



Cairngorms
National Park Authority
Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh

Productive places

Schedule 22: Town centres and retail

Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan: Evidence Report

March 2026





Schedule 22: Town centres and retail

March 2026

Schedule contents

Requirements addressed in this schedule	2
Links to evidence	3
Summary of evidence	6
Policy context	6
National Planning Framework 4	6
Legislation and national documents	10
National Park Authority documents	18
Local authority documents	22
Community action plans	24
Baseline	34
This section provides baseline information on the following matters:	
• Summary of the qualitative assessment of the town centres from the town centre health checks	35
• Summary of the distribution of uses and vacancy rates in the town centres	35
• Summary of the qualitative assessment of village centres	101
• Local centres – with include village centres and other localities with significant retail presence	103
• Summary of retail capacity in the National Park	109
• Nonretail use clusters	116
• Creative and cultural offerings	119
Evidence gaps	127
Summary of stakeholder engagement	127
Summary of implications for Proposed Plan	128
Statements of agreement	129
Statements of dispute	130



Requirements addressed in this schedule

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

Section	Requirement
Section 15(5)(a)	the principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district.
Section 15(5)(ch)	The desirability of maintaining an appropriate number and range of cultural venues and facilities (including in particular, but not limited to, live music venues) in the district.
Section 15(5)(f)	Any change which the planning authority think may occur in relation to any of the matters mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (eb).
Section 16(2)(a)	To take into account— <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



Section	Requirement
	the National Park Plan as adopted under section 12(7)(a) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 (asp 10).

Links to evidence

Legislation

- CNPA003 - Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997
- CNPA004 - National Park (Scotland) Act 2000
- CNPA634 - Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill as passed
- CNPA1216 - The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1997

International documents

- CNPA002 - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

National documents

- CNPA007 - National Performance Framework
- CNPA008 - National Planning Framework 4
- CNPA009 - Local Development Planning Guidance
- CNPA471 - Town Centre Action Plan: Scottish Government response
- CNPA472 - Town centre action plan review: Joint Scottish Government and COSLA response
- CNPA474 - A Healthier Future – Scotland's Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan
- CNPA475 - Diet and Weight: Out of Home Action Plan
- CNPA476 - Scotland's Creative Learning Plan
- CNPA477 - A Culture Strategy for Scotland
- CNPA478 - A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Action Plan
- CNPA479 - Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2022
- CNPA481 - Our Place website
- CNPA482 - Understanding Scottish Places
- CNPA483 - A toolkit for successful town centres
- CNPA484 - 2013 National Review of Town Centres
- CNPA485 - Eating Out, Eating Well
- CNPA487 - Overview of the Total Food and Drink Landscape in Scotland 2021
- CNPA491 - Scottish Government: Place Principle: introduction
- CNPA700 - National Good Food Nation Plan
- CNPA1316 - A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres



National Park Authority documents

- CNPA010 - Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022
- CNPA016 - Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021
- CNPA026 - Local Development Plan interactive map engagement report 2024
- CNPA027 - Cairngorms Youth Action Team Place Standard Tool Engagement 2024
- CNPA028 - Cairngorms National Park Gypsy and Traveller 2024
- CNPA078 - Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks 2023
- CNPA180 - Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Action Plan 2023 – 2028
- CNPA335 - Cairngorms National Park Employment Land Audit 2025
- CNPA473 - Cairngorms National Park Authority Wellbeing Economy Action Plan
- CNPA488 - Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025
- CNPA528 - Cairngorms 2030 projects
- CNPA538 - Cairngorms National Park Authority Resident and Worker Survey 2024 – 2025
- CNPA598 - Badenoch and Strathspey Access Panel 2025
- CNPA599 - Kingussie community roadshow event – Local development plan engagement report 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
- CNPA814 - Active Cairngorms Action Plan 2023 – 2028
- 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
- CNPA1007 - Cairngorms National Park Community Arts and Culture
- CNPA1008 - Cairngorms National Park Cairngorms Future Farming
- CNPA1104 - Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan engagement – gamification approach 2025
- CNPA1105 - Local Development Plan engagement – Planning Power with Cairngorms 2030
- CNPA1317 - 2018 Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Check



- CNPA1362 - Topic: Town centres and retail – engagement version

Local authority documents

- CNPA047 - Highland Council Granttown-on-Spey Conservation Area Appraisal
- CNPA048 - Highland Council Granttown-on-Spey Conservation Area Management Plan
- CNPA237 - Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee Item 6: Badenoch and Strathspey Area Plan
- CNPA636 - Aberdeenshire Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017 – 2027 (website)
- 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

Community action plans

- CNPA063 - Aviemore, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA064 - Blair Atholl Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA065 – Granttown-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 (2017)
- CNPA122 - Carrbridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA123 - Advie and Cromdale Community Action Plan
- CNPA125 - Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA127 - Kincaig 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: Looking to 2030
- CNPA331 - Dulnain Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
- CNPA374 - Boat of Garten Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030



Other relevant documents

- CNPA486 - Monitoring out of home food and drink purchases in Scotland and Great Britain (2022 and 2023)
- CNPA515 - Scotland's Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan. 5 years on, what has it achieved, and what is the current direction of travel?
- CNPA1315 - Scotland's Towns Partnership

Consultation material

- CNPA1319 - Further engagement with Litchfields, acting on behalf of McDonalds Ltd resolving outstanding objections
- CNPA1340 - Evidence report engagement responses
- CNPA1421 - Scottish Forestry response to consultation 24 Sept 2025

Summary of evidence

Policy context

National Planning Framework 4

National Planning Framework 4 Policy 27 (CNPA008) specifically addresses town centres and encourages, promotes and facilitates development in town centres by applying the Town Centre First approach.

National Planning Framework 4 Policy 27 states that local development plans should:

- Support sustainable futures for city, town and local centres, in particular opportunities to enhance city and town centres. They should, where relevant, also support proposals for improving the sustainability of existing commercial centres where appropriate.
- Identify a network of centres that reflect the principles of 20 minute neighbourhoods and the town centre vision.
- Be informed by evidence on where clustering of nonretail uses may be adversely impacting on the wellbeing of communities. They should also consider, and if appropriate, identify any areas where drive through facilities may be acceptable where they would not negatively impact on the principles of local living or sustainable travel.
- Provide a proportion of their local housing land requirements in city and town centres and be proactive in identifying opportunities to support residential development.

Policy 27 (a) states:



- 'Development proposals that enhance and improve the vitality and viability of city, town and local centres, including proposals that increase the mix of uses, will be supported'.

The findings from the Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Check 2023 (CNPA078) and Village Centre Health Check 2025 (CNPA488), referenced in this report, will support the implementation of this policy and inform the Proposed Plan and planning decisions in line with the town centre first approach.

Policy 27(b) states that:

- 'Development proposals will be consistent with the town centre first approach. Proposals for uses which will generate significant footfall, including commercial, leisure, offices, community, sport and cultural facilities, public buildings such as libraries, education and healthcare facilities, and public spaces:
 - i. will be supported in existing town centres, and
 - ii. will not be supported outwith those centres unless a town centre first assessment demonstrates that:
 - All centre and edge of centre options have been sequentially assessed and discounted as unsuitable or unavailable.
 - The scale of development cannot reasonably be altered or reduced in scale to allow it to be accommodated in a centre.
 - The impacts on existing centres have been thoroughly assessed and there will be no significant adverse effect on the vitality and viability of the centres.'

Policy 27(e) states that proposals for residential development in town centres will be supported including new build; the reuse of a vacant building where it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable; and the conversion or reuse of vacant upper floors of properties. The data collected from town centre health checks will help inform future planning policy in the next Local Development Plan regarding the use of vacant sites in the town centre. The potential for housing in the town and village centres of the Cairngorms National Park is considered in Schedule: 13: Housing.

Policy 27 has key policy connections with policies 1, 2, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30 and 31.

Policy 28 specifically addresses retail, aiming to promote and facilitate retail investment to the most sustainable locations, which are most accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes.



Policy 28 states that local development plans should consider where there may be a need for further retail provision and that this may be:

- Where a retail study identifies deficiencies in retail provision in terms of quality and quantity in an area, or:
- when allocating sites for housing or the creation of new communities, in terms of the need for neighbourhood shopping, and supporting local living.

It also states that local development plans should identify areas where proposals for healthy food and drink outlets can be supported.

Policy 28(a) addresses proposals for retail, which include expansions and change of use, which will be supported if they are consistent with the town centre first principle. Policy 28(c) states that small scale neighbourhood retail development will be supported where the proposed development:

- contributes to local living, including where relevant 20 minute neighbourhoods and / or:
- Can be demonstrated to contribute to the health and wellbeing of the local community.

Policy 28(d) states that in rural areas development proposals for shops ancillary to other uses such as farm shops, craft shops and shops linked to petrol / service / charging stations will be supported where they serve local needs, supporting local living and local jobs; the potential impacts on neighbouring settlements are acceptable; provide a year round service; and the likely impacts of traffic generation and access and parking arrangements are acceptable.

Policy 28 has key policy connections with policies 1, 2, 13, 14, 15, 23, 27 and 29.

Policy 29: Rural development aims to encourage rural economic activity, innovation and diversification whilst ensuring that the distinctive character of the rural area and the service function of small towns, natural assets and cultural heritage are safeguarded and enhanced.

Policy 29 states that local development plans should identify the characteristics of rural areas within the plan area, including the existing pattern of development, pressures, environmental assets, community priorities and economic needs of each area. The spatial strategy should set out an appropriate approach to development in rural areas which reflects the identified characteristics. The policy outcomes are:



- Rural places are vibrant and sustainable and rural communities and businesses are supported.
- A balanced and sustainable rural population.

Policy 29 has key policy connections with policies 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33.

Policy 31: Culture and creativity, aims to encourage, promote and facilitate development which reflects Scotland's diverse culture and creativity, and to support Scotland's culture and creative industries. The policy outcomes are:

- Locally distinctive places reflect the diversity of communities and support regeneration and town centre vibrancy.
- Cultural and creative industries are expanded, providing jobs and investment. Communities have access to cultural and creative activities.

Policy 31 states that local development plans should recognise and support opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative sector, culture, heritage and the arts. This is a cross cutting matter, with the National Park's town and village centres playing an important role in supporting the cultural and creative sectors. This is discussed in Schedule 7: Historic and cultural heritage.

Policy 31 has key policy connections with policies 1, 2, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30.

Town and village centres have an important role to play in supporting the aim of Policy 15 (Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods) to create connected and compact neighbourhoods where people can meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home, preferably by walking, wheeling or cycling or using sustainable transport options. These matters are considered in Schedule 12: Living locally and 20 minute neighbourhoods.

There is also some overlap with this schedule and Schedule 18: Health and safety which addresses National Planning Framework 4 Policy 23: Health and safety. In particular the work relating to the food environment, including hot food takeaways, alcohol and tobacco retail, food security and community growing spaces.



Legislation and national documents

National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000

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

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

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

Town Centre Action Plan 2013

The Town Centre Action Plan (CNPA471) was the Scottish Government's response to the national review of town centres. It promoted the 'Town Centre First Principle' and the use of data driven interventions to improve town centres under the six themes of town centre living, accessible public services, proactive planning, digital towns, enterprising communities and vibrant local economies. A number of tools were also developed including the Towns Toolkit, The Place Standard, Understanding Scottish Places (USP) and Town Centre Audits.

Since the publication of the Action Plan, Scotland's National Performance Framework (CNPA007) was adopted, which contains a suite of the National Outcomes that are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (CNPA002), to reposition the focus on wellbeing, inclusive development, climate emergency responses and health and inequalities. Town centres have therefore been identified as key to delivering change, which can be achieved through the 'Town Centre First and Place Principle'. In relation to town centres, the Covid 19 pandemic brought new challenges and amplified existing, and produced further, inequalities' (Scottish Government, 2021).



A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres

In 2021, Scottish Government published 'A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres' (CNPA472) reviewing the Town Centre Action Plan and reaffirming the need to ensure town centres offer 'a sustainable, local economy and society with diverse and mixed uses attracting and meeting the needs and desires of their local communities'. The document states that town centres need to ensure they 'enhance a sense of community, place, identity and that advance equality by enabling all members of society to participate fully'. As part of the review, Scottish Government recommended that there is a need for a revised and enhanced focus on measurement and data for town centres. In response, the Cairngorms National Park Authority updated its Town Centre Health Checks (CNPA078), which includes all of the strategic settlements in the spatial strategy. In addition, in recognition of the important contribution that smaller settlements have undertaken a Village Centre Health Checks (CNPA488) which includes all of the intermediate settlements in the spatial strategy.

National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008) was informed by the revised Town Centre Action Plan Review (CNPA472), which included 59 recommendations for town centres. These actions are cross cutting and need the involvement of many bodies. Its actions relating to implementation of town centre first, town centre living, and 20 minute neighbourhoods are of particular relevance to planning. The recommendation to develop and implement town centre strategies in collaboration with communities aligns with the more place specific approach of the new style local development plan for the Cairngorms National Park.

Place Principle

The Place Principle (CNPA491) supports the National Performance Framework and aims to promote a shared understanding of place, identifying existing services and assets, and potential improvements that can improve the outcome for local people and communities. The data collected through the town and village centre health checks (CNPA078 and CNPA488) can inform future Local Place Plans, supporting the delivery of the Place Principle.

'Towns and town centres are for the wellbeing of people, planet and the economy. Towns are for everyone, and everyone has a role to play in making their own town and town centre successful' (Scottish Government, 2021 (CNPA472)).



Local Development Planning Guidance

This schedule is primarily concerned with addressing evidence to support National Planning Framework 4 Policies 27, 28, 29 and 31 (CNPA008). In response to the Local Development Planning Guidance (CNPA009) in relation to Policy 27: City, town, commercial and local centres, this schedule will evidence:

- The existing network of (town) centres.
- Evidence on where clustering of nonretail uses may be adversely impacting on the wellbeing of communities.

This schedule will take into account the Economic Strategy (the National Park Partnership Plan (CNPA010)) for the National Park, the town centre health checks 2023 (CNPA078) and the village centre health checks 2025 (CNPA488), and this information is included in this schedule.

There are links between this schedule and Schedule 12: Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods.

In line with the guidance the town centre health checks will be updated in 2026 / 2027, two to three years after the last town centre health checks. Although the guidance states this should be done every two years this planned work has been delayed due to the priority to complete the Evidence Report. The next town centre health checks will inform the Proposed Plan.

The guidance advises that as part of the auditing of town centres, planning authorities can gather information on:

- Where there are gaps in supply of existing housing and flats (including student and older persons' accommodation or rental accommodation) relative to demand.
- Where there are capacity or opportunities to develop new housing and flats without compromising active use of ground floors and public spaces, or a mix of uses in the area; and
- any related initiatives that would protect and improve residents' quality of life.

Housing in town centres is considered in Schedule 13: Housing.

The Park Authority continues to work with community planning partners through the production and review of community action plans. Identified actions relating to town centres and retail have been summarised in this schedule.



The Place Standard tool has been used to engage with young people, children and hard to reach groups through the engagement for the Evidence Report.

In relation to Policy 28: Retail, this schedule will evidence:

- Where there may be a need for further retail provision.
- Information about the local food environment.

The Town Centre Health Checks (CNPA078) and Village Health Checks (CNPA488) provide the data for retail provision in the National Park and a summary of the retail provision in each settlement and overall retail provision in the National Park has been included here.

The food environment in the Cairngorms National Park is considered in Schedule 18: Health and safety (which primarily addresses National Planning Policy Framework 4, Policy 23).

In relation to Policy 29: Rural development, this schedule will evidence:

- The characteristics of rural areas within the plan area, including the existing pattern of development, pressures, environmental assets, community priorities and economic needs of each area.
- Identification of Remote Rural Areas.

In relation to Policy 31: Culture and creativity, the Evidence Report considers:

- Opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative sector, culture, heritage and the arts.
- Cultural offering in a place – museums, galleries, theatres, cinemas, music venues, studios, recording spaces and space for art / craft activities.

The Evidence Report is comprised of a suite of schedules that use relevant datasets and local knowledge to identify existing patterns of development, pressures and environmental assets. This includes use of the Urban Rural Classification 2022 framework. The implications of the rural population distribution and demographic profile is considered in Schedule 13: Housing.

The Evidence Report has also been informed by the relevant Creative Scotland plans and strategies, together with any strategies and community action plans which address the area's culture and creativity. This matter is considered in Schedule 7: Historic and cultural heritage.



There are also links between this schedule and Schedule 23: Tourism and Schedule 7: Historic and cultural heritage, which cover a number of matters, including cultural tourist and visit attractions and cultural capital within the historic environment.

A Healthier Future – Scotland’s Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan

The plan (CNPA474) sets out Scotland’s vision for a Scotland where everyone eats well and has a healthy weight. It also sets out Scotland’s ambition to halve childhood obesity by 2030 and significantly reduce diet related health inequalities. The plan seeks to address the high and growing levels of overweight and obesity in Scotland, and concern of the short and long term impact on public health.

The plan identifies five key outcomes:

- Children get the best start in life – they eat well and have a healthy weight.
- The food environment supports healthier choices.
- People have access to effective weight management services.
- Leaders across all sectors promote healthy weight and diet.
- Diet related health inequalities are reduced.

The plan set out specific actions within the outcomes which included the introduction of restrictions on promotions of discretionary high fat, salt and sugar products, restricting the advertising of these products – especially to children, and improving the ‘out of home’ food environment including introducing a new out of home framework.

Obesity Action Scotland reviewed the Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan (CNPA474), five years on in 2023 (CNPA515). They reported that at the time of the plan publication, 65% of adults in Scotland were overweight and suffering with obesity, and 27% of children were at risk of overweight and suffering with obesity, as recorded in the Scottish Health Survey. In 2023 this had risen to 67% for adults and 28% for children at risk of overweight and suffering with obesity in the most recent data.

Diet and Weight: Out of Home Action Plan

The Out of Home Action Plan (CNPA475) outlines steps to work closely with the food industry to help tackle obesity by providing healthier food and drink choices for people. It includes proposals for a code of practice for healthier children’s menus and calorie labelling on menus in cafes, restaurants and takeaways.

The plan commits to support the delivery of Scottish Government’s Good Food Nation Plan (CNPA700) ambition and vision and wider food policies, including by incorporating good practice on matters such as food waste, local sourcing and climate change.



The Out of Home Action Plan has been developed following recommendations made by Food Standards Scotland before the pandemic as a result of actions agreed in the Scottish Government's 2018 Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan (CNPA474).

A Culture Strategy for Scotland

The Culture Strategy for Scotland (CNPA477) is an overarching strategy and sits in synergy with existing strategies for Scotland's historic environment, museums and galleries and libraries.

The vision for culture in Scotland states that:

- 'Scotland is a place where culture is valued, protected and nurtured. Culture is woven through everyday life, shapes and is shaped by society, and its transformative potential is experienced by everyone. Scotland's rich cultural heritage and creativity of today is inspired by people and place, enlivens every community and is celebrated around the world.'

