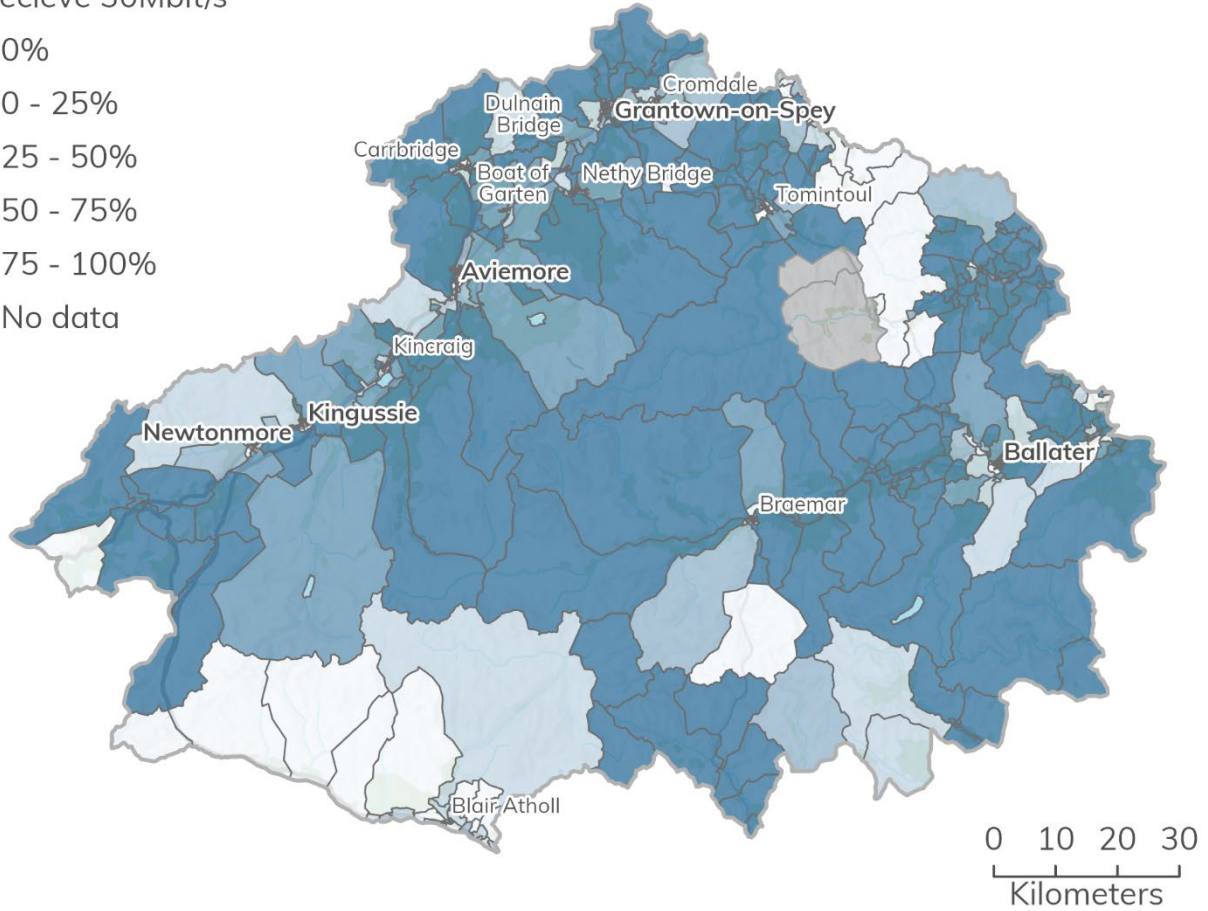


Figure 5 Proportion of premises in the National Park, by postcode area that are unable to attain Superfast broadband speeds (Ofcom, 2023). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Ofcom 2026. 2024 (CNPA173).

Ultrafast connections

'Ultrafast' connections provide speeds of at least 100 Mbit/s (up to gigabit capable connections). Figure 6 shows that in the Cairngorms National Park the postcode areas where ultrafast broadband is available are mainly located in and around the settlements of Aviemore, Blair Atholl and Ballater. Again, it is noted that the postcode areas adjacent to the southern stretch of the A9 in the National Park are also receive better connectivity.



Proportion of premises with Ultrafast Broadband availability

- 0%
- 0 - 25%
- 25 - 50%
- 50 - 75%
- 75 - 100%
- No data

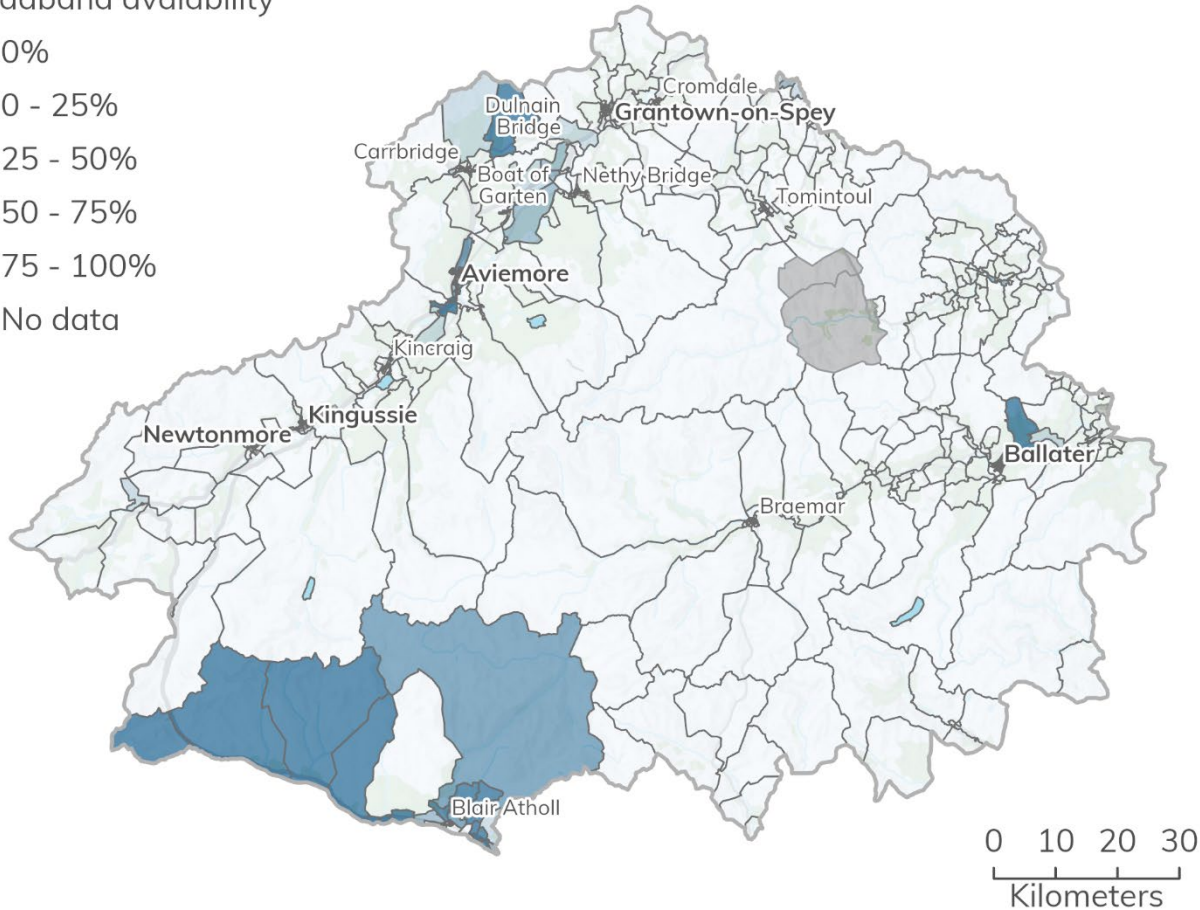


Figure 6 Proportion of premises in the National Park, by postcode area, with Ultrafast Broadband availability (Ofcom, 2023). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Ofcom 2026. 2024 (CNPA173).

Gigabit capable connections

'Gigabit capable' connections are able to offer download speeds of 1 Gbit/s (1000Mbps) and above. It can be delivered by hybrid fibre coaxial cable or full fibre. With gigabit capable broadband, it is feasible to download a full 4K high definition film (100 GB) in under 15 mins, or a one hour high definition television episode in eight seconds. Within the National Park there is no distinction between the areas able to receive ultrafast (Figure 6) and those able to receive gigabit connections (Figure 7) – leading to the assumption that upgrades in these areas have been completed to a gigabit standard of connectivity (and therefore by default also ultrafast).