As such, Scottish Government recognises culture's unique contribution to society, and the valuable role of artists, designers, creative practitioners, producers and business and cultural organisations. The strategy sets out the vision that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, develop and enjoy culture which, in turn, helps individuals and communities to thrive in Scotland.

The vision for culture in Scotland is underpinned by a series of ambitions and aims. It sets out the priorities for action which will shape how culture is supported in Scotland over the coming years.

The principles set out in the strategy include:

- Culture in Scotland is valued in and of itself.
- Culture is free to be inspiring and to challenge.
- Culture is central to the future wellbeing and prosperity of Scotland – cultural, social, economic and environmental.
- Scotland celebrates the diversity and excellence of cultures in the country and the value of open exchange with the wider world.
- Everyone has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits (Article 27, Universal Declaration of Human Rights).
- Place – community, landscape, language and geography – is important and reflects the creativity of the past and provides inspiration for cultural expression today.



The inclusion for the first time of a dedicated outcome for culture in the National Performance Framework (CNPA007) in its 2018 refresh raises the strategic profile of culture across both national and local government, affirms Scottish Ministers' commitment to culture and encourages a stronger focus on activity across the culture sector to contribute to the culture outcome and many of the other outcomes where culture has a contribution to make.

The strategy goes on to detail the overarching ambitions set out by the strategy:

1. Strengthening culture.
2. Transforming through culture.
3. Empowering through culture.

A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Action Plan

The action plan (CNPA478) provides detail on how Scottish Government will deliver the ambitions of the Culture Strategy. It presents a series of workstreams that, collectively, aim to provide a roadmap to a strong, resilient culture sector, and support a cultural landscape which benefits everyone.

Summary of actions contained in the action plan are:

Chapter 1 – Resilience

- R1: Ensure effective ongoing engagement with the sector and maximise impact of existing public sector support.
- R2: Seek ways to review pressure on outgoings and activities.
- R3: Explore and develop alternative and additional income streams.
- R4: Collaboration for effectiveness and impact.
- R5: Advocacy effort within national and local government to ensure the value of culture is understood and maximised.

Chapter 2 – Strengthening Culture

- S1: Continue to make the culture and heritage sectors part of Scotland as a Leading Fair Work Nation by 2025.
- S2: Develop and implement a long term strategic approach to making improvements to the data landscape for culture, working closely with expert partners.
- S3: Work in partnership to increase diversity in the sector, sharing new approaches and codes of practice that ensure skills development and board membership have diversity at their core, including helping recruitment diversity by introducing



appropriate remuneration for board members of national culture and heritage public bodies.

- S4: Develop and implement a long term strategic approach to skills development in the culture sector and creative industries.
- S5: Work to tackle modern day racism by reinterpreting aspects of Scotland's hidden or contested heritage.
- S6: Publish Scotland's International Culture Strategy.
- S7: Champion the economic impact of culture, in particular within the context of community wealth building and creative placemaking.

Chapter 3 – Transforming through Culture

- T1: Collaborate to realise the transformational power of culture in achieving a broad range of policy outcomes by developing cross government policy compacts, embedding culture at the centre of policymaking.
- T2: Harness the transformational power of culture to deliver on climate change priorities.
- T3: Scope the creation of another Youth Arts Strategy.
- T4: Foster greater collaboration between the Culture and Education Sectors.
- T5: Strengthen cross Scottish Government joint working on culture and health and wellbeing policy development and delivery.

Chapter 4 – Empowering through Culture

- E1: Support libraries to deliver free of charge services in the heart of communities across Scotland.
- E2: Bring together local authorities, national and cultural organisations, via a Local and National Delivery Group, to identify, and commit to working together towards shared culture outcomes across Scotland, in line with the aims from the Ministerial meetings with Culture Conveners and the Culture Partners group.
- E3: Understand local authority support for culture, in the context of the impact of, and recovery from, the Covid 19 pandemic, to identify more effective models of collaboration, and delivery utilising data and knowledge from successful programmes.
- E4: Amplify the important role community based cultural assets such as libraries, museums and galleries can play in strengthening and empowering communities, in line with the themes of existing and upcoming strategies.
- E5: Continue the series of the joint meeting of the Culture Conveners and Scottish Government.
- E6: Develop a joint working agreement for culture between the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Government.



Scotland's Creative Learning Plan

Scotland's Creative Learning Plan (CNPA476) was first published in 2013, setting out a shared vision for the importance of creativity in education and as a result there has been a growth in a shared language and common understanding of creativity and creativity skills.

Scotland's Creative Learning Plan is the result of collaboration by organisations working across Scotland in education and creativity and sets out an ambitious vision for creativity in education over 10 years.

Among the aims of the Creative Learning Plan are:

- New policies and plans supporting creativity throughout Scotland.
- More creative teaching practices and support for creative initiatives within local authorities, schools and places of learning.
- More support for and understanding of the value of creativity and experiential learning by parents and carers.

Since its publication, Creative Scotland have refreshed the vision to ensure the Scottish education system enables everyone to recognise, develop and apply their creativity to ensure they thrive in an increasingly complex and fast changing world, with three year outcomes committing to:

- Creativity embedded in curriculum design.
- Learners' mental health and wellbeing is improved.
- Learners confidently applying creativity skills in all contexts.
- Learners directly influencing their own creative learning.
- Quality cultural experiences accessible to all learners.

The Proposed Plan will aim to support the outcomes of the Scotland's Creative Learning Plan. The Proposed Plan will also safeguard existing cultural and creative development as well as support new development that can support the Creative Learning Plan.

National Park Authority documents

Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027

The Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (CNPA010) sets out a strategy for building a wellbeing economy in the National Park and is the Economic Strategy for the National Park. The Partnership Plan explains how the aims of the National Park will be delivered together under a long term vision of 'an outstanding National Park, enjoyed



and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together'. Two of the Partnership Plan's three long term outcomes are of particular importance to this schedule are the:

- Outcome for People: A wellbeing economy that works for all the people of the Cairngorms.
- Outcome for Place: A place that people want to live in, work in and visit that works for all.

The Partnership Plan sets out comprehensive actions over the period 2022 – 2027 to help deliver the long term vision and outcomes. They tackle challenges that are related to a wellbeing economy in the context of the National Park and are delivered by multiple partners across the National Park.

While the National Park Partnership Plan must be considered as a whole, the following objectives supporting the outcomes for Nature, People and Place, are of particular relevance to this schedule:

- A8 – Farming, which aims to work with farms in the Cairngorms National Park to reduce their carbon footprint, conserve soil carbon, encourage sustainable production and deliver increased biodiversity on in-bye land.
- B1 – Working age population, which aims to encourage the proportion of young and working age people in the Cairngorms National Park to increase relative to the total resident population, which remains stable.
- B3 – Real Living Wage, which aims to increase the number of Real Living Wage employers in the National Park.
- B4 – Skills and training, which aims to increase skills and training opportunities for people in the Cairngorms National Park to meet business needs and ensure opportunities created by the growth in green jobs can be filled by residents and underrepresented groups. This ensure that there are training opportunities for people to enter into expanding areas of work such as deer management and peatland restoration, as well as providing support to retrain for future job opportunities in a low carbon economy.
- B5 – Community assets and land, which aims to increase the number of assets in community ownership or management, the number of social enterprises that generate a profit and the area of land where communities are involved in management decisions.
- B8 – Gaelic language and culture, which aims to encourage greater use of Gaelic in the Cairngorms National Park. There is a need to support the continued use of Gaelic and maintain it as an active language and culture within the communities of the National Park.



- C4 – Village and town centres, which aims to ensure villages and town centres in the Cairngorms National Park are thriving places where people live, shop and meet. The Partnership Plan states that 'new businesses and activities will need to be supported to ensure these spaces continue to provide services and value to communities. In general, commercial properties should remain so and should only be converted to residential as a last resort'.
- C10 – Cultural heritage, which aims to safeguard and promote the Cairngorms National Park's cultural heritage and provide opportunities for everyone to experience and learn about the National Park's outstanding historic environment, history and culture.

Actions set out to help achieve the outcomes above and of particular relevance to this section include:

- A8 – Develop nature friendly farming projects (woodland, waders, species rich grassland) as part of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Also to develop and establish a Regional Land Use Framework and Partnership.
- B4 – Support skills and training programmes relevant to business needs and changes in land management within the National Park (related to Nature objectives A2 to A6) and develop targeted skills initiatives to support social enterprises.
- B5 – Support communities to acquire and manage assets / land through enhanced funding and training support (related to People objective B7 – Community led planning and development).
- C4 – Review mechanisms available to the public sector to encourage regeneration of our town and village centres. Also to promote business and community led collaborative projects to encourage local expenditure and supply chains. Finally, to develop a rural approach to the 20 minute neighbourhood concept in the National Park. This is covered in Schedule 12: Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods.
- C10 – Develop a Cairngorms cultural heritage network, building on the success of the Badenoch: The Storylands project, Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership and Cateran Ecomuseum. The National Park has also committed to providing grant funding for community heritage projects that contribute to a cultural heritage network.

The outcomes, objectives and actions are also supported by the Heritage Horizons: Cairngorm 2030 projects (CNPA528).

In addition, Policy C2 specifically addresses the need to support the development of a low carbon circular economy. In terms of new business premises (which includes retail)



there is support for high standards of sustainable design and efficient use of energy and materials in construction.

The Partnership Plan is supported by other action plans such as the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan (CNPA180), Local Development Plan (CNPA016) and Active Cairngorms Action Plan (CNPA814) that all set out work linked to a wellbeing economy and can support health town and village commerce.

Heritage Horizons – Cairngorms 2030

Across 20 long term projects, Cairngorms 2030 (CNPA528) will bring about transformational change in the Cairngorms through a partnership of over 80 organisations supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

A key focus of Cairngorms 2030 includes projects aimed at Fostering healthier, happier communities. The aim is to develop an economy that benefits people and nature, and provide green solutions to public health issues by:

- Working with local businesses to create an economic model based on wellbeing not gross domestic product.
- Encouraging people to walk and cycle more in the National Park which could in turn result in more sustainable uses of town and local retail facilities.

Community arts and culture

The project (CNPA1007) is bringing together the National Park's creative community to identify and develop activities that create a greater connection to the local landscapes and foster a sense of place. The Park Authority aims to support the creative community in building capacity and visibility and collaborating to deliver a programme of community arts projects. More information on this project can be found here:

Cairngorms future farming

This project (CNPA1008) is working with six farms to trial sustainable practices that benefit nature or reduce carbon emissions, all while maintaining profitability as a business. By trying and evaluating different techniques and sharing learnings with other farmers across the National Park, the Park Authority are ensuring that farmers are supported in the collective efforts to reach net zero. More information on this project can be found here:

Wellbeing economy

The National Park Partnership Plan identifies that the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan will support the delivery of the economic strategy set out in the Partnership Plan. The



concept of a wellbeing economy is a holistic one that reflects the entirety of work encompassed by the National Park Partnership Plan, but the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan is intended to provide a focus for partners work and collaboration.

Cairngorms National Park Authority Wellbeing Economy Action Plan

The National Park Partnership Plan (CNPA010) sets out that the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan (CNPA473) will support the delivery of the Economic Strategy set out in the Partnership Plan. The concept of a wellbeing economy is a holistic one that reflects the entirety of work encompassed by the National Park Partnership Plan, but the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan is intended to provide a focus for partners work and collaboration.

The plan provides a working document for the Economic Steering Group and its partners on three priority areas for the economy in the National Park where focussed collaboration and coordination can better add value to other actions delivered by the Partnership Plan and regional economic strategies.

More information on the content of the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan is available in Schedule 21: Economic development.

Local authority documents

Local outcome improvement plans

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

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



Aberdeenshire Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2017 – 2027

The Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership's Local outcomes improvement plan (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. The plan states that it will renew and reimagine Angus' high streets through local place planning and work to progressively reduce and renew empty retail and other spaces.

2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan

Town centre and retail issues are not considered in the Highland outcome improvement plan (CNPA638); however, they will indirectly benefit from the place priority outcome that communities will benefit from being able to access support and services within local places.

2024 – 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan Delivery Plan

There are no references to town centres and retail issues in the Highland outcome improvement plan delivery plan (CNPA1091).

Moray Local Outcome Improvement Plan v2 (2016 – 2026)

Town centre and retail issues are not considered in the Moray Planning Partnership's local outcome improvement plan (CNPA639), however actions relating to the identified priorities of developing a diverse, inclusive and sustainable economy; building a better future for our children and young people; empowering and connecting communities; and improving wellbeing of our population will indirectly support town centres and retail.

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

Town centre and retail issues are not specifically considered in the Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership's community plan (CNPA640), however actions relating to the identified priorities of reducing poverty, digital participation, learning and development and employability will indirectly support town centres and retail.



Badenoch and Strathspey Area Place 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. The plan does not set out any specific priorities in relation to this schedule and therefore at present there are no implications for the Proposed Plan arising from this area place plan.

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.

The Proposed Plan will take into consideration the Action Plan, if relevant actions are included, once it has been published and this will inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

Community action plans

The following action plans identified issues and / or priorities relating to National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008) Policy 27: City, town and commercial centres, Policy 28: Retail, Policy 29: Rural development and Policy 31: Culture and creativity in the Cairngorms National Park.

Advie and Cromdale Community Action Plan

The Action Plan (CNPA123) sets out the medium priority to provide a village shop. Currently the village has no retail premises and residents would like to see the return of a village shop.

In relation to culture, there is a high priority to provide information on local visitor attractions, for example the Battle of Cromdale, Hillfort and Pipers Stone. There is also medium priority to deliver a walking trail or whisky trail from Cromdale to Balmenach with interpretation / information.



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

The Action Plan (CNPA063) sets out a number of priorities aimed at improving the active travel in and around the town to reduce car use through Aviemore.

In terms of economic development, under the theme of 'an economically thriving community' in the town centre, there is a priority to improve opportunities for local employment / businesses. This includes support for new / small / pop up businesses near the main street and creating small office or workshop spaces for small businesses. There is a priority to encourage development of derelict sites in the town centre, with a specific focus on the Laurel Bank site. There is also a priority to increase parking availability for workers in the town.

Under the theme of 'a culturally vibrant community' there is a priority to find a new permanent site for the existing ice rink, extending the activities it has to offer including a café. There is also a priority to maintain and make more use of the village green. This includes more live music events in the summer at the site and promoting the use by more local groups including specifically art and craft groups.

Ballater and Crathie Community Action Plan 2023

Under focus area one – the action plan (CNPA119) sets out a strategic goal to maximise the community's inherent attractions of art and culture, history and heritage, food and drink, action and adventure, and wildlife and nature to develop a rolling programme of events which is co-ordinated and utilises local venues. Survey suggestions included:

- Consideration of use of The Halls as a centre for commercial events programme / community creative play / safe space and resilience centre / business and community group admin centre.

The plan sets out an operational goal to define a plan to consistently maintain and ensure relevance for the outdoor recreational space (for example The Greens), footpaths and cycle path networks, and signage, including provision of sufficient toilet facilities. Survey suggestions included:

- Improving the toilet facilities in The Square, Crathie and other suitable locations.

The plan also sets a tactical goal to ensure that there is sufficient provision of benches to ensure inclusivity and access for a diverse population to the outdoor space through providing access to rest areas, with clear ownership of assets within an assigned community group / authority for maintenance and upkeep.



Under focus area two – ‘the community and heritage hub’, the plan proposes that the Hub will provide services such as design, printing and ticket sales, both remotely and directly promote the creation and delivery of attractive events in the community, as well as being a place for information to be centralised and given out. The community’s aim is that the Hub will be an attractive place to visit and will use space available to display local heritage items.

Finally, under focus area three ‘our local economy’ there is a strategic goal to provide community owned business units.

Blair Athol Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Under the theme of ‘a socially connected community’ the action plan (CNPA064) sets out a priority to provide investment for housing that could utilise vacant or derelict property in the village.

Under the theme of ‘an economically thriving community’ there is a priority to bring vacant building back into use, which include the school, garage and surgery for community benefit.

Boat of Garten Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Under the theme of ‘an economically thriving community’ the Action Plan (CNPA374) sets out the suggestions to:

- Provide small business units – with the plan proposing the old Sawmill site near the village. The site has since been purchased, and the new owners intend to provide units for local businesses.
- Provide a campervan area for visitors with waste and water facilities – with the suggestion this would be outwith the village. Increasing tourist footfall would however be potentially beneficial to the village in terms of local business use.

Under the theme ‘supporting our young people’ the plan also sets out the suggestion to make improvements and extend the play park and space adjacent to the community hall and provide a youth café at the hall.

In terms of culture, the plan sets out the suggestion to improve signage and provide a public art piece on the Green, with some additional street furniture and play equipment.



Braemar Community Action Plan 2017

The action plan (CNPA121) identifies that more visitor accommodation is required; to encourage more tourists to extend their stay in the area. This in turn will benefit retail footfall.

There is also a project outlined to restore the St Margaret's Church building and develop it as a hub for arts, culture and heritage related activities, enhancing Braemar as a tourist destination. The building could then provide a focal point where visitors and residents can have the cultural heritage of the area explained and interpreted. The community set out the vision that St Margaret's will be a centre for high quality performance and exhibitions, showcasing a wide range of activities.

There is also an action to conserve, improve and develop Braemar Castle as a 'must see' visitor attraction, to strengthen learning opportunities and community and business partnerships, and to maximise economic benefit for the community. There is also an action to raise the profile of both Kindrochit Castle structures, explaining their historical significance.

The community also set out an action to explore the opportunity to harness the Braemar Gathering's international reputation, creating a year round attraction.

Under the 'youth and learning' theme the community have set the action to continue the annual festival in October that offers diverse arts, crafts and music courses.

Carrbridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Under the theme of 'a socially connected community' the Action Plan (CNPA122) sets out the priority to undertake a feasibility study to explore the option of adapting the village hall as a community arts and leisure hub.

Under the 'climate conscious community' theme there is a priority to develop a non motorised user's route through to Grantown-on-Spey. This would potentially benefit the economies of both settlements.

Under the theme of 'a culturally vibrant community' there is the priority to develop a heritage trail which involves:

- Carrying out an audit of what already exists in the village in relation to sculptures and interpretation and identify what needs to be changed, updated, added to.
- Updating the carving trail with appropriate signage with more carvings / sculptures along paths in village with information.



The Plan also sets out a priority to enhance the bridge area, surrounding a historic asset in the village. Younger residents also expressed a desire for annual music festivals in the village.

One of the suggestions from the community on what could be better included the re-opening of a cafe / coffee shop in the village. Another comment was aimed at using the vacant / empty shops.

Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Under the theme of 'a socially connected community' the action plan (CNPA125) sets out a priority to improve the village's amenities / facilities. This included the need for provision of an automated teller machine (known as an ATM) facility. There is also a suggestion that more shops are needed in the village.

Under the theme of 'an economically thriving community' the plan sets out the priority to improve opportunities for local development. This includes addressing planning issues for the village to help proposed business and residential development in and around A889 by:

- Engaging with the Cairngorms National Park Authority and The Highland Council planners, to resolve the issues that are contributing to planning being denied for development of housing and business use.

Dalnain Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Under the theme of 'a socially connected community' the action plan (CNPA331) sets out the priority to explore the possibility improving and strengthening services at the village post office and providing a local shop. In terms of young people, they stated that 'the shop is closed, and they would like it to reopen as a grocery store that sells necessities, a bit like the one in Carrbridge'.

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

The action plan (CNPA065), under the theme 'a climate conscious community' sets out the suggestion to amend the town's Conservation Area Management Plan. This suggestion includes the following actions:

- Remove barriers for energy improvements¹ for example solar panels / unplasticized polyvinyl chloride (uPVC) windows keeping aesthetics suitable.

¹ Matters relating to energy are covered in Schedule 9: Energy.



- Decide whether to get rid of or replace the bollards and chains in Square and South Street. They are ugly at the moment and bar access for wheelchairs and buggies, and also trip hazards.
- Release the 1960 / 70s bungalows from the plan restrictions – they are unfair and unjustifiable.

In addition to the actions above, there is also a suggestion to provide a water fountain where people can refill drinking water bottles.

Under the theme 'an economically thriving community' there is the suggestion to broaden the economic focus of the town to create a more resilient economy and a suggestion for more support for the local economy (which includes encouraging people to shop locally).

Under the theme 'a culturally vibrant community' the Plan sets out suggestions for both The Square and the High Street. Actions for The Square include:

- Calls not to pedestrianise it.
- More benches
- Remove (some) chains to give access to grass for wheelchairs, buggies.
- Tree condition survey and programme for phased replacement. Use native trees. Same for Church Avenue.
- Dedicated paths across grass and down Church Avenue.
- Improve poor aesthetic of new bins chained to concrete blocks – some kind of wooden bin surround.

Actions for the High Street include:

- Ensuring all shop fronts are in some sort of use.
- Improved maintenance of some of the buildings
- Grants for refurbishment of shop fronts.
- Use one empty premises for encouraging pop up shop run by local charities.
- Insist on a more uniform quality of shop signage – no plastic.
- Tool library.
- Promote High Street shopping over online more – poster campaign.
- No wheelie bins on street.
- Museum and Hub to share visitor information role through the year.

There is also a suggestion to repurpose the old Palace Hotel, on the High Street for housing.



Kincraig Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Under the theme of 'economically thriving communities' the Action Plan (CNPA127) sets out the priority to revisit the potential for a community run shop or pop up. There is also a priority to find a use for the old A9 complex beside the garage. Suggestions include the land could be used for a shop / farm shop or business units (commercial / small industrial).

Under the theme of a 'culturally vibrant community' the plan sets out the priority for Insh, to support the Insh community to maintain its crofting heritage, with projects to improve biodiversity and manage climate change. There is also a suggestion from the community to take on Insh Church for the community / its cultural heritage.

Kingussie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Under the theme of 'a socially connected community' the action plan (CNPA066) sets out a suggestion to create more housing which includes repurposing unused buildings and change of use from commercial premises. It is not clear from the plan where these are, but the most recent town centre health check did identify a number of vacant buildings in the town centre.

Under the theme of 'an economically thriving community' the plan sets out the following suggestions linked to retail and the town centre:

- Support for the High Street – which includes reinvigorating the High Street and utilising empty and underused buildings on the High Street.
- Improving opportunities for local employment / business – which includes creating local flexible space for co-working. There is a specific action to set up a cooperative in one of the unoccupied shops and use empty shops windows to display information and / or artwork.

Under the theme of 'a culturally vibrant community' there is the suggestion to develop Talla Nan Ros as a community space, which includes:

- Exploring the feasibility of converting the space into housing, multimedia centre, retail space etc.
- Look at finding an alternative space in Kingussie for a purpose built new village hall.

The community would also like to see the 'Wolf of Badenoch' trail and statue completed.



Laggan Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Contained in the action plan (CNPA129), under the theme of 'a socially connected community', is the priority to provide sustainable community spaces, to deliver community needs. This includes making more use of the community facilities for example the village hall, Wolftrax café, church for:

- Social and leisure activities / Sport and exercise opportunities for all.
- Food larder / Food exchange.

Under the theme of 'a climate conscious community' there is a priority to improve the village's visual appearance, through actions including more benches, attractive planting and general maintenance of public spaces.

Under the theme of 'an economically thriving community' the plan sets the priority aimed at local jobs and businesses. This includes the aim to provide assistance for local businesses through provision of small business units.

There was also the suggestion of a community shop for basics, linked with the food shed (suggested location was at the Wolftrax) – to serve the needs of visitors and community and remove any stigma for those using the food shed.

Mount Blair Community Action Plan 2013

The vision for Infrastructure, services and housing set out in the action plan (CNPA130) is:

- To make it sustainable to live and work in the Glens the community will develop good access to affordable housing, vital services, community facilities, and good communication and transport systems.

There was seen to be a need to retain and support vital services like the schools and post offices and shops.

Theme two focuses on the local heritage, culture and produce in terms of the sense of place. It sets out several priorities which include:

- Priority 1 – Develop local archive project which includes actions to explore other ways of making heritage a stronger feature of the area and something that is accessible to visitors.
- Priority 2 – Arts and Crafts Workspace / Studio Space which includes working with local arts and crafts people and other businesses to explore the need for small workspace and studio facilities in the area. Also to Identify suitable places for this



type of development which could be a significant tourist attraction – suggestions include the old Blackwater Inn or the old Church in Kirkmichael.

Theme 5: Access to services and transport, Priority 3 sets out the need to ensure the retention of the primary school, nursery and other vital services. This includes the action to support the use of local services, which should be encouraged and should include supporting the post offices, shops and petrol station.

Nethy Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Under the theme of 'an economically thriving community' the action plan (CNPA131) sets out the priority to improve opportunities for local employment and businesses. This includes the possibility of acquiring buildings and land for environmental, social, cultural redevelopment to benefit the community.

Another suggestion that came from the consultation with the community included the need for local spaces for 'co-working' and hot desking. There is also a suggestion to acquire Canmore in Dell Road for redevelopment to benefit the community – however it is unclear from the plan what the suggested use would be.

Under the theme of 'a culturally vibrant community' the plan sets out the following suggestions:

- Repair wall at the Old Kirk and improve the quality of the car park at Castle Roy.
- Fix old village fountain.

Newtonmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Within the action plan (CNPA132), under the theme of 'an economically thriving community', is the priority to improve support and assistance for local businesses and people trying to get into work. This includes an action to support business startups and existing local businesses.

In relation to the town centre, there was a suggestion to encourage a more vibrant, attractive Main Street: more shops, flowers, places to eat, local produce shop, local charity shop, re-route heavy goods vehicles to use Coffin Road onto the A9 and manage Main Street congestion in the summertime. Younger residents would like to see a more shops generally, including Tesco and McDonalds, sweet shop, clothes, chippy, art gallery, pet and toy shop and a bookshop.

Under the theme of 'a culturally vibrant community' there is a priority addressing the Wildcat centre and trail which carries the following actions:



- To look at the long term maintenance of the trail.
- Ensure the sustainability of the Centre.
- Improve the trail pathways and increase accessibility.

There was also a suggestion to reroute the Wildcat trail from top of Calder Path north towards Allt Laraidh (link to Kingussie) / liaise with local people and maintain the Wildcat Experience, including surface path at golf course section (also supported by the secondary pupils and those under 25 years old).

There is also a priority under the theme 'a culturally vibrant community' to improve the centenary gardens. This priority includes the following actions:

- Better signage to gardens and picnic area.
- Add in an accessible sensory garden.

Strathdon Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

There are a number of priorities in the plan that could have bearing on the topics discussed in this section:

- Improving opportunities for local employment / business. This includes providing provision of small unit office / business space and improving local broadband. Also providing a local Pub / eatery and a community run bunk house.
- Exploring the use of the Clubbie as a heritage space.
- Exploring options for the redevelopment of the Lonach Hotel Site.

Under the theme of 'a socially connected community' there is also the priority to explore more community activities that include support for a local pub or eatery and / or a Strathdon café.



Baseline matters

This section summarises a number of matters relating to the retail, and town, village and local centres in the Cairngorms National Park, summary of the distribution of uses and vacancy rates in the town centres, summary of retail capacity, nonretail use clusters and creative and cultural offerings.

There are links between this policy area and:

- Schedule 1: Plan outcomes
- Schedule 3: Site assessment methodology
- Schedule 4: Climate change
- Schedule 7: Historic and cultural heritage
- Schedule 11: Sustainable transport
- Schedule 12: Living locally and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- Schedule: 13: Housing
- Schedule 18: Health and safety
- Schedule 21: Economic development
- Schedule 23: Tourism

Network of centres

Town and local (including village and neighbourhood) centres play a vital role in fostering sustainable economic growth, offering employment opportunities and essential services to towns and villages within the National Park. Serving as vibrant hubs, town centres bring together a variety of activities and amenities – including retail spaces with healthier local food options, markets, pubs, restaurants, cafes, and banks – that support both surrounding communities and rural areas outwith the key settlements.

The 2013 National Review of Town Centres (CNPA472) examined the fundamental reasons for investing in and revitalising towns, leading to the development of the Town Centre Action Plan (CNPA471). This plan introduced the Town Centre First Principle and facilitated the establishment of Scotland's Town Partnership (CNPA1315). Several key tools emerged from this initiative, including the Towns Toolkit (CNPA483), The Place Standard Tool (CNPA481), Understanding Scottish Places (CNPA482), and Town Centre Audits (or health checks).

Scotland's Towns Partnership is Scotland's national towns' collective; representing and promoting the diversity of Scotland's towns and places and supporting those organisations and groups that have an interest in or ownership of them. Acting as a central resource hub, the Scotland's Towns Partnership provides a resource to



knowledge, best practices – supporting learning opportunities, fostering networks and events. Additionally, the Scotland's Towns Partnership website hosts the Understanding Scottish Places tool, offering insights into the unique characteristics of towns across Scotland.

The Cairngorms National Park is characterised by its rurality and is well served by a network of small retail and service centres, ranging from town centres to village centres, and small local centres supporting local residential areas outwith the town centre. This schedule summarises the evidence collected on these:

- Town centres (see page 35).
- Village centres (see page 70).
- Other types of centres (see page 103).

Town centres

In the context of the Cairngorms National Park, National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008) Policy 27 is applicable to town centres in the absence of any cities. There are five towns in the National Park (Figure 1), identified in the current Local Development Plan (CNPA016) as strategic settlements. These are:

- Aviemore
- Ballater
- Grantown-on-Spey
- Kingussie
- Newtonmore.

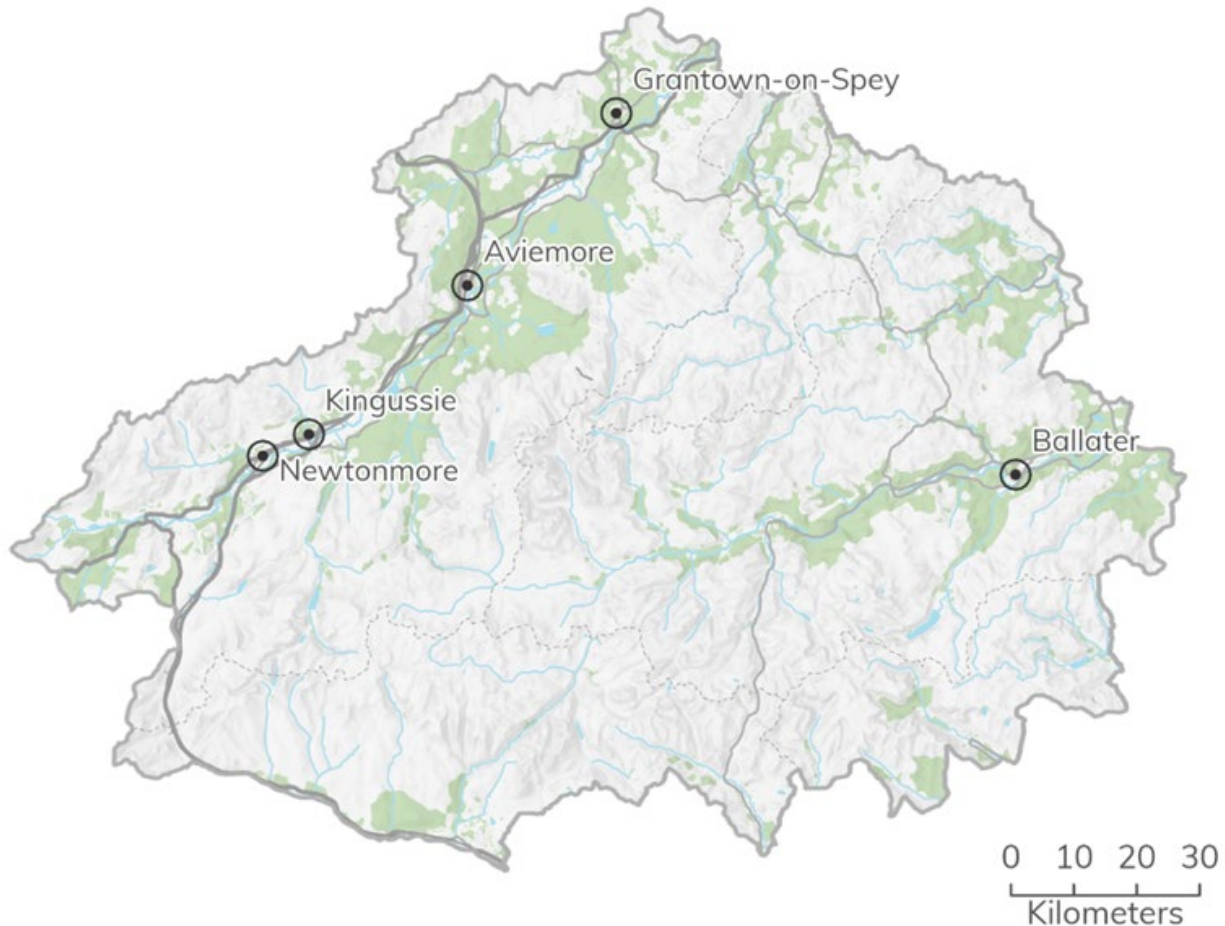


Figure 1 Network of town centres in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

Within these five towns, a town centre boundary has been identified within the adopted Local Development Plan 2021 (CNPA016). These town centre boundaries set the scope for undertaking town centre health checks within the National Park. These town centre health checks form the core of the information summarised in this section and fulfil the requirement for local development plans to be informed by ‘town centre audits’ for each town centre to help harness strengths, support vitality and viability, tackle weaknesses and improve resilience.

The National Park Authority is committed to carrying out regular town centre health checks to monitor town centre performance, with the most recent carried out in 2023 (CNPA078). The Park Authority plan to carry out the next Town Centre Health Checks in 2026 / 2027, and the refreshed report will inform the Proposed Plan.

This schedule also draws on the information provided by Understanding Scottish Places (CNPA482) delivered through the Scotland’s Town Partnership (CNPA1315). Scotland’s



Towns Partnership is Scotland's national towns collective; representing and promoting the diversity of Scotland's towns and places and supporting those organisations and groups that have an interest in or ownership of them.

Understanding Scottish Places sets a methodology for assessing town centres through the document's 'Your Town Audit' approach. The audit provides users with an analysis of more than 50 measures across the seven key performance indicator themes, most of which fall beyond the scope of the town centre health check. However, the following key performance indicators taken from the audit methodology were included:

- Accessibility
- Local service
- Local capacity

Inventory of town centre businesses and other non residential uses

The type and location of each business within the boundary of each defined town centre was recorded in the town centre health check to build an understanding of the business and retailer representation within each town's centre. In 2023, additional categories for places of worship and healthcare were added. Also, the category for restaurants, bars, cafes was extended to include take aways. Business use was divided into 12 different categories²:

- Non food retail.
- Charity shops.
- Food shops for example supermarket, butcher, delicatessen, bakery etc.
- Restaurants, bars, cafes and take away.
- Retail services, for example post office, hairdresser, photo shop, dry cleaning, garage.
- Financial and business services, for example property services, accountant, solicitor, bank etc.
- Hotels and accommodation.
- Tourism and leisure.
- Community / public, for example local authority office, community centre.
- Other private businesses.
- Healthcare, this includes dentists, medical clinics and pharmacies.
- Places of worship.
- Vacant.

² Some businesses encompass uses that fall within than one category, for example a large retailer may have an in-store cafe – in these circumstances, the primary use has been recorded.



The composition of local businesses / uses can be an important indicator of town centre vitality. Higher than average levels of vacant premises can indicate that there is lower demand in a town centre and poorer town centre health whereas a more varied mix of businesses and low vacancy rates can indicate a more thriving town centre.

Monitoring the types of town centre businesses, levels of change and vacancy rates over time will help to understand key trends and identify any issues that are affecting the vitality of particular town centres.

The outcomes of the town centre health checks will inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan. Strategies for the town centres and smaller intermediate settlements are also informed by the community action plans.

Assessment of town centre characteristics and activity

In addition to the quantitative data gathering of recording business types, qualitative information was gathered by the officers about different aspects of the physical environment, public realm and facilities and accessibility of each town centre (CNPA078). A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis was undertaken for each town centre - however, this schedule focuses on the opportunities and threats to the town centres.