Proportion of premises with gigabit availability

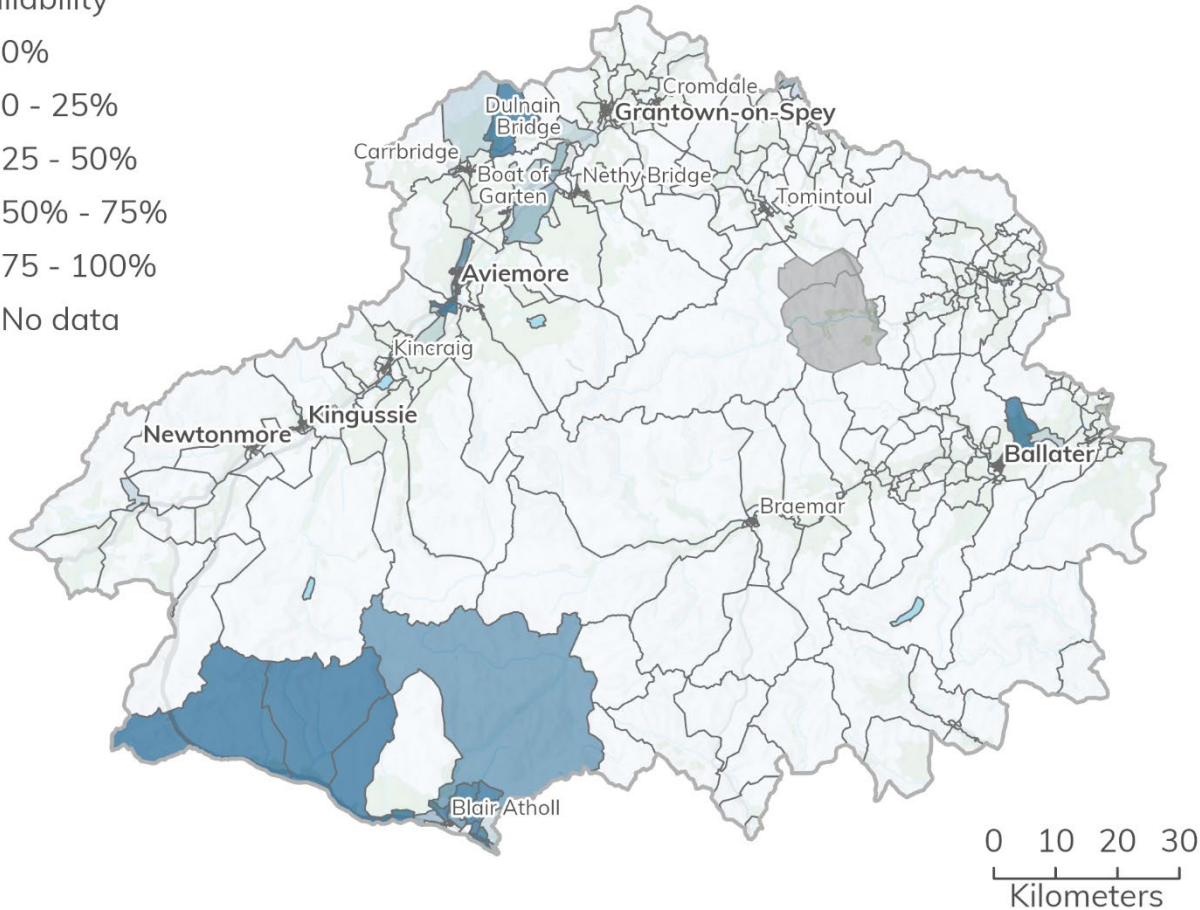


Figure 7 Proportion of premises in the National Park, by postcode area, with Gigabit Broadband availability (Ofcom, 2023). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Ofcom 2026. 2024 (CNPA173).

The majority of the residents in the Cairngorms National Park are unable to achieve ultrafast or gigabit broadband connectivity, presenting particular challenges for those relying on higher broadband speeds for employment or access to services / entertainment online that require them.

Summary by settlement

Based on the data presented within Figure 2 to Figure 7 (CNPA173), Table 3 provides a summary of the availability of broadband connections for the settlements identified in the National Park Partnership Plan’s spatial strategy⁴ (CNPA010). It demonstrates that connection speeds within the Strategic and Intermediate settlements are good and

⁴ See Schedule 1: Plan outcomes for further information.



therefore, in accordance with infrastructure first principles, there are no barriers to growth at these locations.

Table 3 provides a RAG assessment of the current availability of broadband connections for settlements identified in the National Park Partnership Plan’s spatial strategy using the scoring system shown in Table 2.

Table 2 RAG Scoring system for Table 3.

Available throughout the settlement	Available
Available in limited parts of the settlement	Limited availability
Not currently available in any parts of the settlement	Not available

Table 3 Current availability of broadband connections for settlements identified in the National Park Partnership Plan’s spatial strategy. 2024 (CNPA173).

Settlement name	Settlement status	Decent connection	Superfast connection	Ultrafast connection	Gigabit capable connection
Aviemore	Strategic	Available	Available	Available	Available
Ballater	Strategic	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability
Grantown-on-Spey	Strategic	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability
Kingussie	Strategic	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability
Newtonmore	Strategic	Available	Available	Not available	Not available
Blair Atholl	Intermediate	Available	Available	Available	Available
Boat of Garten	Intermediate	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability
Braemar	Intermediate	Available	Available	Not available	Not available
CarrBridge	Intermediate	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability
Cromdale	Intermediate	Available	Available	Not available	Not available
Dulnain Bridge	Intermediate	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability
Kincraig	Intermediate	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability
Nethy Bridge	Intermediate	Available	Available	Not available	Not available
Tomintoul	Intermediate	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability



Settlement name	Settlement status	Decent connection	Superfast connection	Ultrafast connection	Gigabit capable connection
Angus Glens	Rural	Limited availability	Not available	Not available	Not available
Calvine	Rural	Available	Available	Available	Available
Coylumbridge	Rural	Available	Available	Not available	Not available
Dalwhinnie	Rural	Available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Dinnet	Rural	Available	Available	Not available	Not available
Glenlivet ⁵	Rural	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability
Glenmore	Rural	Limited availability	Limited availability	Not available	Not available
Glenshee	Rural	Limited availability	Not available	Not available	Not available
Insh	Rural	Available	Available	Not available	Not available
Inverdrueie	Rural	Available	Available	Not available	Not available
Killiecrankie	Rural	Available	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability
Laggan	Rural	Available	Limited availability	Limited availability	Limited availability
Pitagowan	Rural	Available	Available	Available	Available
Strathdon	Rural	Available	Available	Not available	Not available

Fixed wireless and satellite internet services

Alternative broadband options in the National Park include fixed wireless services and satellite internet services.

Fixed wireless services in rural areas of the National Park provide essential superfast broadband by using radio signals from local masts to reach homes and farms where fibre is scarce, offering alternatives to slow landlines, often with government voucher support for setup. While generally reliable and fast (50 - 100Mbps+), speeds can vary with weather or obstructions.

Alternatively, satellite internet is available everywhere in the National Park and is not obstructed by topography (as long as there is a view of the sky) or location.

⁵ Glenlivet encompasses the villages of Tomnavoulin, Castletown, Minmore, Chapelton, Clashnoir, Drumin, and Authnarrow.



Both services are supported by the R100 Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (page16), with a list of registered suppliers available here:

- <https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-broadband-voucher-scheme/registered-suppliers> (CNPA1237)

These technologies could mean that development may not be constrained to areas that have access to existing fibre infrastructure. However, due to the higher cost of fixed wireless and satellite internet services this is not an optimal solution for significant housing development. Therefore, following an infrastructure first approach the Proposed Plan will aim to support development in locations already served by existing sufficient fibre broadband infrastructure or in areas where planned upgrades will be able to accommodate need.

Resilience

Ofcom's guidance stipulates that service providers should offer at least one resilient solution to ensure access to emergency services for a minimum of one hour during power outages.

This can prove challenging in the National Park, when the solution, often proposed is to use mobile phone access, which presumes a reliable and robust mobile network coverage. This is not universally available across the National Park (see page 41).

Any new development will have the challenge of being resilient enough to withstand and will need to quickly recover from disruptions in the face of increasingly unpredictable challenges.

Fixed broadband implications for Proposed Plan

The evidence indicates that all Strategic and Intermediate settlements within the Cairngorms National Park are well served by superfast broadband coverage, with Aviemore, Blair Atholl, Calvine and Pitagowan benefiting from both access to ultrafast broadband and gigabit capable connectivity. As the Strategic and Intermediate settlements are intended to be the focus for development within the National Park⁶, in accordance with the principle of infrastructure first, there are no barriers to growth or

⁶ See Schedule 1: Plan outcomes further information on the spatial strategy.



the delivery of the indicative housing land requirement of 889 dwellings⁷ arising from broadband connectivity.

Mobile network coverage

Mobile networks and mobile broadband are vital services to the people living, working and visiting in the Cairngorms, due to the extensive areas of remote rural landscape. Mobile networks and mobile broadband are accessed through the use of a SIM card or eSim that is inserted into or registered with a device (such as mobile phone / smart phone, or SIM enabled router also known as a dongle). To operate mobile networks and broadband, the device must receive signal from masts, and each mast can provide their network up to a certain distance/ radius (depending on the geography).

Mobile communications work on radio frequencies. In the UK, Ofcom grant licences to four operators to either purchase or lease a range of frequencies within the radio spectrum on which to run their mobile communications networks. These companies are known as mobile network operators (MNOs).

In the UK this means mobile network operators sit at the top of the pyramid of mobile service providers (with providers like Tesco mobile using O2's infrastructure and network to deliver its services). The four main mobile network operators in the UK are Vodafone UK, EE, O2 and Three. They effectively rent 'radio space' directly from the UK Government. Each of the mobile network operators build and is responsible for its own infrastructure (for example masts, transmitters, and control stations) to run its networks.

Having access to adequate mobile data access is essential for accessing public services for example parking meters in the Cairngorms National Park. In areas where there is limited or no broadband availability it is also vital for residents who need to access digital services.

4G mobile not-spots

In the Cairngorms National Park 4G coverage differs between the four mobile network operators which can be seen by observing the varying not-spot areas for each operator (Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11). The 4G mobile not-spot maps show the geographic of the National Park that receives no 4G coverage from a given mobile network operator. The spatial mapping data used in this section is derived from the published 4G coverage available on the mobile network operators' individual websites.

⁷ See Schedule 13: Housing for further information on housing development.



Currently (in 2024) EE has the best 4G coverage in the National Park. It is worth noting that given the topography of the Cairngorms National Park interior there are large areas of the National Park that receive no signal from any of the mobile network operators. The data used to produce the 4G and 5G not-spot maps comes directly from the mobile network operators publicly available mapping showing coverage available through the service providers websites (produced using data extracted in March 2024).