Aviemore town centre

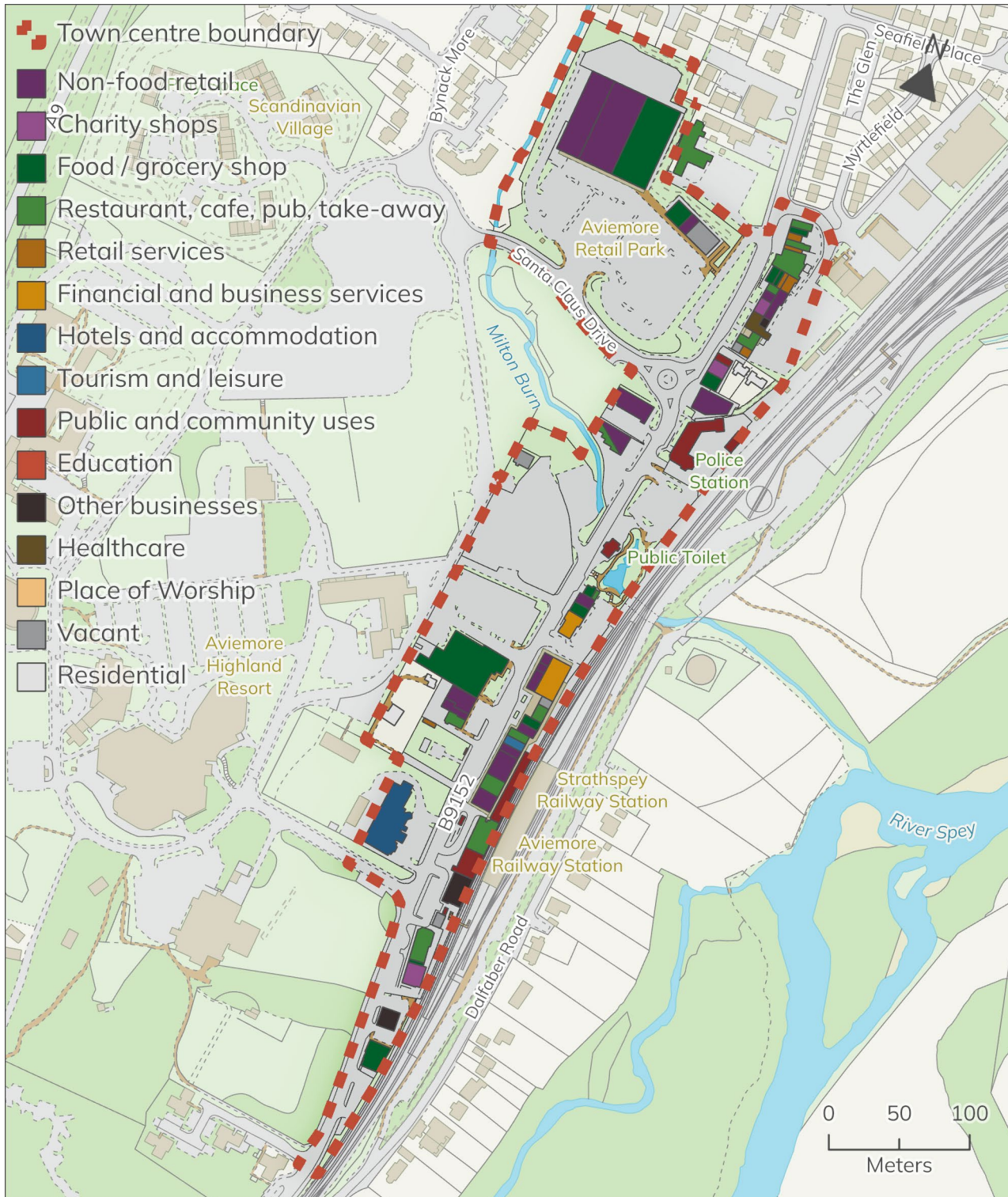


Figure 2 Aviemore town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023 (CNPA078). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. (CNPA078)



Aviemore is located in Highland in the Cairngorm National Park. The Grant Estate developed the town as a rest stop for travellers and built accommodation for rail and road travellers. This laid the foundations of its future tourist industry and 1960's redevelopment as Scotland's premiere ski resort.

Today Aviemore is the largest town in the National Park. It has experienced significant growth over the last two decades and continues to be a popular destination for visitors due to its close proximity to Cairngorm and Glenmore and its reputation as an outdoor activity hub.

Aviemore is a distinctive town within the Cairngorms National Park, containing a range of architectural styles and a strong retail presence along Grampian Road. While it lacks notable architectural landmarks beyond the Cairngorm Hotel and Railway Station, its green open spaces are valued by the community. Despite its popularity as a holiday destination, Aviemore's town centre lacks cohesive design and local character.

Green areas are well maintained, with adequate seating and an outdoor event space, although possibly underused due to lack of sufficient lighting. A retail adjacent green space is being damaged due to unofficial parking. Pedestrian access is generally good, though some routes are inaccessible to wheelchair users and parents with buggies for example for example access to Myrtlefield shopping centre from the car park. There are good parking options, but regulation and disabled access could improve.

While navigation is straightforward along Grampian Road, varied signage styles and increased traffic levels impact clarity. There is some cycle infrastructure and storage but a lack of electric bike charging, and dedicated lanes adds to congestion. Aviemore is well connected by co-located bus and rail services, with strong links to major cities and local destinations, including a heritage steam railway. More information on public transport in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

For the first time in 2023 the town centre health check looked at the number of premises within the town centre boundary that have a residential use. In Aviemore, only 5% of all the buildings within the town centre boundary are currently in residential use (Figure 3), however the town centre boundary is tightly drawn around the retail units and car parks.

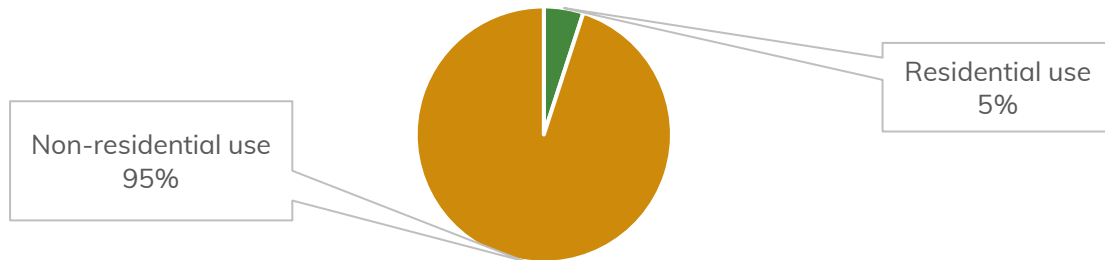


Figure 3 Proportion of premises within Aviemore town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non residential use in August 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Check Report 2023 (CNPA078).

The business composition chart (Figure 4) shows that the town centre has a range of business types, with non food retail forming the highest proportion at 23% followed by restaurants, cafes, pubs and take aways which account for 18%. Hotels and accommodation and healthcare uses account for only 1% each. Of all the town centre business premises, 45% (29 premises) of them represent chains and 55% (35 premises) independent retailers (slightly less than the 60% recorded in 2018).

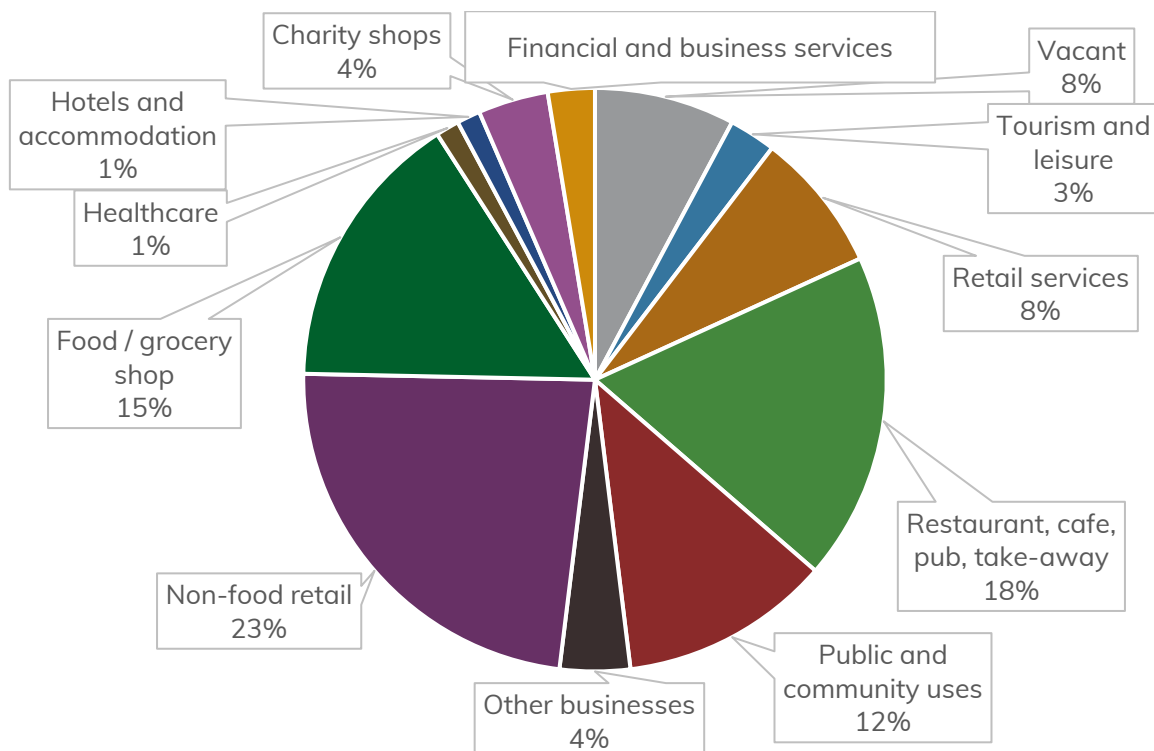


Figure 4 Composition of town centre premises with a non residential use in Aviemore, August 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Check Report 2023 (CNPA078).



Composition of town centre businesses

Composition of the town centre businesses has been recorded in the 2016 and 2018 town centre health checks and meaningful comparisons can be drawn between the different years to identify trends and changes to the business vitality of the town centre. Therefore, the selected data on business premises which reflect those collected in previous years have been compared (Figure 5 and Figure 6).

The number of food / grocery shops in Aviemore town centre has doubled in terms of numbers from six in 2016 to 12 in 2023, proportionally rising from 11% to 16% (2016 – 2023) (Figure 5). The number of retail services has also increased proportionally from 4% in 2016 to 8% in 2023, representing an increase of four premises over the period.

The number and proportion of vacant buildings in Aviemore town centre have increased proportionally from 5% in 2016 to 8% in 2023 representing a 100% increase in numerical terms with three additional vacant buildings during the period. It is unclear yet whether this is the beginning of a longer term trend or the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic and current financial uncertainty which have delayed the units being let / or re-let.

The number and proportion of buildings recorded as public and community use has increased from 7% (in 2016 and 2018) to 12% in 2023, which in terms of numbers of premises was reported as four in 2016, five in 2018 and nine in 2023 representing a significant increase. However, a change to the recording method to include public toilets, and public transport related structures (not previously included) accounts for the significant increase rather than an increase in new public or community buildings in the town centre. The increase in premises / buildings from 2018 to 2023 was four.

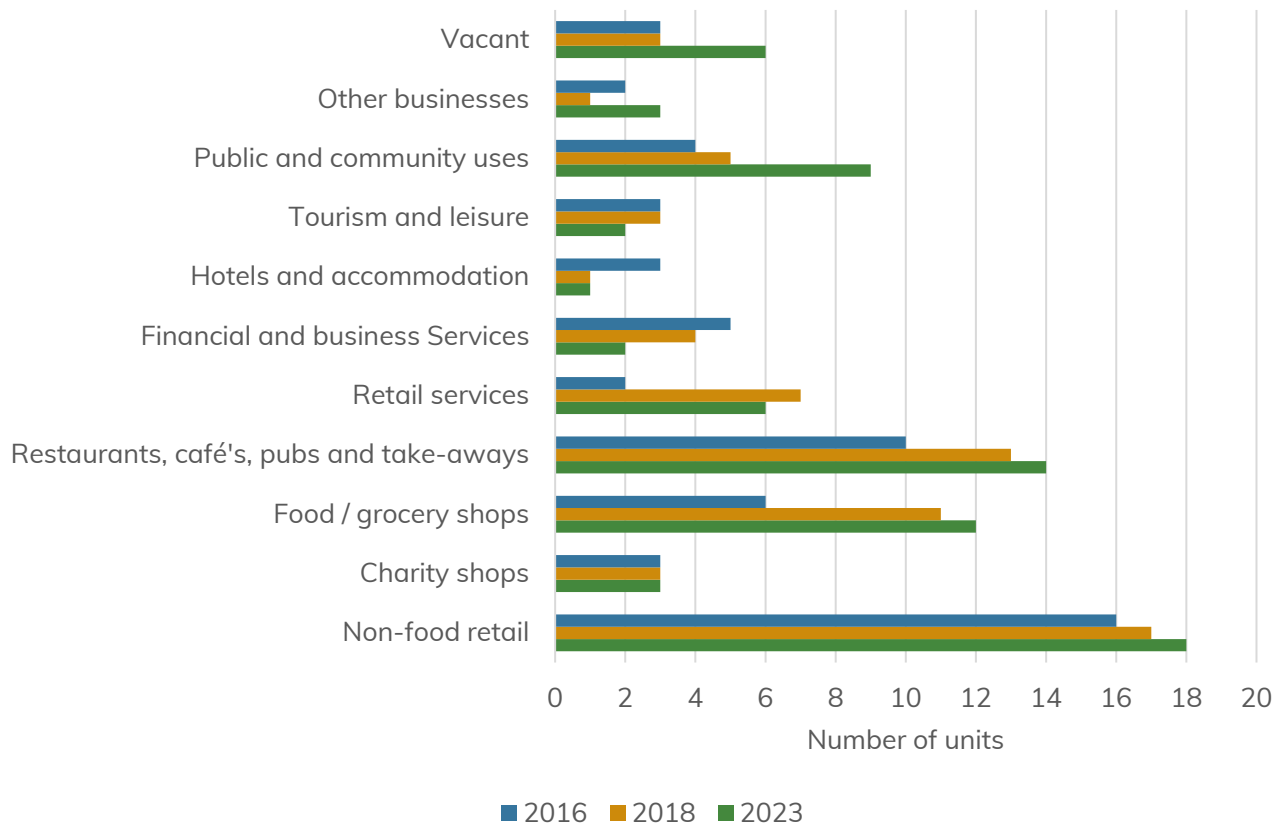


Figure 5 Number of business premises by type in Aviemore town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Check Report 2023 (CNPA078).

There has been little change in the number of restaurants in Aviemore, with 18 recorded in 2023, equal to 2016 (with 19 in 2018). The number of charity shops (5) has remained constant in Aviemore since 2016 (Figure 5).

Two sectors that appear to be in decline in the town are the financial services and hotel and accommodation. Financial services have decreased proportionally from 9% in 2016 to 3% in 2023 (Figure 6) representing the loss of three financial services businesses during the period (Figure 6). Hotel and accommodation businesses have decreased from 5% proportionally in 2016 to 1% in 2023 representing the loss of two hotels and accommodation providers.

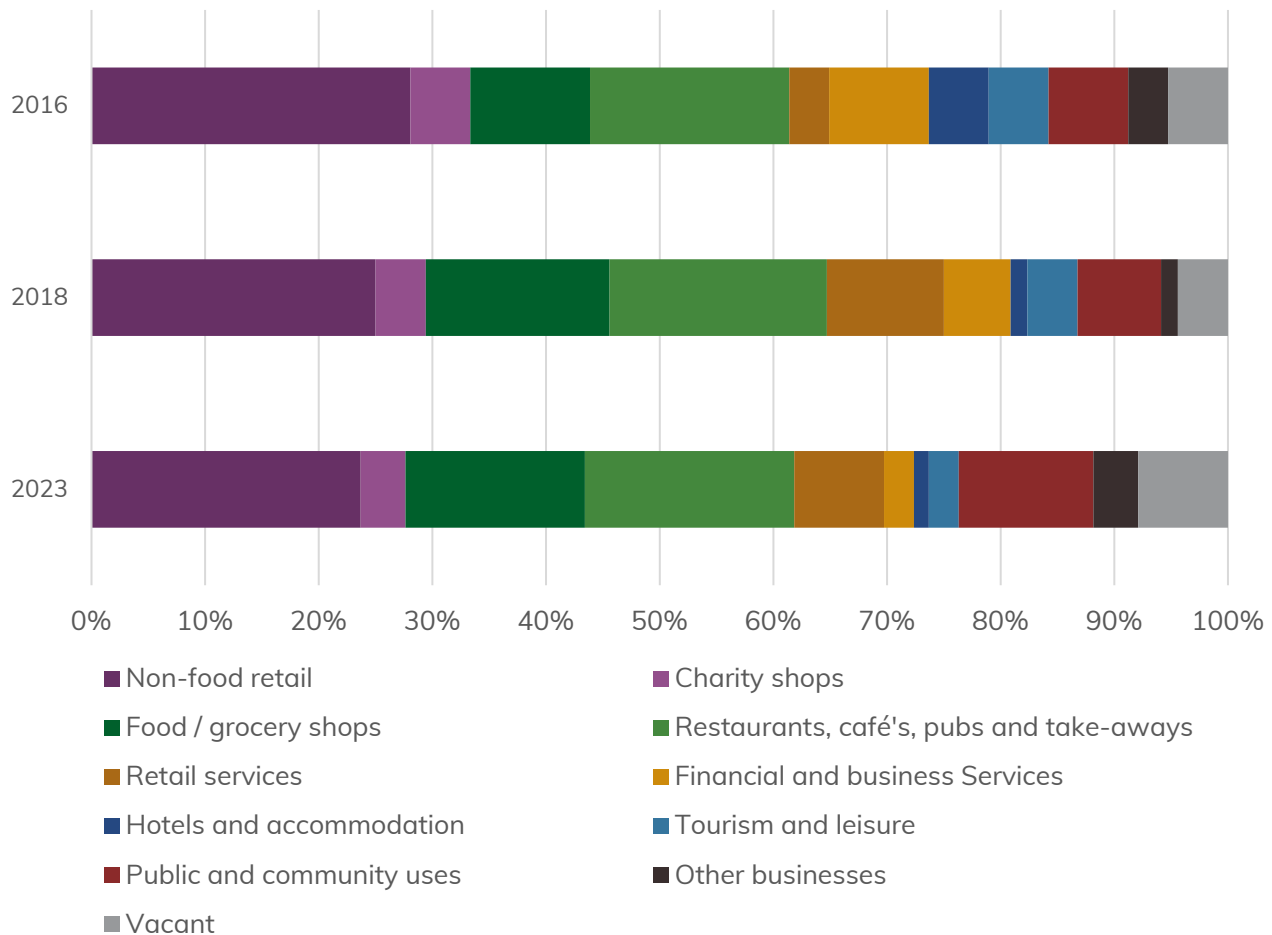


Figure 6 Composition of town centre businesses in Aviemore town centre, 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Check Report 2023 (CNPA078).

The town centre health check report highlighted the following opportunities for improvement in the town centre:

- Construction underway next to the service station to include electric vehicle charging.
- Planning application to develop Laurel Bank site is currently awaiting determination by Scottish Ministers (this has since been granted planning permission).
- Work on going to look at developing the Aviemore Highland Resort site.
- Capitalise on the environment and the town role as an outdoor capital.
- Promote cultural identity.

Threats to the town centre include the risks posed by climate change leading to a reduction in the number of snow days impacting the winter economy and economic benefits that brings to the retail and vitality of the town centre. More information the effects of climate change in the National Park is available in Schedule 4: Climate change.



Other threats to the vitality of the town centre include the increasing vacancy rates and the increasing number of short term holiday lets and / or second homes in the wider area impacting local business's ability to attract and retain staff due to staff housing shortages or affordability. More information on the economy in the Cairngorms National Park is available in Schedule 21: Economic development.



Ballater town centre

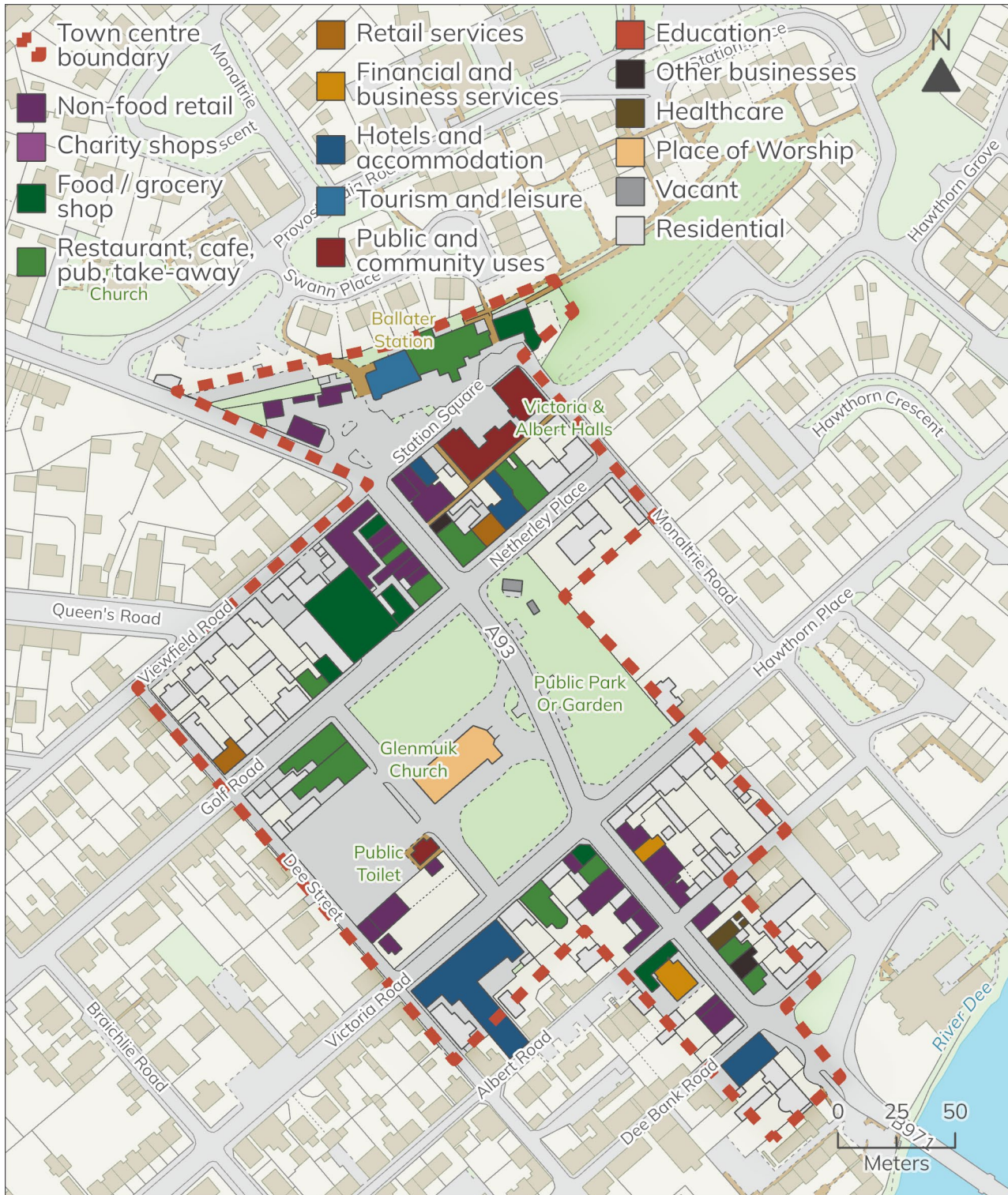


Figure 7 Ballater town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023 (CNPA078). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.



Ballater, often cited as a Victorian village, is a significant settlement in the National Park. It sits in Deeside in the eastern part of the National Park and has a population of just over 1,500 (CNPA482). The town has strong royal connections due to its proximity to Balmoral and boasts an attractive historical centre. Today its economy is heavily reliant on tourism, attracting visitors because of its royal connections, local scenery, and rural Scottish pastimes (notably fishing and shooting).

The town centre has a high quality built environment, characterised by granite architecture typical of the local historic vernacular, enhanced by green elements like planters and flower boxes. Business activity is focused around two key areas divided by a centrally located church. A strong sense of identity is formed through the town's royal and historic ties, scenic surroundings, and a tidy, well maintained streetscape. The town centre offers well maintained, welcoming and accessible green spaces. The main green areas around the church are clean and well maintained with good provision of street furniture.

The grid layout aids navigation, but narrow pavements and limited crossings can hinder movement, particularly for those with mobility challenges. While parking is ample near the church, excessive vehicle presence especially by large coaches diminish the town's historic setting. Cycling feels secondary to cars, though cycle parking exists near shops and green spaces. From the town centre there are good connections to the surrounding areas, paths and Deeside way.

The public toilets are free, centrally located and well maintained, including accessible facilities. Navigation is clear thanks to good provision of fingerposts, heritage signs, and interpretive boards spread throughout the centre.

Reliable bus services connect the town to Aberdeen, with digital displays offering real time schedule updates. However, services are limited. More information on bus services in Ballater can be found in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

Town Centre Businesses

In Ballater, 47% of all the buildings within the town centre boundary are currently in non residential use and 53% are designated as residential dwellings (Figure 8).

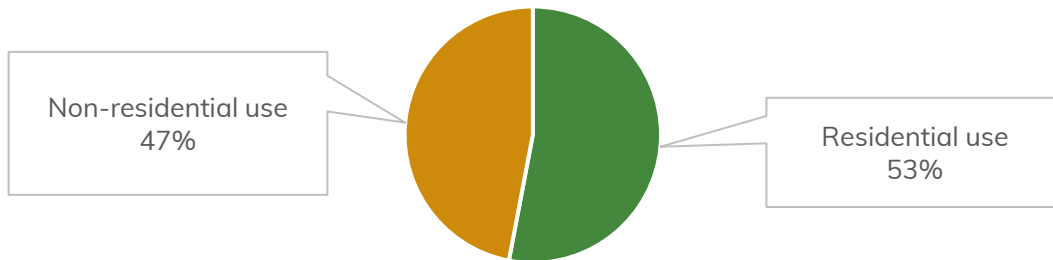


Figure 8 Proportion of premises within the town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non residential use in Ballater in August 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

The highest proportion of businesses in the town centre are non food retail which account for 39% of all businesses (Figure 9). Other significant proportions include restaurants, cafes, pubs and take aways which make up 20% (representing 24 establishments) and food and grocery shops which make up 11%. Of the town centre businesses 91% of the premises were recorded as being independent outlets up from 83% in 2018 (84% in 2016).

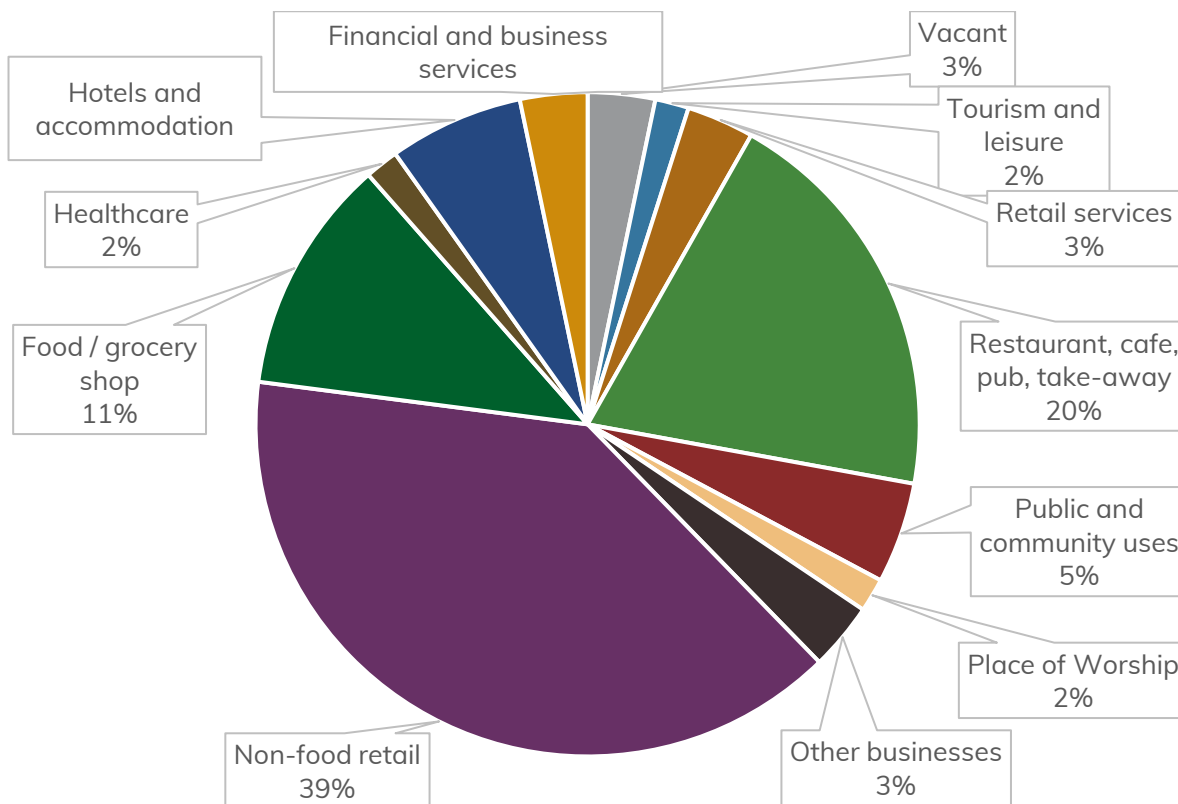


Figure 9 Composition of town centre premises with a non residential use in Ballater, August 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).



Composition of town centre business

In Ballater, the number and proportion of vacant properties has significantly decreased from 12 (22%) in 2016 to 3 (3%) in 2023 (Figure 10 and Figure 11). This is due to the 2016 town centre health checks being carried out about a year after the 2015 flood event that badly affected many businesses in Ballater, meaning in that many were still closed and awaiting refurbishment prior to re-opening when the health check was carried 2016.

Non food retail businesses have significantly increased since 2016 when only 15 premises (27%) were recorded to 24 in 2023 (41%). Restaurants, café, pubs and takeaways have also increased from seven businesses in 2016 to 12 in 2023 representing a 71% increase across the period. This may reflect the fact the town is a popular holiday destination attracting an affluent clientele with potentially more disposable income. Non food retail, food / grocery and restaurants, cafes, pubs and take aways dominate the town centre. Unlike some of the other town centres there are no charity shops within the town centre.

Between 2016 and 2023 there has been little or no change in the numbers of hotels and accommodation, public and community use buildings, financial and business services, tourism and leisure or food / grocery shops. It is worth noting the number of financial and business services businesses has reduced from three to two (2016 – 2023) which is a trend seen across all the towns in the National Park.

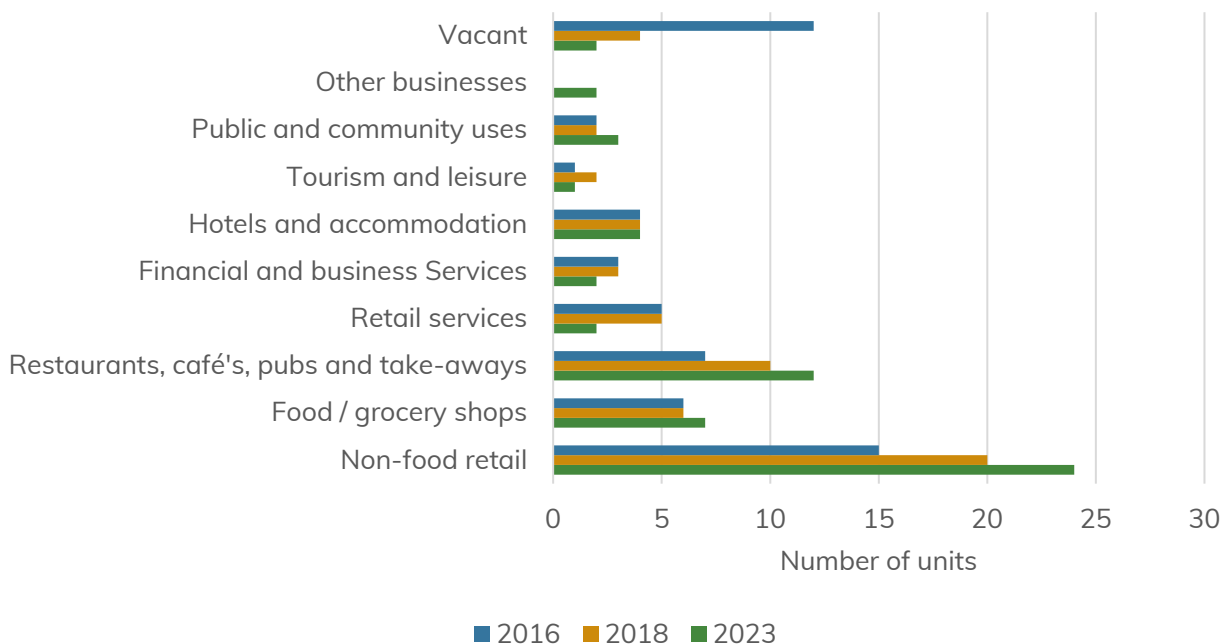


Figure 10 Number of business premises by business type in Ballater town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

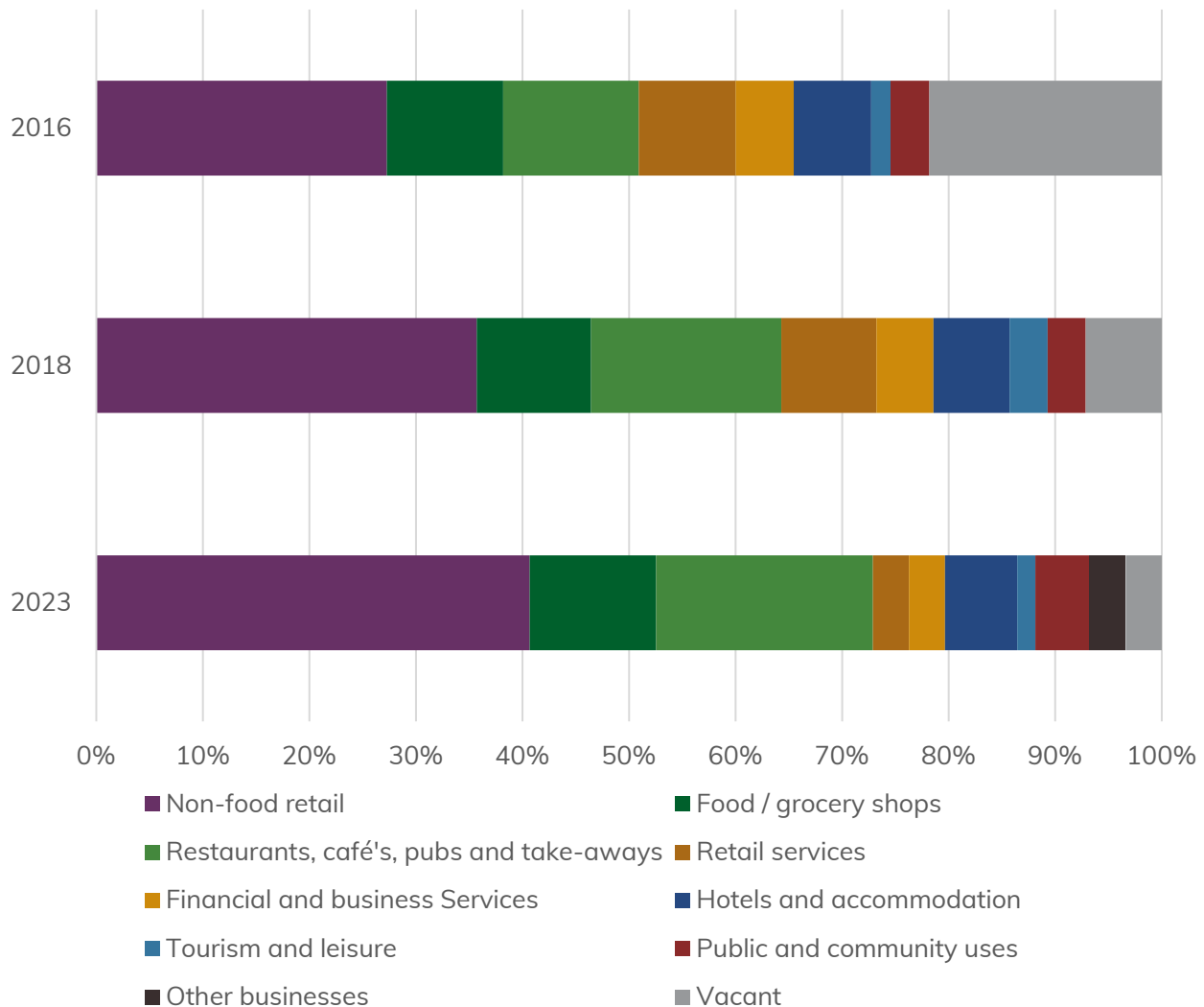


Figure 11 Composition of town centre businesses in Ballater town centre, 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

The town centre health check report highlighted the following opportunities for improvement in the centre town:

- More defined parking to maintain setting of the church and improve pedestrian access.
- More cycle parking, and dedicated cycle routes through the town centre.
- Need for more electric vehicle charging points.
- Strengthening the role of tourism – there could be further opportunities to enhance the visitor experience, and the town may benefit from a wider range of tourism accommodation.

Threats identified to the town centre include:



-
- Flooding, as seen in 2015³.
 - Becoming too popular – during the town centre health check visit it was noted the streets were very busy.
 - Car dominance and the reliance on car use – there is already a car dominated feel to town centre with a lot of informal parking around the central church⁴.

³ More information on the risks of flooding in the National Park is available in Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management.