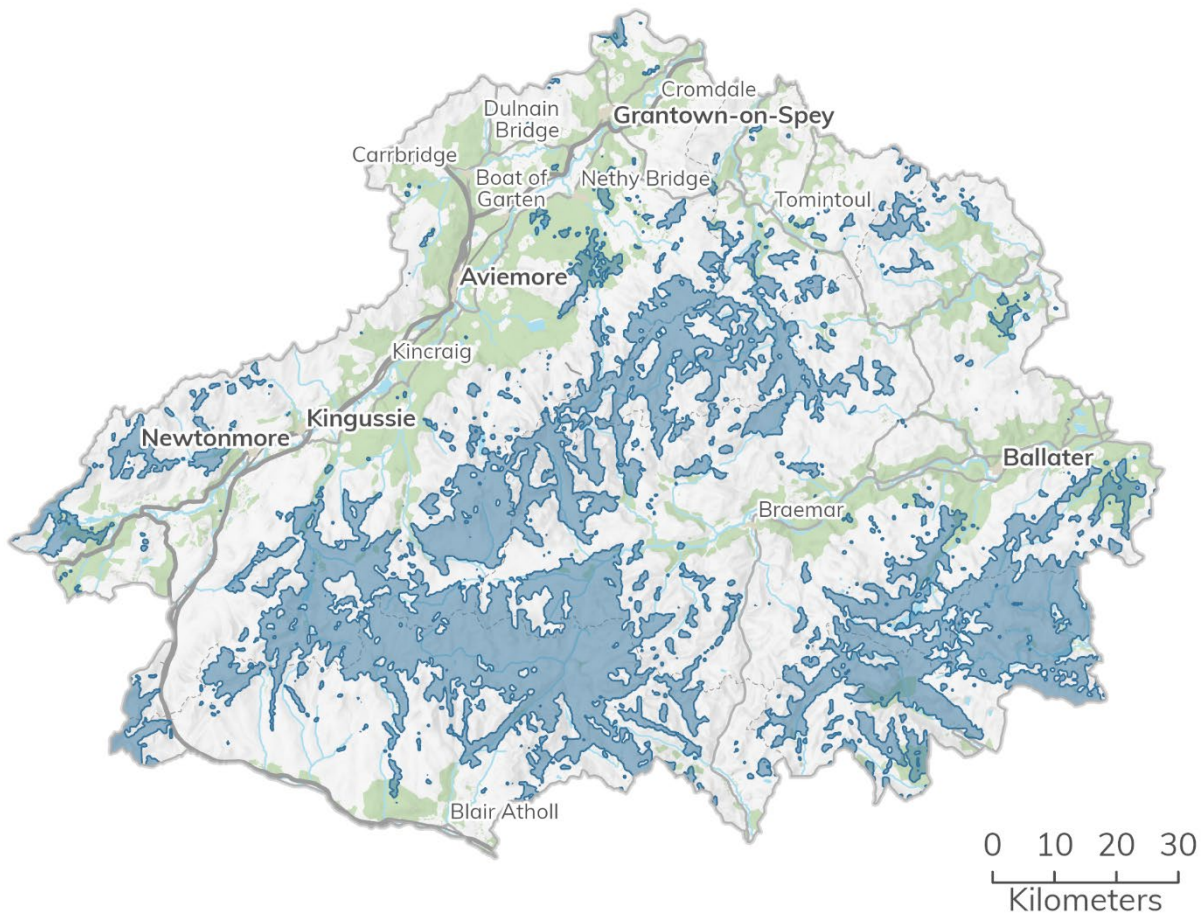


Figure 8 Map showing the EE 4G Not Spots in the National Park (March 2024). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © EE 2026.

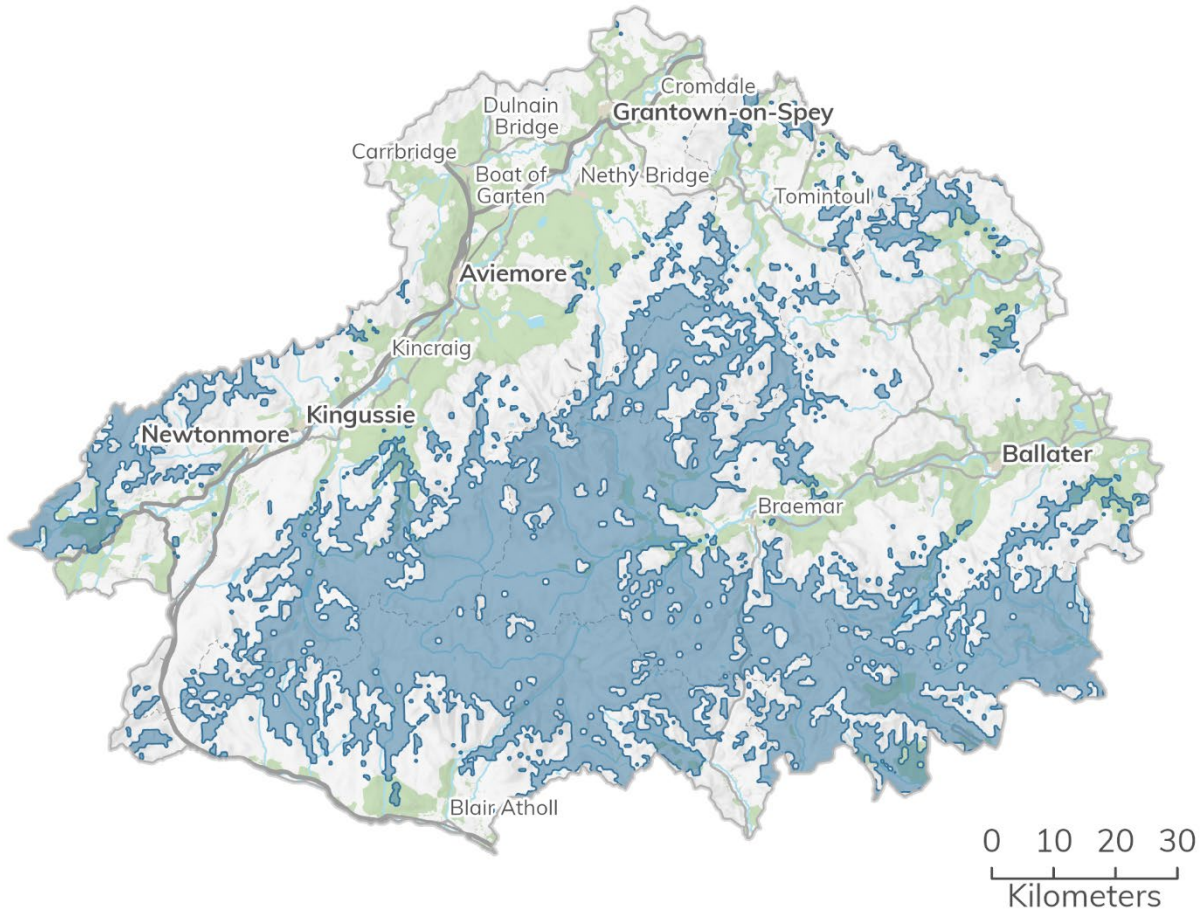


Figure 9 Map showing the O2 4G Not Spots in the National Park (March 2024). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © O2 2026.

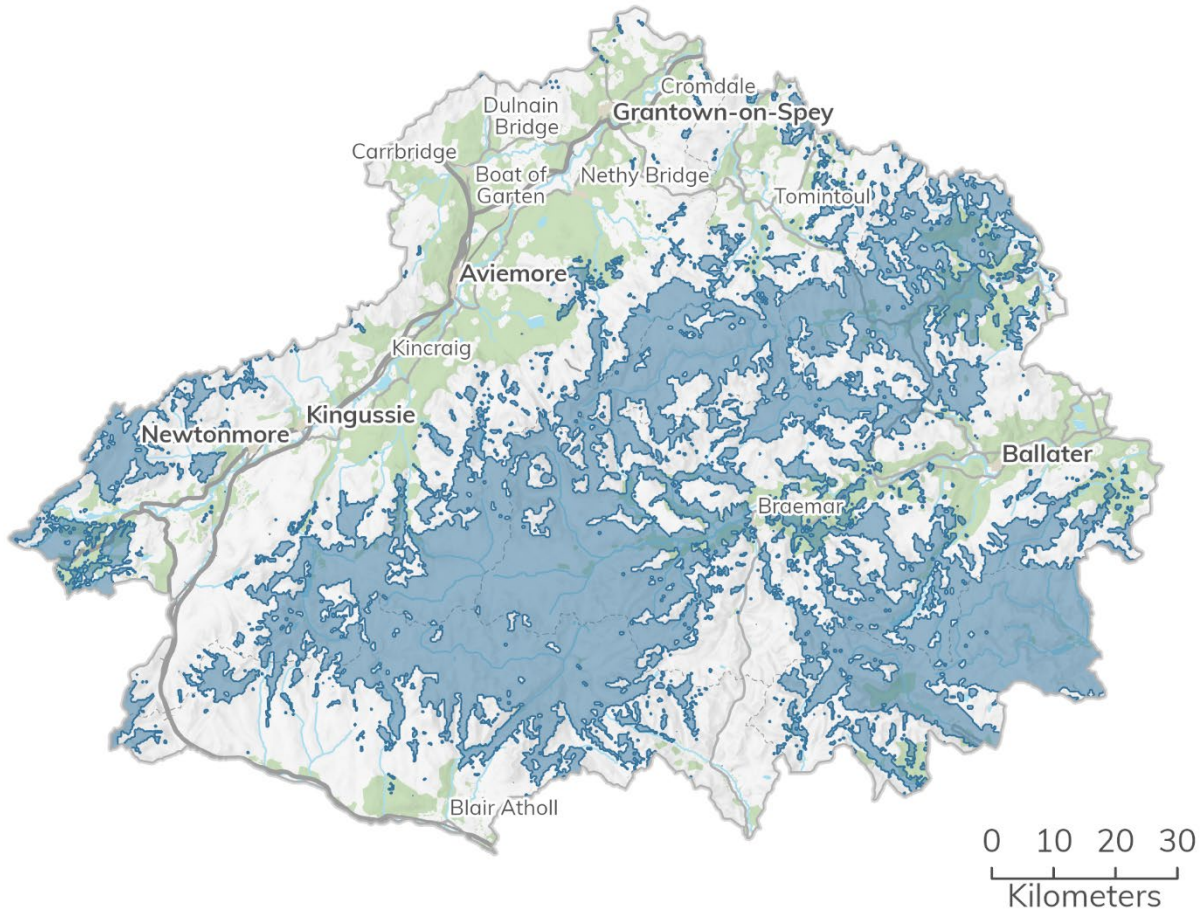


Figure 10 Map showing the Three 4G not spots in the National Park (March 2024). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Three 2026.

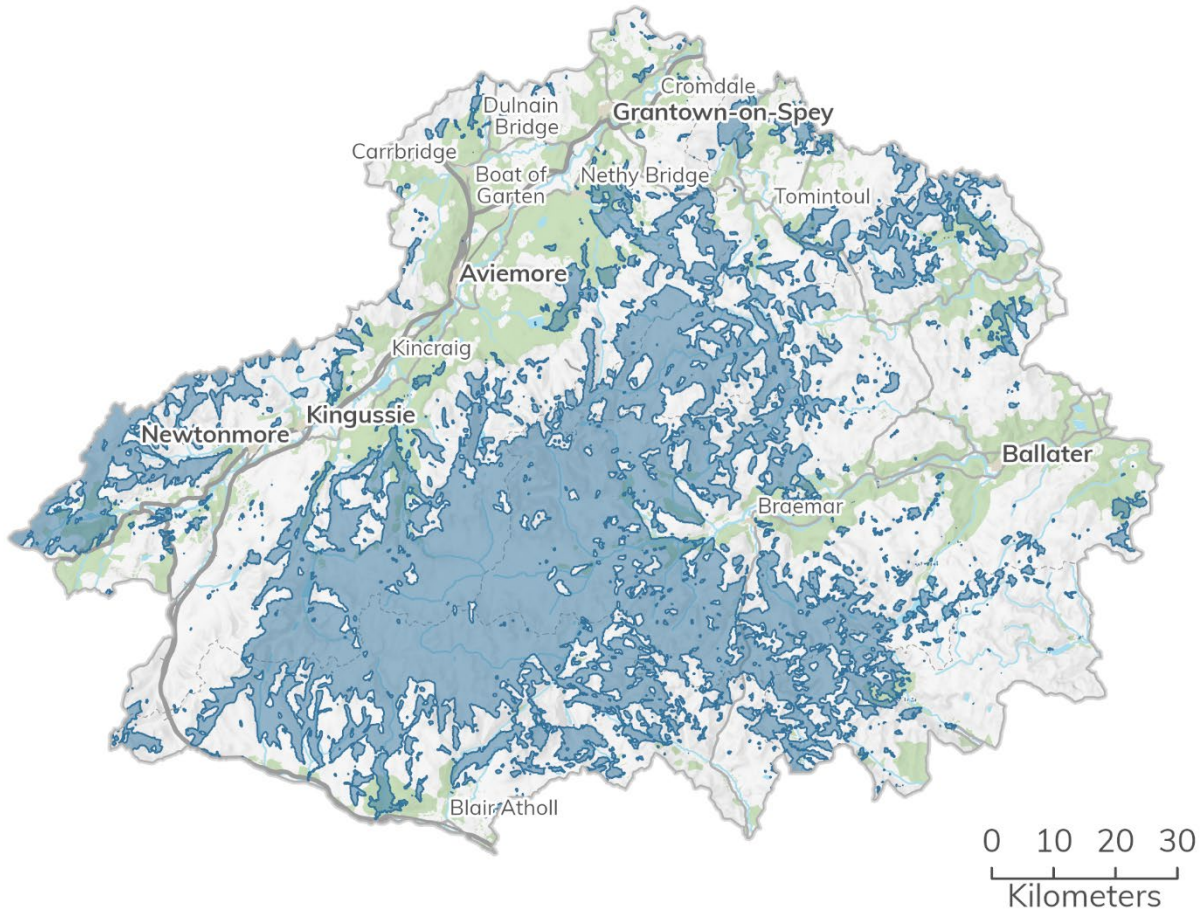


Figure 11 Map showing the Vodafone 4G Not spots in the National Park (March 2024). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © Vodafone 2026.

A total 4G not-spot area is a geographic area that receives no 4G coverage from any Mobile Network Operators (Figure 12). In 2023, 7% of the UK, by geography, is in a 4G total not spot (CNPA173). In contrast in the National Park approximately 8.8% (which is approximately 400km²) of the land area is classed as a total 4G mobile not-spot (not covered by any of the four mobile network operators).

A partial mobile not-spot is a geographic area served by at least one, but not all four mobile network operators. In the National Park approximately 50% (approximately 2250km²) of the area is considered as a partial mobile not-spot for 4G mobile services (Figure 12).

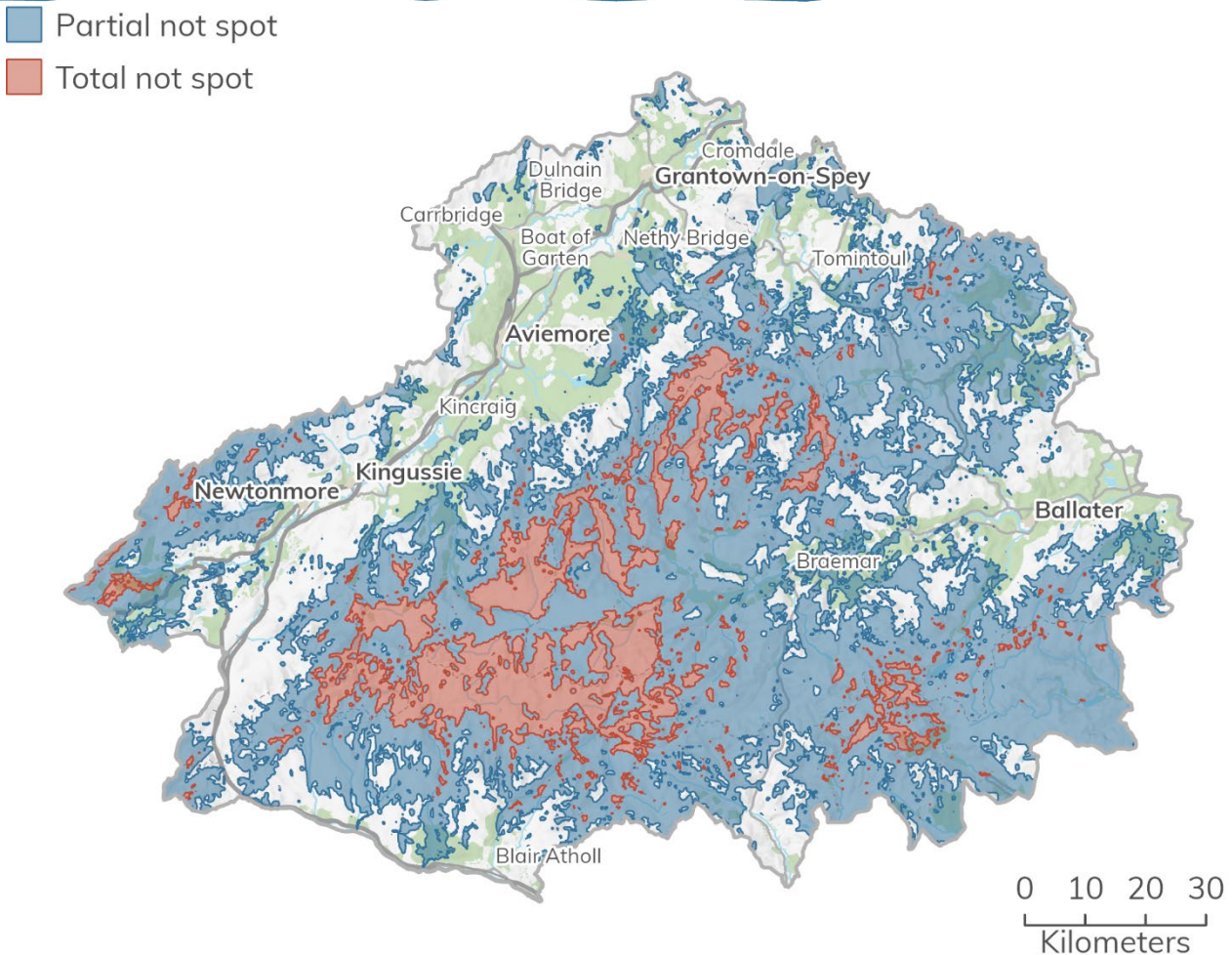


Figure 12 Partial and total 4G not-spots (March 2024). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © EE, O2, Three, Vodafone 2026.

Mobile network operators have started, switching off their 3G networks⁸. Some other devices other than mobiles relying on 3G services, such as care alarms, security alarms and payment terminals, will also lose connectivity. In addition to the not-spot areas, customers who previously had a 3G only connection will be affected.

The Shared Rural Network

Launched in 2020, the Shared Rural Network programme (CNPA162) was initiated to improve 4G coverage across the UK. The Shared Rural Network (SRN) aimed to deliver reliable mobile broadband to 95% of the UK, addressing the digital divide by improving 4G coverage in the areas that need it most.

⁸ By all major networks by the end of 2025 to make way for faster 4G and 5G (CNPA173)



The UK Government published an update on the Shared Rural Network total not-spots project in June 2025 (CNPA480). People living and working in mobile signal blackspots across Scotland will be prioritised under changes to the UK Government's rollout of 4G coverage.

The Shared Rural Network programme has achieved its overarching target a year ahead of schedule, with over 95% of the UK now within range of a 4G mobile signal as a result of all Mobile Network Operators delivering new infrastructure. The programme has also met its road and premises targets which were due in January 2027 and delivered more than 50 government funded mast upgrades as part of the Shared Rural Network's Extended Area Service (EAS) project.

The programme is now focusing on addressing the connectivity challenges in more hard to reach areas of Great Britain that are total not-spots, for example in areas with no mobile signal from any operator. The UK Government have spent time engaging with local communities and interest groups, especially in Scotland, to understand how best to maximise the benefits of future mobile upgrades. As a result of this engagement the UK Government and the operators have agreed to prioritise new mobile infrastructure for areas where it will have the biggest positive impact, primarily where people live, work, or travel, including walking and hiking routes.