⁴ More information on traffic and parking is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Granttown-on-Spey town centre

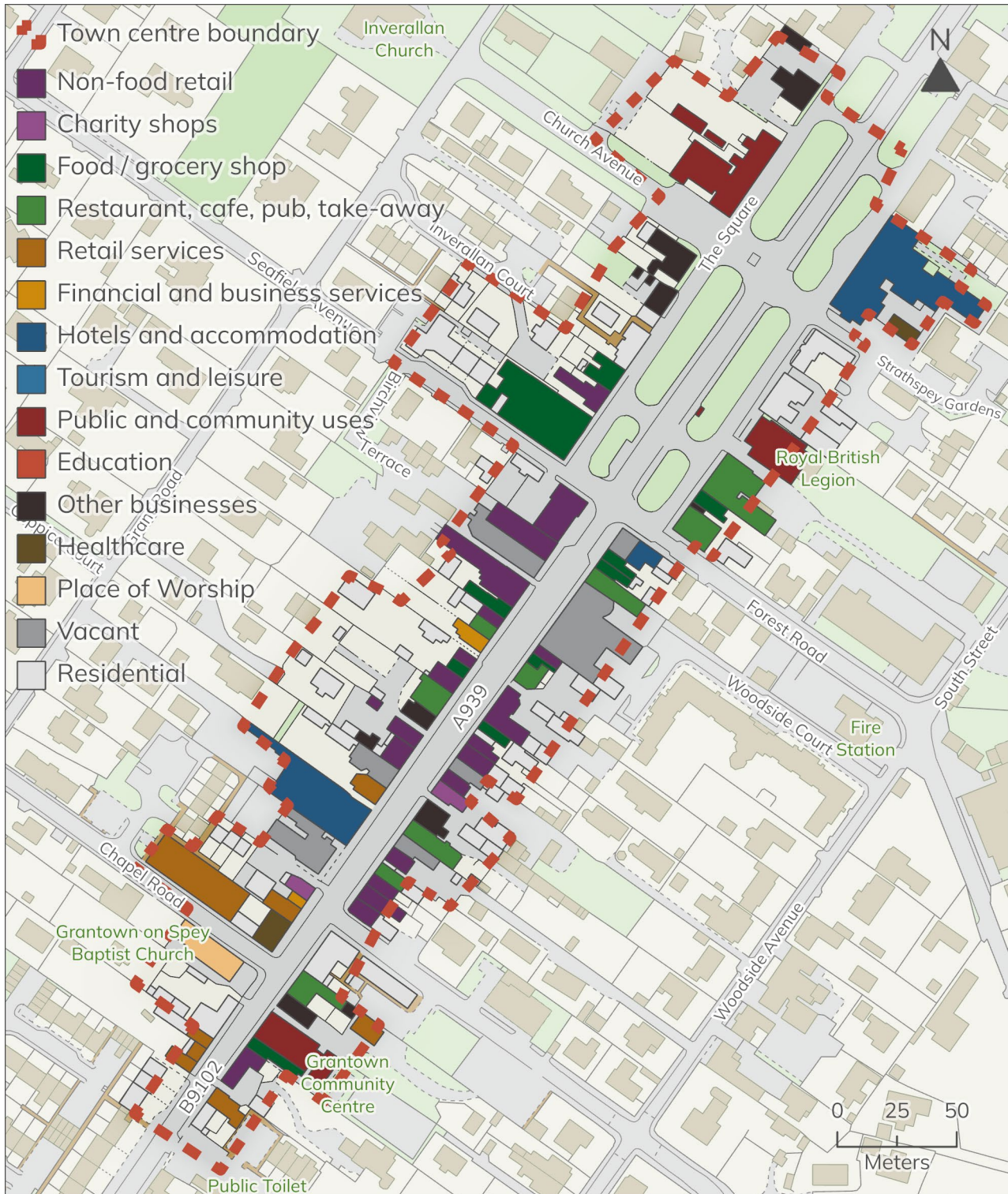


Figure 12 Granttown-on-Spey town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023 (CNPA078). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.



Grantown-on-Spey lies in the north of the Cairngorms National Park and is one of the main service centres in Badenoch and Strathspey with a population of just over 2,400 people (CNPA482). The town has a traditional long High Street and central square which forms the hub of the town.

The town centre is attractive and generally well maintained, with a mix of traditional and varied shopfronts. Some High Street buildings show wear, and a number of properties remain vacant despite recent revitalisation efforts. The area is part of an expanded conservation area with an active masterplan. The conservation area appraisal (CNPA047) for Grantown-on-Spey provided by the Highland Council, provides an in depth review of the area and can be accessed here:

Grantown-on-Spey has a strong historic and planned town identity, though inconsistent application of building regulation has impacted parts of its character. The new conservation appraisal and subsequent management plan (CNPA048) offers a chance to reinforce its unique identity.

The town square provides pleasant green space. Planters contribute positively to the area's aesthetic. High Street pavements are wide and easy to use, but the square suffers from limited crossings, reduced visibility, and obstructions like illegal parking, creating challenges for safe pedestrian movement.

Traffic congestion and unregulated parking are common issues in the town centre, especially on the square and along the High Street. Car dominance makes cycling difficult. Cycle facilities are limited, poorly signposted, and mostly uncovered.

Accessible and clean public toilets are available in the town centre at two locations at either end of the town but require a 50p fee. Fingerposts and some directional signs exist, but there is a need for clearer signage for amenities like public toilets, recycling, and key civic buildings. Bus services exist connecting the town to nearby settlements, Aviemore and Inverness but is of limited frequency and underused. Residents mostly rely on private vehicles. Digital boards at bus stops provide information on the next buses timetabled.

Town Centre Premises

In Grantown-on-Spey, 48% of the premises in the town centre were recorded proportionally as being for non residential use in 2023 (Figure 13). This represents a significantly different town centre composition compared to Aviemore (Figure 3), with a composition more akin to Ballater.

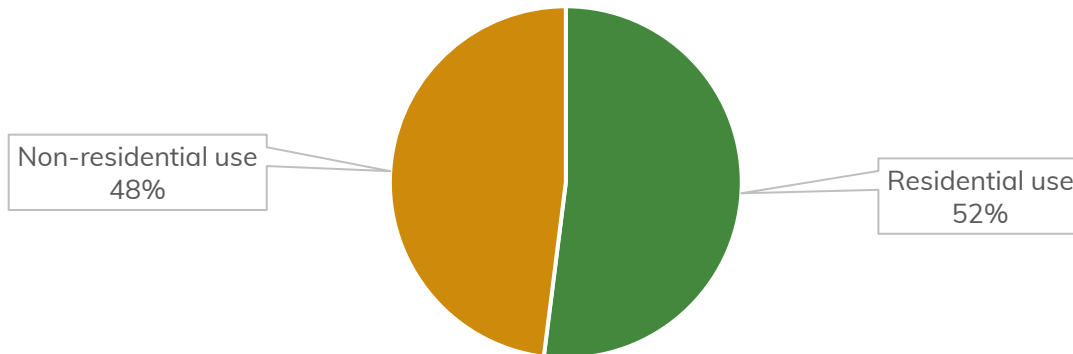


Figure 13 Proportion of premises within the town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non residential use in Grantown-on-Spey in August 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

The highest proportion of non residential premises in the town centre are non food retail which account for 26% of all businesses representing 20 establishments (Figure 14). Other significant proportions include other businesses accounting for 13%, restaurants, cafes, pubs and take aways which make up 11% (nine premises) and food and grocery shops which make up 13% (10 premises). Of the town centre non residential premises (totalling 78), 84% of the premises were recorded as being independent outlets up from 72% in 2018 (and in 2016). This high proportion of independent to chain led retailers is similar to Ballater's composition (92% independent).

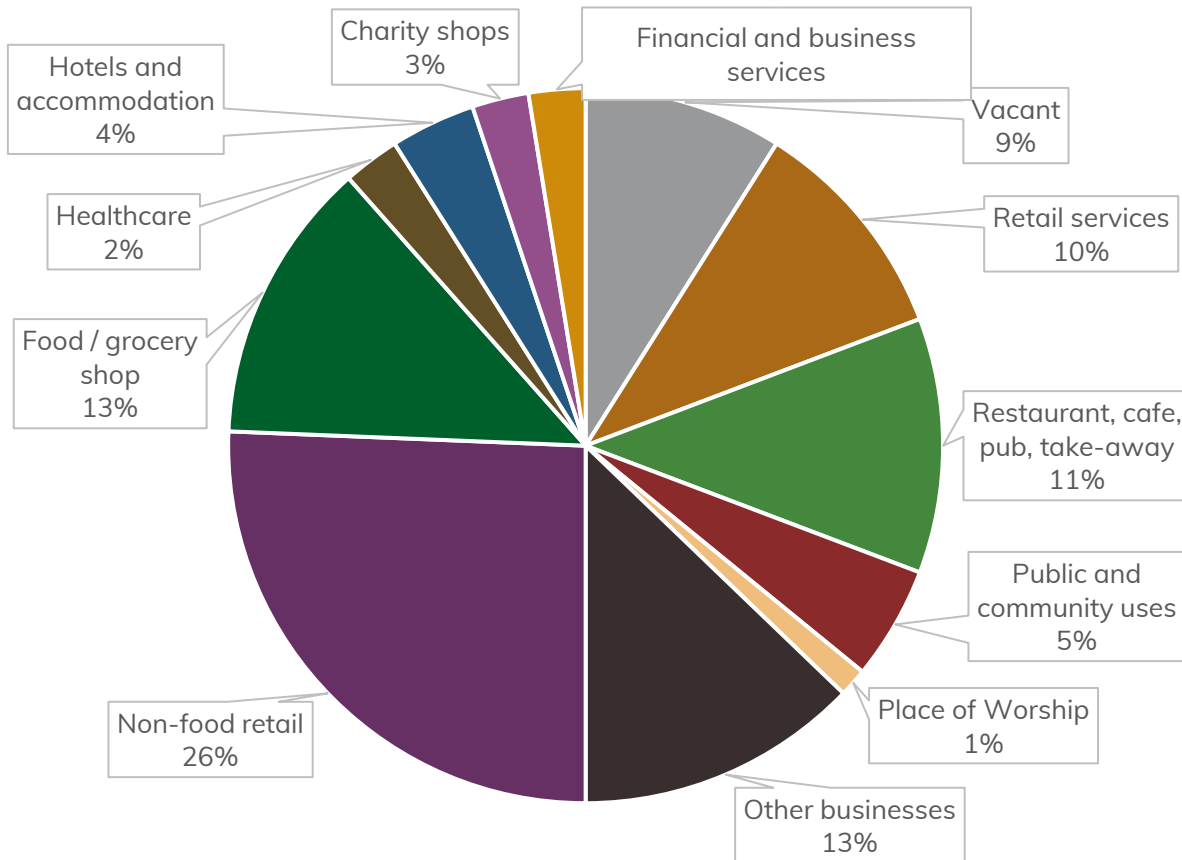


Figure 14 Composition of town centre premises with a non residential use in Grantown-on-Spey, August 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

Composition of town centre business

In Grantown-on-Spey, similar to in Ballater, there has been an increase in non food retail. This was stable between 2016 and 2018, but in 2023 rose from 20% of the businesses to 27% representing an increase of five new businesses (Figure 15 and Figure 16). Other businesses have also significantly increased proportionally from 4% in 2016 to 13% in 2023. It is possible the increase in these businesses is a result of the covid 19 pandemic and a switch from restaurants, cafes pubs and takeaway business and retail services. Restaurants, cafes, pubs and take aways have reduced from 12 in 2018 to nine in 2023. Retail services have also decreased in this period from 12 businesses to eight.

Interestingly the number of vacant properties in the town has remained constant at seven or 9%. Given the fact that there was a five year gap between the most recent and last town centre health check it is possible that not enough data has been collected to say whether this is typical or not. However, it does remain a problem given the small size of the town that nearly 10% of the town centres business premises are vacant.



The number of financial and business services businesses have also severely declined (as seen in the other towns to a lesser degree). In Grantown-on-Spey in 2016 there were six businesses serving financial and business needs whereas in 2023 this number has reduced to two. The loss of the last bank on the High Street is perhaps a visual reflection in the changes in the way financial services are administered in rural towns. Tourism related businesses have also decreased from 2 (3%) to zero in 2023. There has also been a modest decline in hotels and accommodation with the loss of one establishment since 2016.

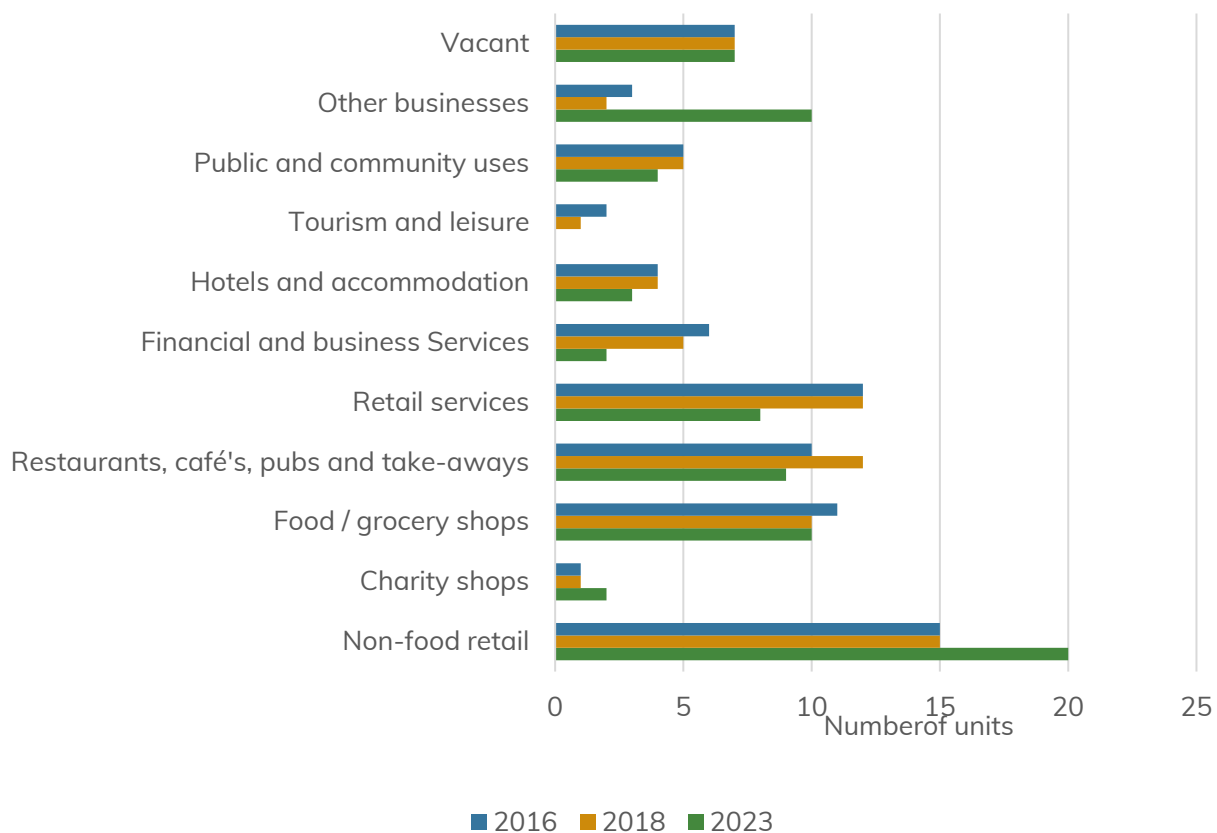


Figure 15 Number of business premises by business type in Grantown-on-Spey town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

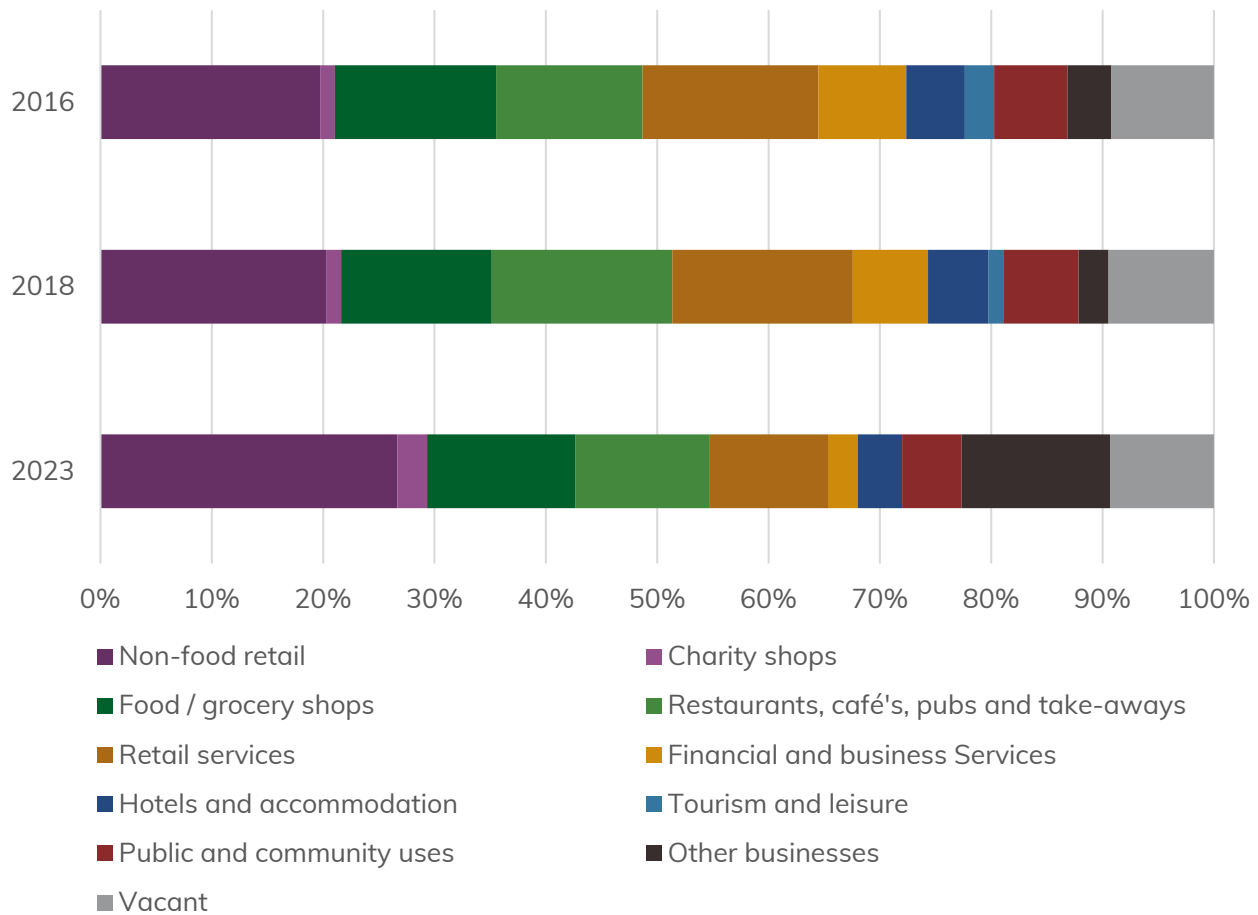


Figure 16 Composition of town centre businesses in Granttown-on-Spey town centre, 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

The town centre health check report highlighted the following opportunities for improvement in the town:

- Further promotion of the town and surrounding woods / walks as an outdoor visitor destination.
- Strathspey Railway extension⁵.
- Improvements to signage to maximise visitors to Granttown Museum.

Threats identified to the town centre include:

- Macro scale economic changes which affect local businesses (small changes or a poor season can affect the viability of a business).
- Deterioration and lack of maintenance of older buildings in the town centre.