The Shared Rural Network has published new targets (CNPA162) which aim to see coverage in the Highland and Islands increase from 26% to 63% in terms of 4G coverage from all mobile network operators and from 73% to 88% from at least one mobile network operator. In the North East region they forecast and increase from 59% to 77% in terms of 4G coverage from all mobile network operators and from 86% to 94% from at least one mobile network operator.

More information is available on the Shared Rural Network website (CNPA162). The Proposed Plan should consider supporting development that supports an increase in 4G connectivity where possible.

Scottish 4G infill programme

The Scottish Government's Scottish 4G Infill Programme (S4GI) (CNPA1244) aims to deliver 4G infrastructure and services in 55 mobile 'not spots' in rural and island parts of Scotland. The Scottish 4G Infill Programme is being delivered in partnership with WHP Telecoms, Cellnex UK and the Scottish Futures Trust. S4GI was part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support activity in the Highlands and Islands.



The progress update (CNPA1244) includes an update on works at Clova with improvements complete meaning 4G services are now available from EE in the area. The Glen Clova area is partially covered by the Cairngorms National Park boundary and extends down into the Angus Local Authority area.

Installing new masts is a lengthy process and which includes agreeing terms with landowners, gaining planning permission and a commitment from at least one mobile network operator (EE, O2, Three, Vodafone) to providing 4G mobile services from that site.

WHP Telecoms Ltd. is currently involved in intensive discussions with potential landlords, planning authorities, communities and mobile network operators to achieve these three consents.

The Scottish 4G infill programme will provide regular progress updates on their website with clear reasons should any masts be unable to progress.

5G Coverage

There is very limited 5G mobile coverage currently in the Cairngorms National Park (as of March 2024).

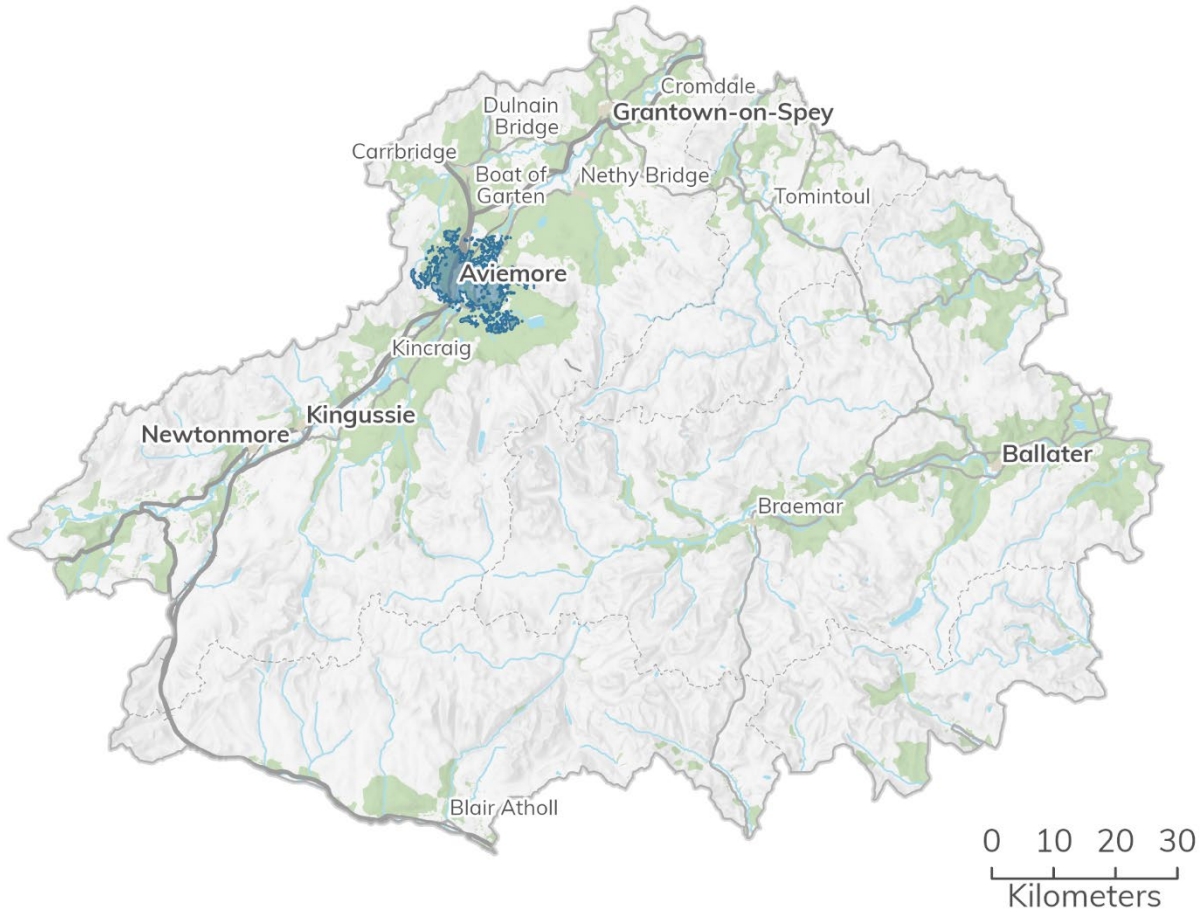


Figure 13 Map showing the current 5G availability from EE in the National Park, (March 2024). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © EE 2026.



Only EE and Three publish 5G availability in the National Park in Aviemore (Figure 13, Figure 14). O2 and Vodafone currently do not offer or publish availability on 5G availability anywhere in the National Park.

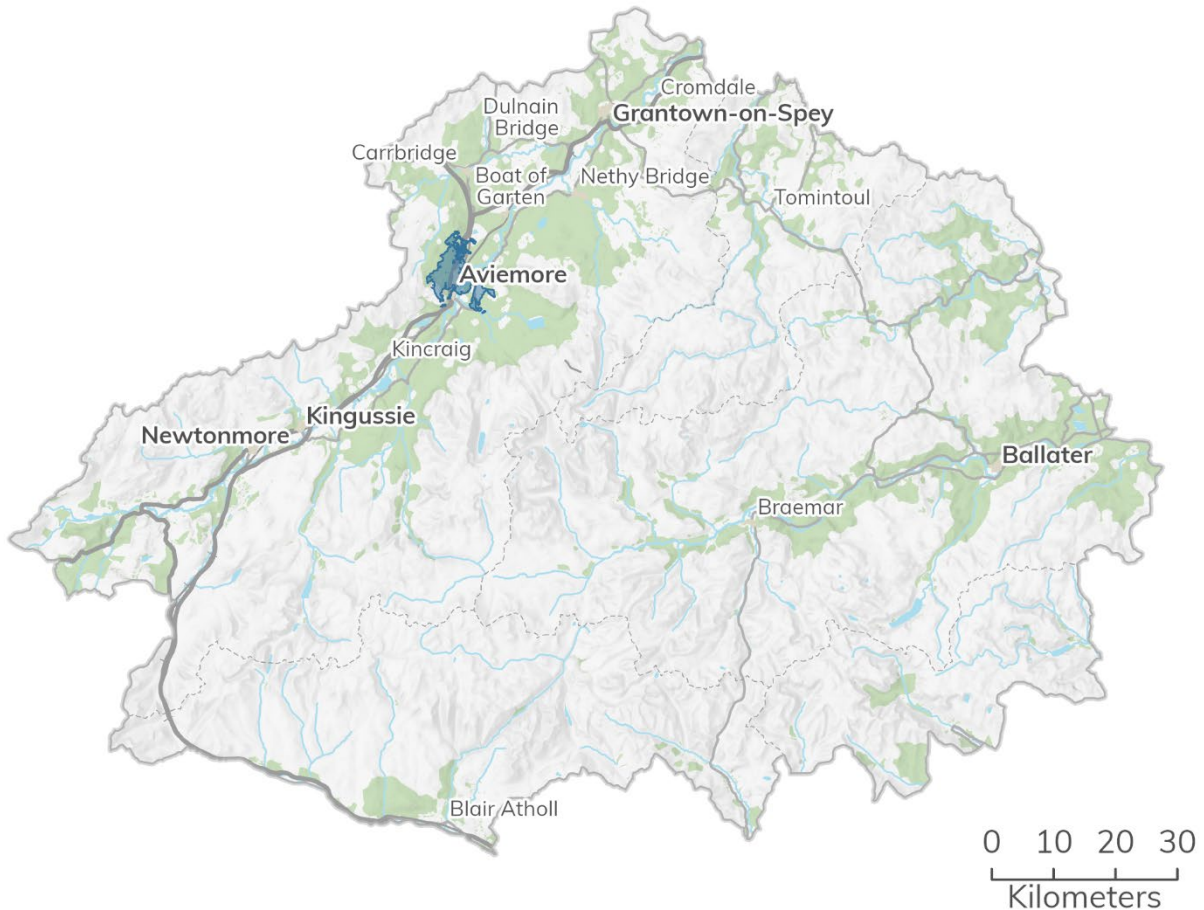


Figure 14 Map showing the current 5G availability from Three in the National Park (March 2024).
Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey
AC0000821810. Contains data © Three 2026.

The Shared Rural Network is focused on extending 4G coverage. There is, at present, no equivalent funding programme to support the rollout of 5G, although masts built under the Shared Rural Network could potentially host 5G equipment (CNPA163).

Summary by settlement

Based on the data presented within Figure 8 to Figure 14, Table 4 provides a summary of mobile network coverage for the settlements identified in the National Park Partnership Plan's spatial strategy⁹ (CNPA008). It demonstrates that coverage within

⁹ See Schedule 1: Plan outcomes for further information.



the Strategic and Intermediate settlements is good and therefore, in accordance with infrastructure first principles, there are no barriers to growth at these locations.

Table 4 Current mobile network coverage for settlements identified in the National Park Partnership Plan's spatial strategy (CNPA008).