⁵ More information on the proposed Strathspey railway extension is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Kingussie town centre

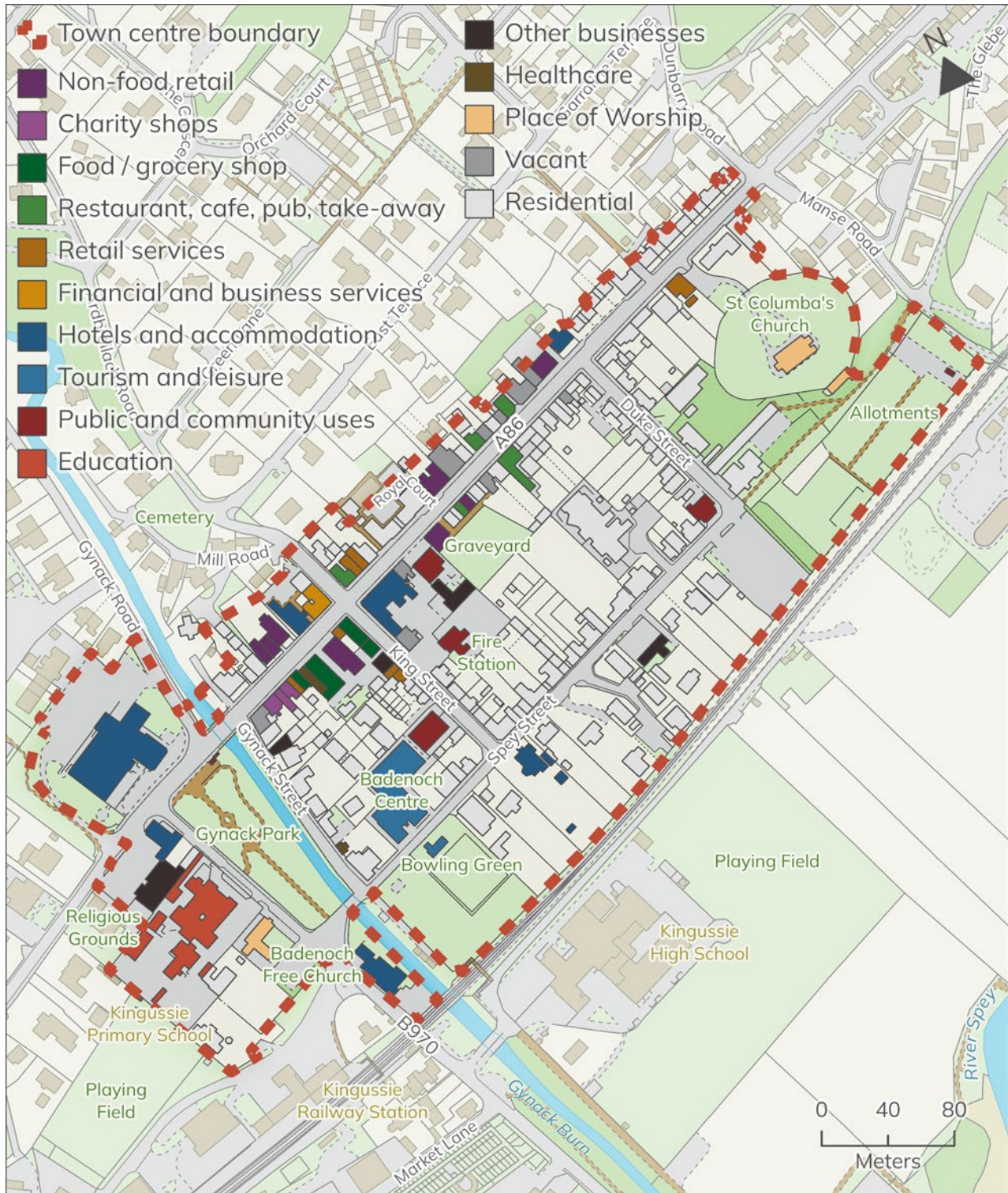


Figure 17 Kingussie town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023 (CNPA078). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.



Kingussie is the oldest settlement in Badenoch and is a traditional Highland town, which began life as a planned village in 1799. It expanded in the 1800s with the introduction of the railway which brought tourism to the town. However, the A9 now bypasses the town and may have contributed to a decline in economic activity. It has a population of nearly 1,500 (CNPA482). It is a popular destination for visitors with a number of attractions nearby. The town centre is focused along a long traditional high street typical of the area.

Kingussie has a tidy and attractive town centre with Victorian architecture and some modern buildings. While most shopfronts are well maintained, some vacant properties remain. Historic buildings and a central park enhance the overall appeal, though traffic is dominant on the High Street. The town has a strong identity rooted in its heritage and community led spaces like the Caberfeidh Horizons hub.

The public realm feels cohesive, with hanging baskets and Gynack Park providing a social and green focal point. The High Street, however, has little space for gathering due to traffic. The High Street is easy to navigate, but crossings are limited especially at the eastern end. Narrow pavements on side streets may hinder those with reduced mobility.

Parking is readily available both on street and in adjacent car parks, with no indication of capacity issues during the visit. Cycle parking is limited and informal near the Co-op. Some facilities exist but are not clearly marked or easily accessed from the High Street.

Public toilets are located slightly outside the town centre at Ardvonie Car Park. They are clean and maintained, though not conveniently situated for town centre visitors.

While Kingussie benefits from bus and rail links, the two are not well integrated. Lack of clear or digital bus timetables could hinder use. Signage is generally good, with clear wayfinding for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Town Centre Businesses

In Kingussie a large proportion (73%) of the buildings within the town centre boundary are designated for residential use (Figure 18). Similar to Newtonmore this represents a significantly different town centre composition compared to Aviemore (Figure 3) where the majority of premises in the town centre are designated for business use and, to a lesser degree but just as significant, differ from Grantown-on-Spey and Ballater, which have more evenly split proportions.

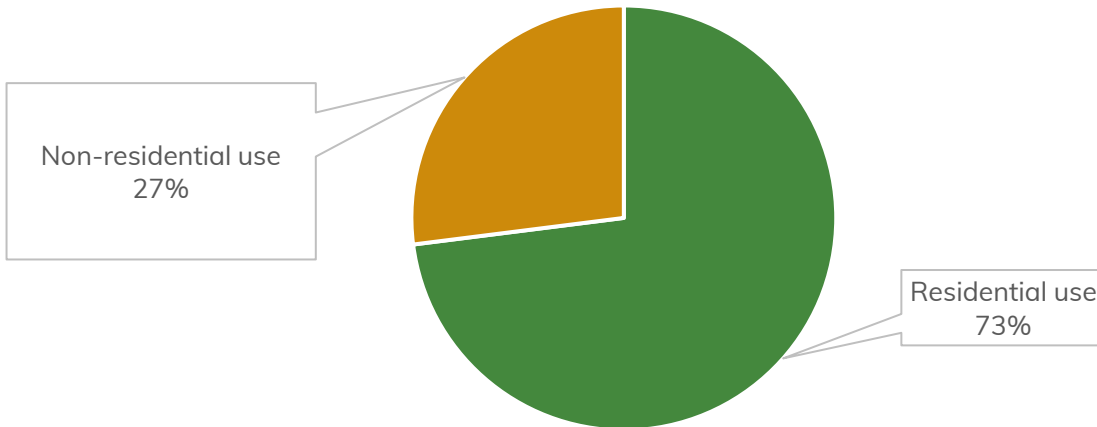


Figure 18 Proportion of premises within the town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non residential use in Kingussie in 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

Figure 19 shows that Kingussie enjoys the most even distributed proportion of different business uses of all the towns in the National Park with no one business / use dominating too strongly. The greatest proportion of businesses being seen in non food retail which accounts for 12% of the non residential premises in Kingussie (eight premises). Hotels and accommodation, retail services and public and community uses each account for 11% (representing seven premises per use). Proportionally 16% of the premises were recorded as vacant (10 units). Charity shops, tourism and leisure, food and grocery, healthcare, other businesses, restaurants, cafes, pubs and take aways and places of worship each account for 3% to 8% each.

Of the town centre businesses 89% of the premises were recorded as being independent outlets up from 75% in 2018 (and 82% in 2016). This high proportion of independent to chain led retailers is equal to the proportion recorded in Ballater in 2023 (92% independent).

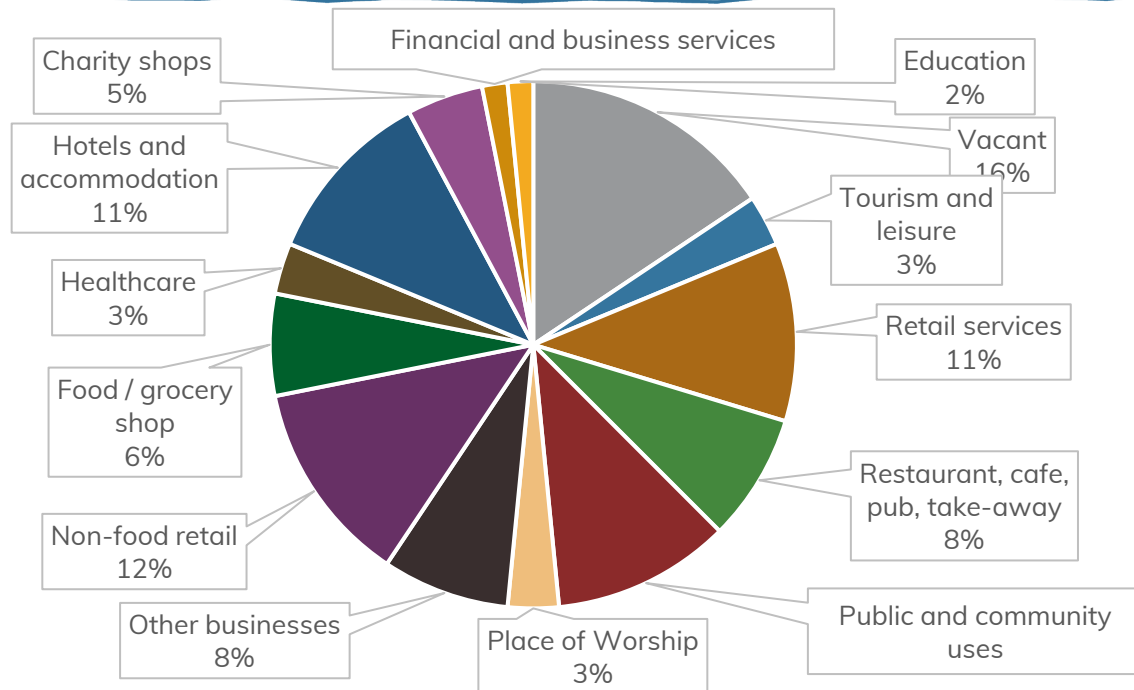


Figure 19 Composition of the town centre buildings recorded as non residential use in Kingussie in 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

Composition of town centre business

The number of vacant businesses in Kingussie has increased since 2016 overall, when only six business were recorded at being vacant, with 10 in 2023 (and 11 in 2018).

Dissimilar to other towns the numbers of hotels and accommodation businesses have been steadily increasing from five in 2016, six in 2018 to seven in 2023 (Figure 20 and Figure 21). Charity shops have increased from one shop being recorded in both 2016 and 2018 to three in 2023. This may be attributed to the inception and growth of the Caberfeidh Horizons charity operations in Kingussie. Non food retail businesses have also increased since 2016 from seven to eight.

There is a clear decreasing trend in financial and business services (as seen in other towns in the National Park since 2016). These businesses have decreased from three in 2016, two in 2018 to only one being left in 2023.

Retail services have also decreased both proportionally and in terms of absolute numbers throughout the three town centre health checks, reporting nine (19%) in 2016, eight (16%) in 2018 down to seven (12%) in 2023.

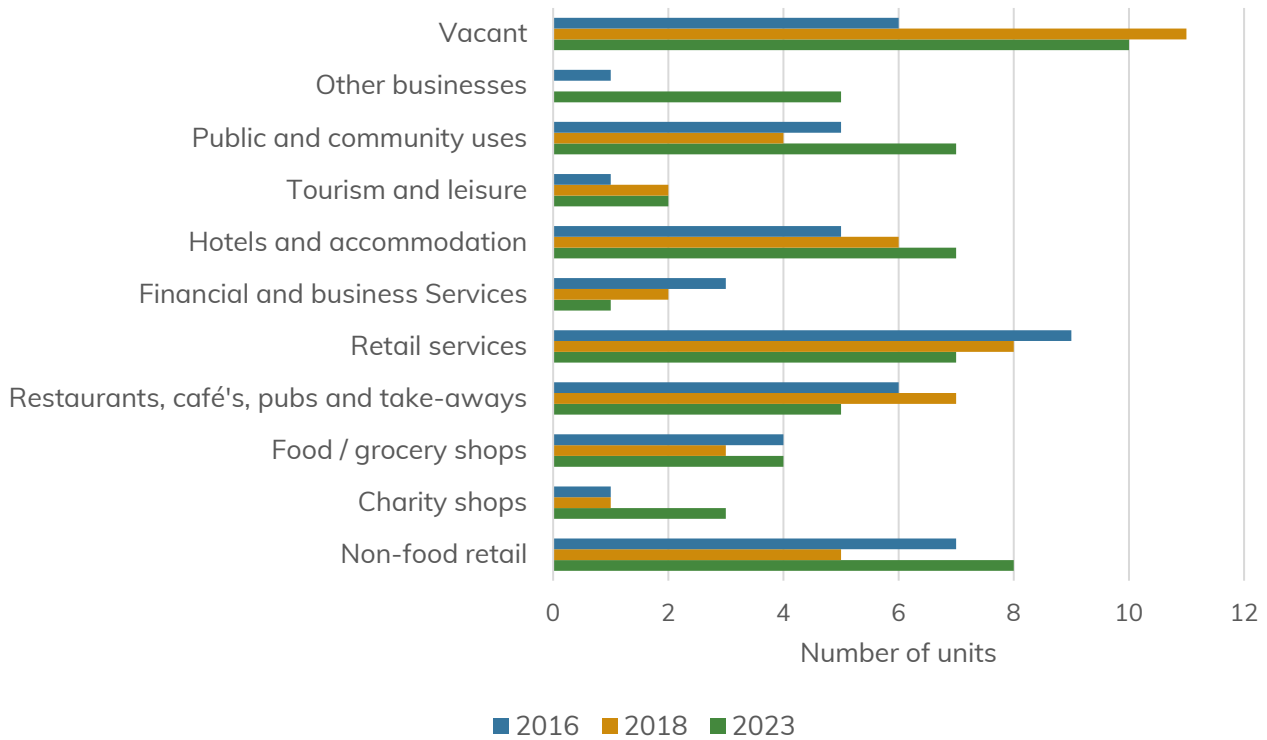


Figure 20 Number of business premises by business type in Kingussie town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

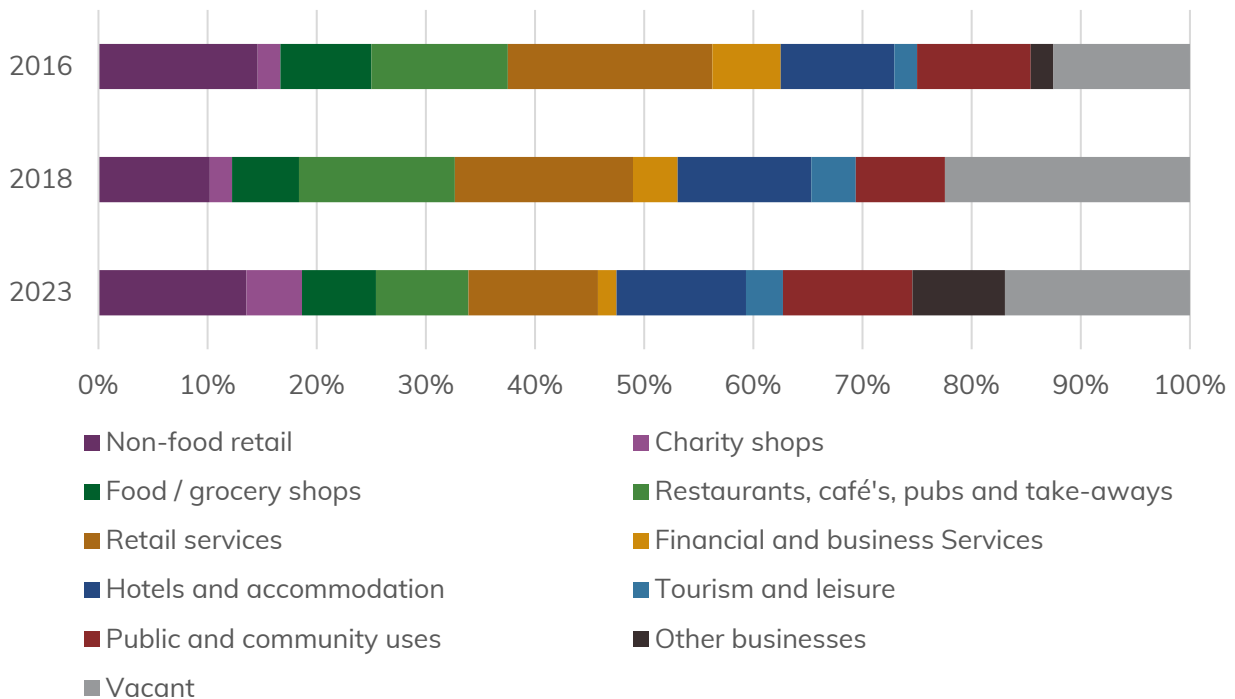


Figure 21 Composition of town centre businesses in Kingussie, 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).



The town centre health check report highlighted the following opportunities for improvement in the town:

- Digital bus timetables serving the town centre stops.
- Cycle lanes, further cycle parking and active travel promotion.
- Integration of bus and rail services.

Threats identified to the town centre include:

- Infrequent transport services and train station some distance from the High Street.⁶
- The Coop is towards the edge of the centre. It has own parking / bus stop etc, which potentially reduces footfall in the centre.
- Lack of dedicated cycle infrastructure⁷ could hinder move to active / sustainable travel changes.
- On street parking⁸ detracts from visual quality of streetscape.