Settlement name	Settlement status	Covered by partial 4G not spot?	Covered by total 4G not spot?	Has 5G coverage?
Aviemore	Strategic	No	No	Yes
Ballater	Strategic	No	No	No
Grantown-on-Spey	Strategic	No	No	No
Kingussie	Strategic	No	No	No
Newtonmore	Strategic	No	No	No
Blair Atholl	Intermediate	No	No	No
Boat of Garten	Intermediate	No	No	No
Braemar	Intermediate	Partially	No	No
CarrBridge	Intermediate	No	No	No
Cromdale	Intermediate	No	No	No
Dulnain Bridge	Intermediate	No	No	No
Kincraig	Intermediate	No	No	No
Nethy Bridge	Intermediate	No	No	No
Tomintoul	Intermediate	No	No	No
Angus Glens	Rural	Yes	Yes	No
Calvine	Rural	No	No	No
Coylumbridge	Rural	No	No	Yes
Dalwhinnie	Rural	No	No	No
Dinnet	Rural	No	No	No
Glenlivet ¹⁰	Rural	Partially	No	No
Glenmore	Rural	Partially	No	No
Glenshee	Rural	No	No	No
Insh	Rural	No	No	No
Inverdrue	Rural	No	No	No
Killiecrankie	Rural	No	No	No
Laggan	Rural	No	No	No
Pitagowan	Rural	No	No	No
Strathdon	Rural	Yes	No	No

¹⁰ Glenlivet encompasses the villages of Tomnavoulin, Castletown, Minmore, Chapelton, Clashnoir, Drumin, and Authnarrow.



Mobile network coverage implications for Proposed Plan

The evidence indicates that all Strategic and Intermediate settlements within the Cairngorms National Park are well served by 4G mobile data coverage, with the Aviemore benefiting from access to 5G coverage. As the Strategic and Intermediate settlements are intended to be the focus for development within the National Park¹¹, in accordance with the principle of infrastructure first, there are no barriers to growth or the delivery of the indicative housing land requirement of 889 dwellings¹² arising from mobile network connectivity. However, many rural areas experience gaps in coverage, primarily due to the challenges posed by topography.

Telecommunication masts

There are 76 telecommunication masts located within the Cairngorms National Park at 70 different locations (Figure 15). The masts serve one, two, three or all four of the mobile network operators depending on their location. The information was taken from the open source website: cellmapper.net and independently verified by a planning officer using satellite mapping. The distribution of masts across the National Park reflects the 4G mobile partial and total not-spot areas shown in Figure 12. Although the settlements are generally well served by 4G availability by at least one mobile network operator, the interior due to its topography is where the majority worst connectivity is experienced.

¹¹ See Schedule 1: Plan outcomes further information on the spatial strategy.

¹² See Schedule 13: Housing for further information on housing development.

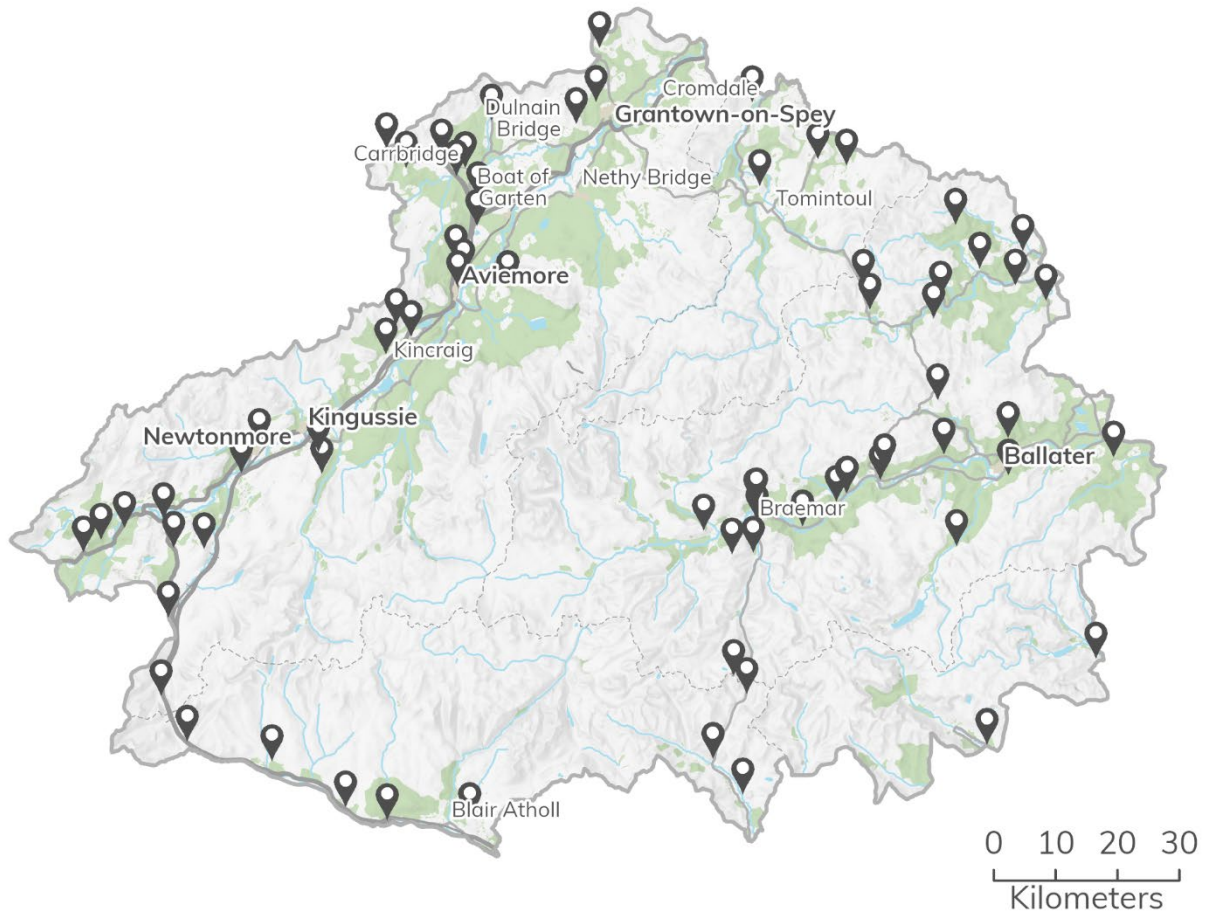


Figure 15 Telecommunication mast location in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © cellmapper.net, 2026. (CNPA174).

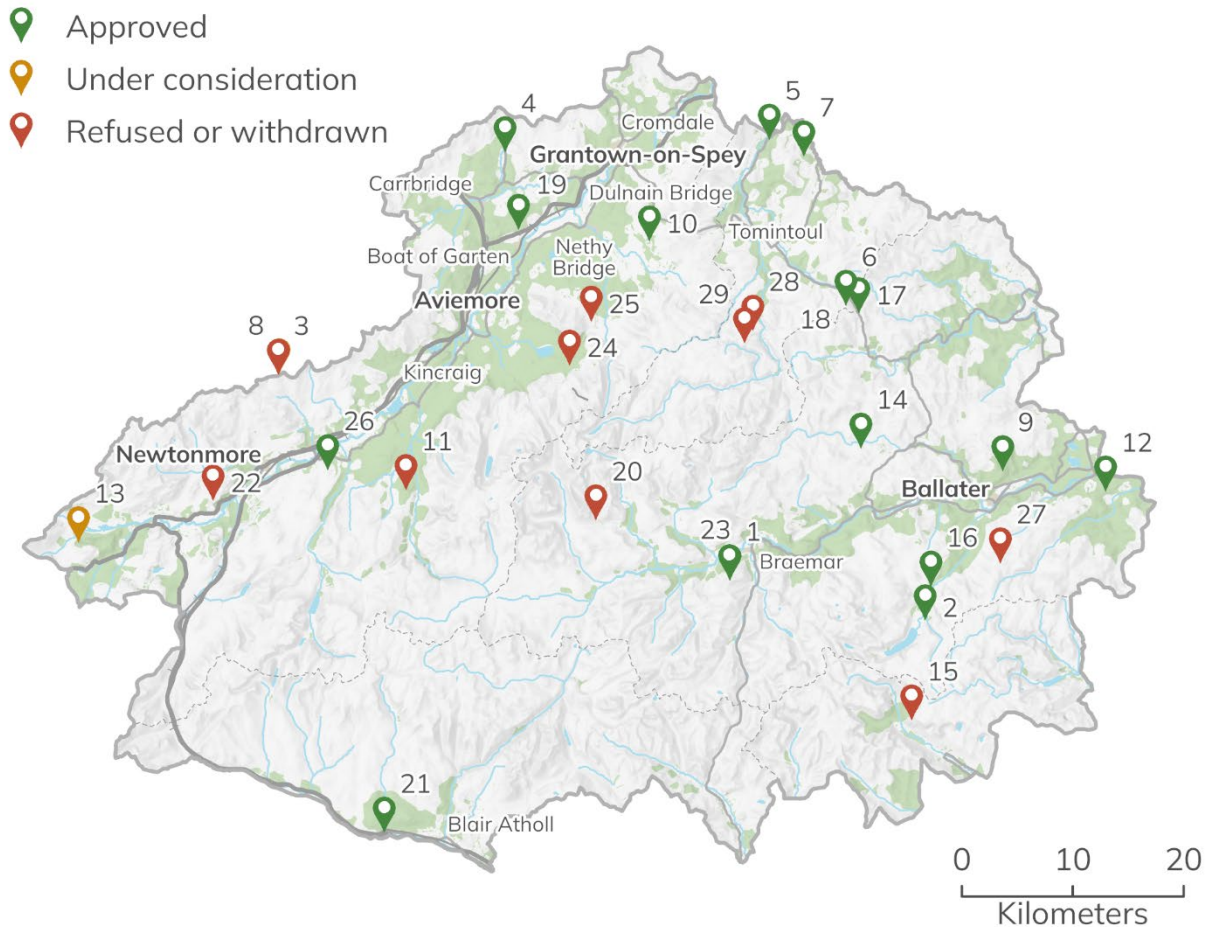


Figure 16 Telecommunication planning applications 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

In the Cairngorms National Park during the last five years (2021 – 2025) (Table 5) 17 planning applications for new telecommunication masts, replacements or associated development have been approved, eight have been withdrawn, two refused and a further two are currently under consideration by the relevant local authority (Figure 16, Table 5).

In terms of new telecommunication masts in new locations during the last five years (2021 – 2025) (Table 5) – 10 applications have been approved and two have been refused.



Table 5 Details of the telecommunication planning applications from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025 in the Cairngorms National Park area relating to the numbered entries on Figure 16 (Status of applications correct as of 1 January 2026)

Year	Planning Application reference	Status	New mast permitted	Description	Address	Figure 16 Map reference
2021	2021/0099/DET, APP/2021/0568	Approved	Yes	Erection of temporary 27m mast associated antennas and ancillary infrastructure.	Morrone Hill Radio Facilities, Braemar, Aberdeenshire.	1
2021	2021/0169/DET, APP/2021/1089	Approved	Yes	Alterations to existing telecommunications base station including replacement of 21m high tower with 32.5m high tower and ancillary equipment.	Site At Spittal of Glenmuick, Glen Muick, Ballater, Aberdeenshire.	2
2021	2021/0328/DET, 21/04253/FUL	Withdrawn		Erection of 6m high lattice radio mast and equipment cabinet.	Land 4825M NW Of Keepers Cottage Pitmain Kingussie.	3
2021	2021/0357/DET, 21/05077/FUL	Approved	Yes	Erection of 20m high lattice telecommunications tower, installation of telecommunications cabinets.	Land 800M NE of Auchterteang, Carrbridge.	4
2022	22/00125/APP	Approved	Yes	Proposed 25m high steel lattice tower C/W headframe on new 7m x 7m RC concrete base and associated ancillary works.	South Of Altnaglander Cottages, Ballindalloch, Moray.	5
2022	2022/0048/DET, 22/00136/APP	Approved	Yes	Proposed 25m high steel lattice tower and associated ancillary works on land at Beinn Chruinnich Ballindalloch Moray.	Land At Beinn Chruinnich, Ballindalloch, Moray.	6
2022	2022/0238/DET, 22/01012/APP	Approved	Yes	Proposed 30m high steel lattice tower on new 7m x 7m concrete base and associated ancillary works at The Clash – Western Access Track Glenlivet Estate Tomnavoulin Ballindalloch.	The Clash – Western Access Track, Glenlivet Estate, Tomnavoulin, Ballindalloch, Moray	7
2022	2022/0266/DET, 22/03688/FUL	Under consideration		Erection of 8m high lattice radio mast.	Land 4825M NW of Keepers Cottage Pitmain Kingussie	8



Year	Planning Application reference	Status	New mast permitted	Description	Address	Figure 16 Map reference
2022	2022/0357/DET, APP/2022/2299	Approved		Installation of ground based cabinet, cable tray and ancillary development.	Base Station, Tullich, Invercauld Estate, Pass of Ballater, Aberdeenshire, AB35 5SB.	9
2022	2022/0401/DET, 22/05282/FUL	Approved	Yes	Erection of 30m high telecoms mast and ancillary development.	Land 390M East of Laggandhu, Nethy Bridge.	10
2023	2023/0083/DET, 23/00491/FUL	Withdrawn		Erection of 25m high lattice telecoms tower, equipment cabins, access track.	Land 925M SW of Stronetoper, Kingussie.	11
2023	2023/0079/DET, APP/2023/0223	Approved		5m extension to existing 15m tower and installation of two 300mm dishes.	Telecommunications Mast, Hillhead, Glen Tanar, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire.	12
2023	2023/0116/DET, 23/00818/FUL	Under consideration		Erection of 25m high telecoms tower, antenna, equipment cabins, compound and formation of access track.	Land 1200M SW of Stalkers Cottage, Laggan.	13
2023	2023/0124/DET, APP/2023/0310	Approved	Yes	Erection of a 25m High Lattice Tower with Associated Equipment and Ancillary Development.	Land At, Baldownie, Invercauld Estate, Aberdeenshire.	14
2023	2023/0274/DET, 2023/0274/DET	Withdrawn		Proposed development of a new telecommunications base station installation comprising of a 25m height lightweight lattice tower with 3no. radio antennas, 2no. 600mm dishes, 1no. 300mm dish, radio equipment housing, an electrical generator with built in fuel tank and associated ancillary development located within a new compound enclosed with a 1.0m high x 1.0m wide gabion wall on three side deer proof fencing with access gates.	Red Craig, 900M East of Braedownie, Glen Clova.	15
2023	2023/0165/DET, APP/2023/0671	Approved		Installation of replacement dish of 300mm diameter at a height of 8m on existing wooden monopole.	Mountain Post Repeater Site, Craig Megen Balmoral Estate, Aberdeenshire , AB35 5SU.	16



Year	Planning Application reference	Status	New mast permitted	Description	Address	Figure 16 Map reference
2023	2023/0205/DET, APP/2023/0827	Approved		Upgrade to the existing telecommunications site.	Lecht Ski Centre, Strathdon, Tomintoul, Aberdeenshire, AB36 8YP.	17
2023	2023/0272/DET, 23/00975/APP	Approved	Yes	Remove 12.5m lattice tower and replace with 17.5m lattice tower with existing Airwave antennae and dishes attached install 3 x cabinets a generator and an electricity meter cabinet and erect 1.8m high exmesh fencing on Land at Beinn Chruinnich Ballindalloch Moray.	Land At Beinn Chruinnich, Ballindalloch, Moray.	18
2023	2023/0334/DET, 23/03625/FUL	Approved	Yes	Erection of 25m high telecommunications mast, antennae, dishes, cabinets, fenced compound, construction of 20m access track.	Land 165M NW of Lower Corronich, Boat of Garten.	19
2023	2023/0364/DET, APP/2023/1574	Withdrawn		Installation of 20.0m lattice tower, 3no antennas, 2no dishes, 15No RRU's, 3no Hlcs, 9no Bobs, 3no. Sbcs, 1no. Eltek PSU, foul weather enclosure, 2no cabinets, generator, 1no V-SAT dish, 1.8m high compound, drainage system and ancillary development.	Land approximately 70M North of Walking Trail, Luibeg Footbridge, Forest of Mar, Inverey, Braemar, AB35 5YJ.	20
2023	2023/0397/DET, 23/01574/FLL	Approved	Yes	Erection of a telecommunications mast and installation of ancillary cabinets.	Land 130 Metres South West of Clan Donnachaidh Museum, Pitagowan, Blair Atholl , PH18 5TW.	21
2023	2023/0418/DET, 23/04700/FUL	Refused		Installation of 25m high telecommunications mast and ancillary development within fenced compound.	Land 640M NW Of Gate House, Newtonmore.	22
2024	2024/0049/DET, APP/2024/0087	Approved		Installation of antennas and transmission dishes on existing mast, ground based apparatus and ancillary development.	Morrone Hill Radio Facilities, Braemar, Aberdeenshire, AB35 5YB.	23



Year	Planning Application reference	Status	New mast permitted	Description	Address	Figure 16 Map reference
2024	2024/0150/DET, 24/02089/FUL	Withdrawn		Erection of 25m high telecoms mast, equipment cabinets, formation of compound.	Land 1425M South of The National Outdoor Training Centre, Glenmore, Aviemore.	24
2024	2024/0179/DET, 24/02817/FUL	Withdrawn		Erection of 22.5m high telecoms mast, antennae, equipment cabinets, fenced compound and formation of 25m long access track.	Land 410M NE Of Ryvoan Bothy Glenmore Aviemore.	25
2024	2024/0185/DET, 24/02534/FUL	Approved	Yes	Removal of FM transmitter, and erection of 20m high lattice tower, cabinets, formation of access track.	Land 755M SE Of Taigh Nan Critheann, Kingussie,	26
2024	2024/0305/DET, APP/2024/1783	Withdrawn		Installation of 32.5m lattice tower within fenced compound with associated infrastructure and formation of access track.	Am Mullach, Glen Muick Estate, Ballater, Aberdeenshire, AB35 5SU.	27
2025	2025/0008/DET, 24/01903/APP	Refused		Proposed telecommunications installation comprising of a new 15.0m high lattice tower on new concrete base, 3no shared antennas, 2no dishes, 4no cabinets, 2no 9m (hub height) micro turbines, a solar array, 1no generator compound and ancillary development.	Land At Geal Charn Lower, Glenavon Estate, Inchory Lodge, Tomintoul, Ballindalloch, Moray, AB37 9HX.	28



2025	2025/0044/DET,	Withdrawn		Proposed telecommunications installation comprising of a new 20.0m high lattice tower on new concrete base, 3no shared antennas, 2no dishes, 5no cabinets, 2no 9m (hub height) micro turbines, a solar array, 1no generator compound and ancillary development.	Cnpa Cnaochann Aitinn, Glenavon Estate, Inchory Lodge, Tomintoul, Ballidalloch, Moray, AB37 9HX.	29
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UK transition from analogue to digital landlines

Communications providers in the UK are replacing the technology they use to provide fixed telephone networks (landlines). For most customers, the upgrade is expected to be complete by January 2027 (CNPA986).

Ofcom has published guidance (CNPA984) on treating vulnerable customers fairly and expectations on telecoms providers to ensure they support vulnerable or at-risk customers throughout the upgrade process to digital phone lines. Ofcom states that communications providers should take steps to identify at-risk customers and engage in effective communications to ensure all eligible customers are protected throughout the upgrade process.

In December 2023, The UK's leading communications providers (such as Sky, BT, VMO2 and TalkTalk) agreed to a Charter of commitments for protecting telecare users and other vulnerable customers (CNPA985).

January 2024 saw the formation of the Telecare Action Board (TAB), which has brought together around 30 organisations from government, the telecoms and telecare sectors, industry bodies, local authorities and regulatory stakeholders to identify and protect telecare users and those with additional needs before they switch to digital.

A second Charter for Network Operators was also signed in March 2024 (CNPA987). Through this Charter, companies such as Openreach, CityFibre and CommunityFibre, agreed to a set of commitments that will ensure telecare customers have compatible solutions in place following the upgrade.

To identify and protect vulnerable customers and those with additional needs, Local Authorities and telecare providers have been asked to disclose which phone lines have telecare devices on them through data sharing agreements with communications providers.

Other planned digital infrastructure upgrade works in the Cairngorms National Park

Openreach

Openreach are committed to delivering Ultrafast full fibre broadband to 25 million homes and business across the UK by 2026 supporting the UK Governments goal to deliver Gigabit capable broadband to more than 85% of the UK. The work is planned by



exchange. Openreach offers an interactive map on their website which displays information on whether an exchange is in their build plan (CNPA988). Openreach has also published the Full Fibre Broadband Programme Build (2025) (CNPA1239) which provides a list of all the exchanges and locations currently announced as part of the Full Fibre Broadband Build Plan. Table 6 contains a list of Openreach’s FTTP (Fibre to the premises) locations within the current Fibre First Towns, Cities and Boroughs Build Programme as well as Market towns and villages build Programmes in the National Park (CNPA1239). Openreach are planning to upgrade services in Granttown-on-Spey and Ballater, with full fibre expected to be available in the next 12 months (before October 2026).

Table 6 Exchanges currently announced as part of Openreach’s Full Fibre Broadband Build Plan for all exchange areas that overlap the geography of the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA1239). Data correct as of October 2025.

Exchange	Building in this area soon, with services available in the next 12 months	Building in the future no confirmed date	Finished main part of build	Stop Sell activated ¹³
Aboyne			Yes	
Aviemore			Yes	Yes
Ballater	Yes			
Granttown-on-Spey	Yes			
Pitlochry		Yes		

In the Dulnain Bridgæ, Glenkindie and Blair Atholl exchange areas, Openreach report (CNPA988) that they have built Ultrafast Full Fibre broadband to many of the homes and businesses in these areas through Openreach’s smaller and funded build programmes and do not have any further plans to build in these areas.

Cairngorm Broadband

The Cairngorm Broadband network is planned to be delivered by Scotnet – Scotland’s largest rural broadband provider.

With much of the Cairngorms and surrounding areas poorly serviced by BT’s legacy copper broadband network, Scotnet offers a potential solution to homes and businesses

¹³ Openreach Stop Sell is when BT Openreach stops selling traditional copper based phone lines.



which have been deemed to be technically and or/commercially unviable by BT, and therefore won't be served under either the Reaching 100% scheme or commercial deployment plans.

The organisation utilises the grants available to all unserved properties by Scottish Government. The grant can be used with a registered supplier on the Government's Broadband Voucher Scheme framework (Scotnet is one) and could be aggregated with others to form the capital budget for the deployment of new infrastructure.

As a supplier on the scheme, Scotnet are creating a new super fast network serving a large part of the Cairngorm National Park, together with the areas to the North and East which will fall within their proposed coverage area.

More details on the Cairngorm Broadband Project can be found here:

- <https://www.cairngormbroadband.com/about/> (CNPA989)

Highland Broadband Project

The Highland Broadband Project is run by Lothian Broadband Networks Ltd (LBN). Since 2015, Lothian Broadband Networks have been focused on closing the digital divide by rolling out industry leading gigabit capable fibre broadband to towns and villages who were otherwise being left behind by other providers. In 2020, Lothian Broadband Networks acquired Highland Wireless, signalling the start of the companies move into the Highlands of Scotland.

The full fibre network being installed in the Highlands is the fastest network being built anywhere in the UK, capable of symmetrical 10Gbit/s speeds; it is also resilient for future needs as technology develops and becomes more demanding on connectivity. Lothian Broadband Networks contracts also offer their own Smart WiFi+ solution. The smart WiFi+ solution offered by Lothian Broadband Networks delivers consistent WIFI connections across the whole property.

Within the National Park full fibre networks are being installed in the following settlements throughout 2024:

- Grantown on Spey
- Kingussie
- Kincaig
- Newtonmore.



More details on the Highland Broadband Project can be found here:

- <https://highlandbroadband.com/> (CNPA990)

Evidence gaps

No outstanding evidence gaps have been identified.

Summary of stakeholder engagement

Engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities. conveyed that digital exclusion was a major barrier for employment stating that poor connectivity limits access to services and by extension employment, and that investment in digital infrastructure is needed to support those who are self employed as well as aid in fostering community connection (CNPA028).

Engagement with children and young people revealed calls for the provision of public Wi-Fi across strategic and intermediate settlements within the National Park, with numerous suggestions for local gathering spaces to act as hotspot locations. The primary rationale for this request related to safety, enabling young people to communicate with friends and family while socialising. Although network coverage is continuing to improve across the National Park and cellular signal is generally available within strategic settlements, concerns were raised regarding the quality and reliability of coverage in certain locations, including Grantown-on-Spey.

Participants also highlighted difficulties in accessing information due to poor website design and under publicised mobile applications, resulting in events, volunteering opportunities and initiatives taking place across the National Park being overlooked or the public being unaware of their existence. (CNPA027, CNPA058, CNPA681, CNPA682, CNPA683, CNPA833, CNPA834, CNPA835 and CNPA836).

Engagement with the Aviemore / Cairngorms 2030 Planning Power game displayed that some residents could feel a sense of isolation due to poor coverage of Wi-Fi access in rural neighbourhoods citing that this was a barrier to access concerning working from home as well as feeling 'cut off' from social networks throughout the National Park. This in addition to a lack of effective dissemination of information, proved to be another barrier to groups and individuals from being able to engage fully with their local communities. (CNPA1105 and CNPA1104)

Across multiple groups, players emphasised that digital infrastructure is 'fundamental to modern life', particularly for remote communities. Reliable connectivity was seen as critical for work, education, healthcare, social inclusion, and attracting younger



populations. Although there was discussion surrounding telephone masts and their visual impact on the landscape.

The importance of digital access was amplified by references to hybrid working and remote learning. Participants argued that poor connectivity limits opportunities and deepens rural urban divides.

Public engagement on the schedule (See CNPA1360 for engagement version) was carried out from 26 August – 4 October 2024. Seven completed responses were received (CNPA1340).

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 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 (CNPA004), in particular the fourth aim ‘to promote sustainable economic, social and cultural development of the area’s communities’.
- 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 (CNPA008).

There are no digital connectivity issues in any of the settlements within the National Park where development is to be focused in accordance with the National Park Partnership Plan’s spatial strategy¹⁴ (CNPA010). This supports the delivery of the indicative housing land requirement of 889 dwellings¹⁵ and the infrastructure first approach. In its preparation the Proposed Plan should therefore seek to:

- Focus new development within areas with the best potential for digital connectivity.
- Ensure the citing and delivery of digital infrastructure should ensure the impacts to natural heritage are avoided / minimised.
- Ensure that where possible new development is serviced by a minimum superfast broadband connectivity (30Mbit/s).

¹⁴ See Schedule 1: Plan outcomes further information on the spatial strategy.

¹⁵ See Schedule 13: Housing for further information on housing development.



- Support new telecommunication masts that provide improved connectivity within the digital connectivity priority area identified in the National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027.
- Limit the use of fossil fuelled generators for powering masts.
- Promote an 'end of use' policy so that if masts become redundant, they should be removed.

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)
- Lindsay Smith (C094)

Historic Environment Scotland (C002)

Historic Environment Scotland agreed that the evidence presented correctly identifies the characteristics of the Cairngorms National Park. They did not know of any additional information that would help inform the preparation of the next Local Development Plan and agreed that the correct implications for the next Local Development Plan had been identified.

NatureScot (C004)

NatureScot agreed that the evidence presented in this report correctly identifies the characteristics of the Cairngorms National Park. Although NatureScot agreed that the evidence presented in this report is sufficient to inform the preparation of the next Local Development Plan and the correct implications have been identified, they requested the following amendments:

- Identify more inter-relationships noted between this topic paper and the Natural Heritage and Landscape topic papers.
- Add reference to the Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018 – 2032
- Add reference to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045
- Add an implication that states that the careful siting of digital infrastructure should be sought to ensure impacts to natural heritage are avoided / minimised.



Park Authority response

The Park Authority agrees and has amended the schedule to reflect NatureScot's comments.

Lindsay Smith (C094)

Lindsay Smith agreed that the evidence correctly identifies the characteristics of the Cairngorms National Park. They stated that they knew of any additional information that would help inform the preparation of the next Local Development Plan but declined to give any further detail. They agreed that the correct implications for the next Local Development Plan had been identified.

Tim Keats (C100)

Tim Keats agreed that the evidence correctly identifies the characteristics of the Cairngorms National Park. However, they did not agree that the evidence is sufficient to inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan. This is because reference should be made to the planned removal of traditional landline telephone and replacing them with an internet based telephone service as digital services do not work in a power cut, leaving people vulnerable. A register of which mobile phone base stations are and are not equipped with backup power should be created.

Park Authority response

A statement about the transition from analogue to digital landlines and support for vulnerable customers has been added to the schedule, including information on the UK Government position to protect vulnerable people during and after the transition. Creating a register does not however fall within the scope of the Evidence Report, as the required information is not publicly available.

Aviemore Community Council (C025)

Aviemore Community Council acknowledged that they are well supported, however delivery to some of the more remote areas of the population is patchy and at peak times / season even with the level of connectivity connections do slow across the area. The Community Council stated that they will vigorously defend the area against the development of phone masts in inappropriate locations as part of the shared rural network (CNPA1415).



Park Authority response

The National Park Authority acknowledges the comments that Aviemore Community Council have reported that delivery to some of the more remote areas of the population is patchy and at peak times / season which can lead to a reduced digital service. This information will be taken into account during the production of the Proposed Plan.

Statements of dispute

There are no outstanding statements of dispute.