⁶ More information on public transport in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

⁷ More information cycling in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

⁸ More information on parking in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Newtonmore town centre

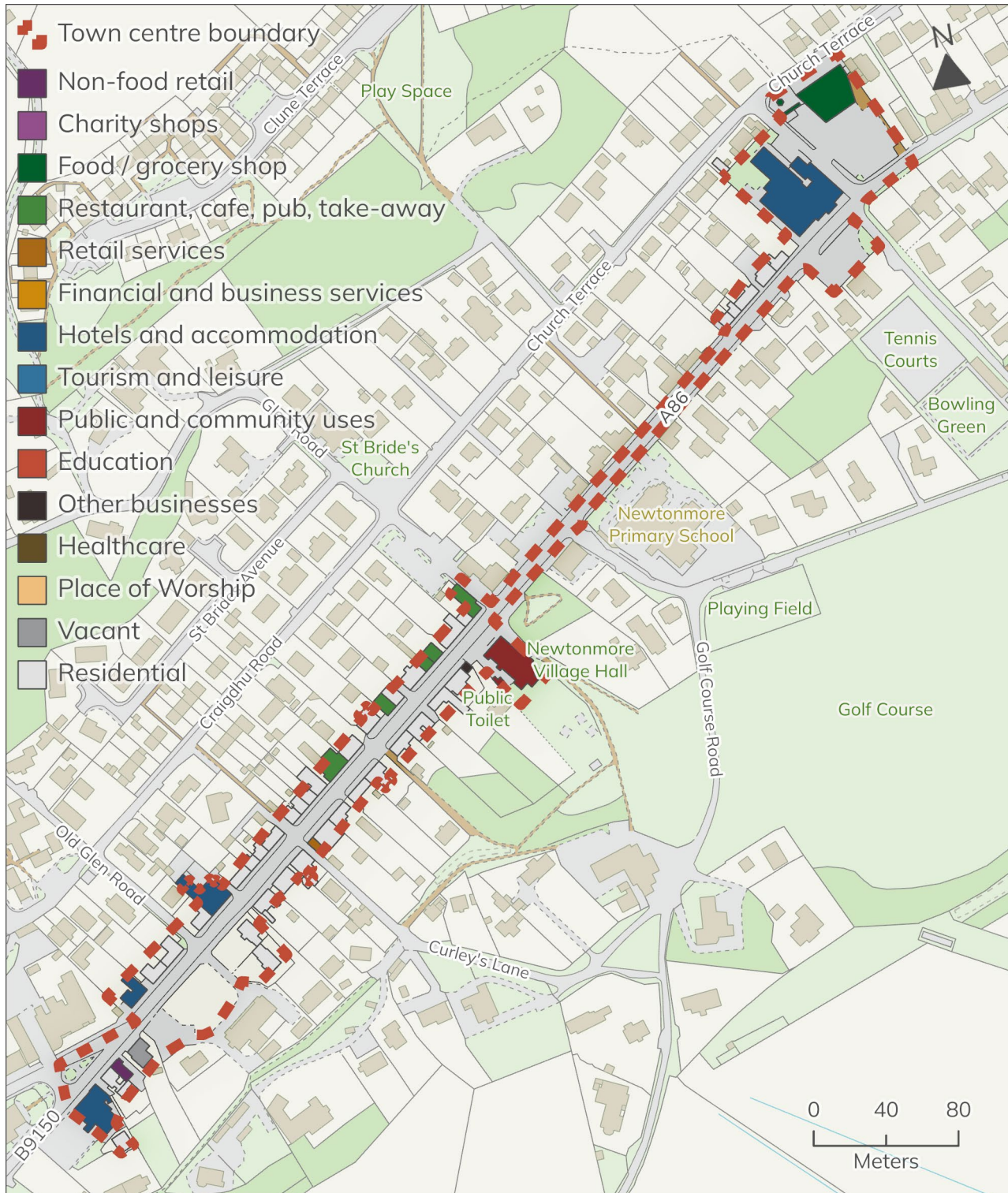


Figure 22 Newtonmore town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023 (CNPA078). Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.



Newtonmore is a village which lies on the western edge of the National Park, around three miles southwest of Kingussie and approximately 17 miles southwest of Aviemore. It is a popular destination for anglers and grouse shooting tourists. It is also home to the Highland Folk Museum which is popular with visitors in the summer season. The area also hosts the Wild Cat Trail and Wild Cat Experience and there is a dedicated Wildcat Centre in the town centre. Surrounding the town there are also a number of bike and walking trails. It also has a long linear village centre typical of the area with a strong historic character. It has a population of just over 1,000 (CNPA482).

Newtonmore is a well maintained, attractive village centre with a historic High Street, granite buildings, and some modern infill. While most buildings are in good condition, minor maintenance issues and a scarcity of public bins were noted. The town maintains a strong local character, shaped by preserved architectural features and scenic surroundings. A high proportion of independent shops adds to its distinctive, small town charm.

Two well kept green spaces near the post office and war memorial foster community pride. These areas are centrally located supporting gatherings and local activity. The flat, linear layout aids navigation, and pavements are generally wide. One well placed pedestrian crossing supports low footfall needs, though some cluttered signage was observed. Traffic is light and calm. On street and public parking are sufficient, but excess street parking may detract from the High Street's appeal. Electric vehicle charging is only available outside the centre.

Despite being on a National Cycle Route, the town lacks clear cycling infrastructure or designated facilities. Public transport is limited. The bus stop near the Coop is well used, but the rail station is out of walking range and services are infrequent.

Public Toilets are centrally located but in need of cosmetic upkeep, they are functional but not highly visible or welcoming. Signage is functional but could be better organised. Key information is provided near the post office.

Town Centre Businesses

In Newtonmore the majority (73%) of the buildings within the town centre boundary are designated for residential use (Figure 23). This represents a significantly different town centre composition compared to Aviemore (Figure 3) where the majority of premises in the town centre are designated for business use, and to a lesser degree differs from Grantown-on-Spey and Ballater where the distribution is more equally weighted. In



Newtonmore proportionally 86% of the non residential premises are independent retailers – representing 13 premises.

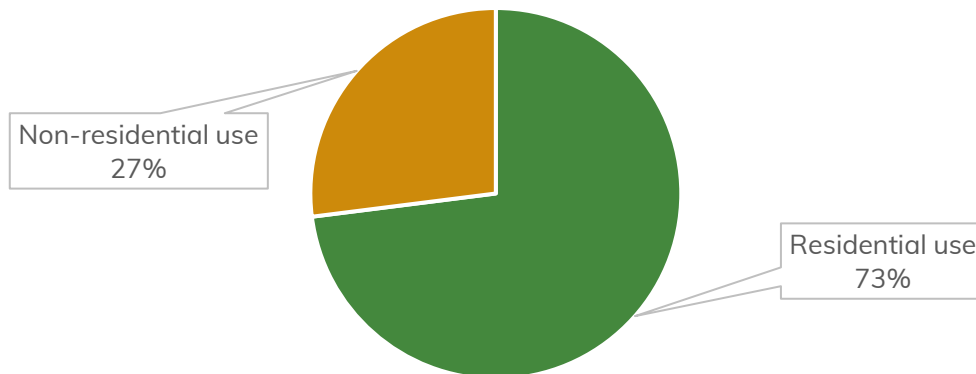


Figure 23 Proportion of buildings within the town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non residential use in Newtonmore in 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

Figure 24 shows the largest proportion of premises for non residential use in Newtonmore are recorded as restaurants, cafes, pubs and take aways and hotels and accommodation both 28% (representing four establishments each). Food and grocery shops make up 7% with the remaining 37% of the non residential premises comprising of retail services (one), vacant properties (one), non food retail (one), other businesses (one) and public and community uses (13% but only equating to two units – the town hall and public toilets). It should be noted that there are a far lower number of buildings within the town of Newtonmore with a much higher proportion designated as residential dwellings meaning the actual numbers of each type of business are low, thus meaning the proportional figures have less significance than some of the other towns.

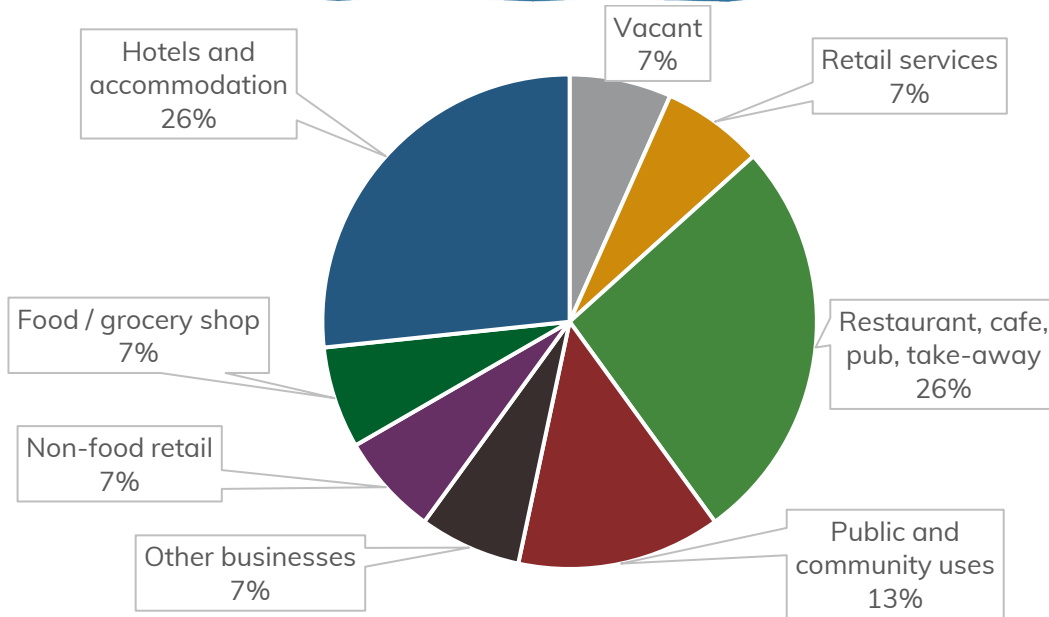


Figure 24 Composition of town centre premises with a non residential use in Newtonmore, August 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

Composition of town centre business

Newtonmore is by far the smallest town in terms of numbers of businesses with only 14 businesses operating in the town centre. This makes meaningful analysis difficult in terms of proportions attributed to each business type (Figure 25 and Figure 26). Instead, it is better to talk directly in terms of number of businesses to give a clearer picture of change. Overall, there has been little change in the composition of the town centre from 2016 to 2023.

The numbers of vacant properties have decreased from three in 2016 to one in 2023, however it should be noted there was only one recorded in 2018, so any meaningful trend at this point is not evident. Hotels and accommodation and restaurant, cafes, pubs and take away businesses have been fairly stable with the same figures reported for 2023 as 2016. Across all years there has been no change in the number of food / grocery shops remaining constant at one.

Public and community uses have increased by one, and tourism and leisure decreased by one, with one extra other business type recorded (2016 – 2023). These small discrepancies may be changes occurring as a consequence to the recording method, which with the introduction of spatial data capture should produce more accurate and consistent results going forward. Overall, there has been little change in the business composition, with the exception of vacant buildings, since 2016.

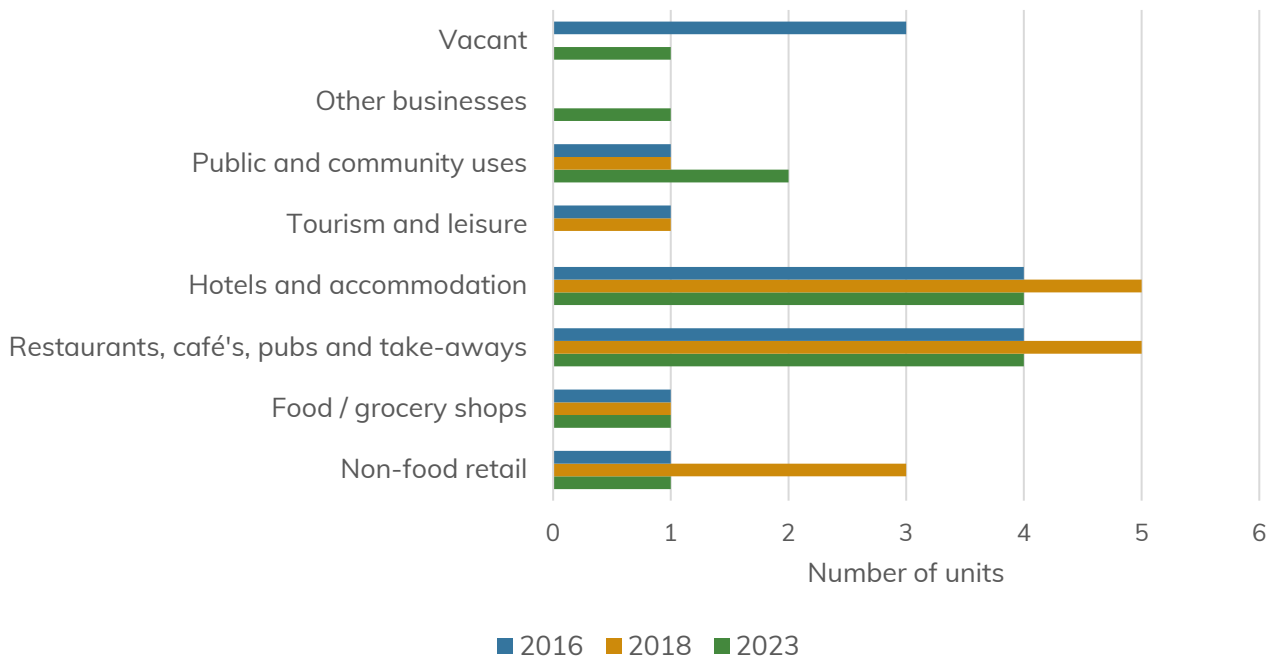


Figure 25 Number of business premises by business type in Newtonmore town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

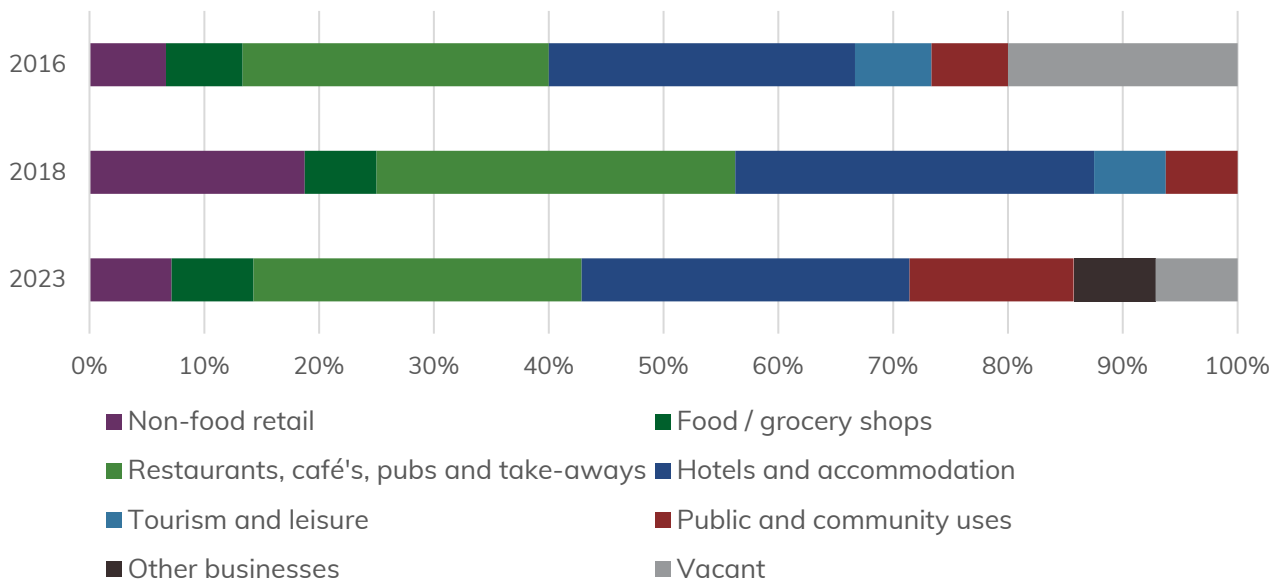


Figure 26 Composition of town centre businesses in Newtonmore town centre, 2016, 2018 and 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078).

The town centre health check report highlighted the following opportunities for improvement in the centre town:

- Future cycle path connection and opportunity to promote cycling in the town.



- Utilising other vacant shop fronts for aesthetic improvement – for example art displays, window graphics.
- The disused / vacant old bank could be used for either commercial or residential purposes.

Threats identified to the town centre include:

- Infrequent transport services⁹ and train station being some distance from the High Street.
- The Coop is on the edge of the centre, drawing focus away from the High Street. It has own parking / bus stop etc, which potentially reduces footfall in the centre.
- Lack of dedicated cycle infrastructure¹⁰ could hinder move to active / sustainable travel changes.
- On-street parking¹¹ detracts from visual quality of street scape.

Town centre health check implications

Based on the evidence gathered in the town centre health checks (CNPA078), the report makes the following recommended implications for the preparation of the Proposed Plan:

Vacant and derelict land and buildings

Vacant and derelict land and buildings should be appraised for allocation for various uses, including residential development to support the local need for housing. This will support National Planning Framework 4 Policy 27 (CNPA008) by supporting an increase in the mix of town centre uses and supporting residential development on vacant or derelict sites. It will also meet Policy 9's requirement for local development plans to set out opportunities for the sustainable reuse of brownfield land including vacant and derelict land and empty buildings.

Electric vehicle charging

With the transition to electric vehicles, additional charging sites and / or infrastructure¹² will be required and should be supported by the Proposed Plan.

⁹ More information on public transport in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

¹⁰ More information cycling in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

¹¹ More information on parking in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

¹² More information on EV infrastructure in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Active travel infrastructure

The Proposed Plan should seek to support additional active travel infrastructure¹³ in town centres, for example cycle parking and changes to road layouts to support wheeling in the town centres, supporting National Planning Framework 4's strategy for creating sustainable places.

The Proposed Plan should reflect any local and emerging traffic and parking schemes by community groups in the town centres that support better pedestrian movement and minimise the negative effects of vehicle traffic.

Strathspey Railway

The Proposed Plan should support the development of the extension of the railway¹⁴ from Aviemore to Grantown-on-Spey, supporting the visitor economy.

Town centre boundaries

The Town centre health check report makes recommendations to review to the current town centre boundaries of the following settlements:

- Grantown-on-Spey: An extension of the town centre boundary to include the library and adjoining car park and toilets, as well as the Garth Hotel and public gardens adjoining the square. The rationale for this is that the current boundary does not include the whole square, which is to many residents and visitors seen as the main focus of the town. The library and gardens opposite form an important part of the public space and amenities of the town.
- Kingussie: A review of the boundary to reduce its size given the high proportion of residential premises in the southern half of the current area.
- Newtonmore: An extension of the boundary to include the buildings adjacent to the Community Hall, including the primary school and pharmacy, two key building uses in the town centre.

Village centres

In the smaller rural settlements, there are village centres that act as local centres for the local communities. Village centres (Figure 27) in this context are defined by the designation of the settlements in the National Park Partnership Plan (CNPA010) as intermediate settlements. Therefore, the village centres covered by this report are:

¹³ More information on Active travel infrastructure in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

¹⁴ More information on the proposed Strathspey Railway extension is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport



- Blair Atholl
- Boat of Garten
- Braemar
- Carrbridge
- Cromdale
- Dulnain Bridge
- Kincaig
- Nethy Bridge
- Tomintoul

In 2025 the Cairngorms National Park Authority introduced a village health check study (CNPA488) to assess the health of local villages. Such checks can aim to in understanding local needs, thus helping planners and community groups in identifying issues such as gaps in services as well as addressing vacant units. They also support evidence based planning, track changes over time, and assess how villages respond to economic, social, and environmental pressures. Additionally, they promote sustainable development and encourage community involvement, ensuring locals opinions are reflected in future strategies.

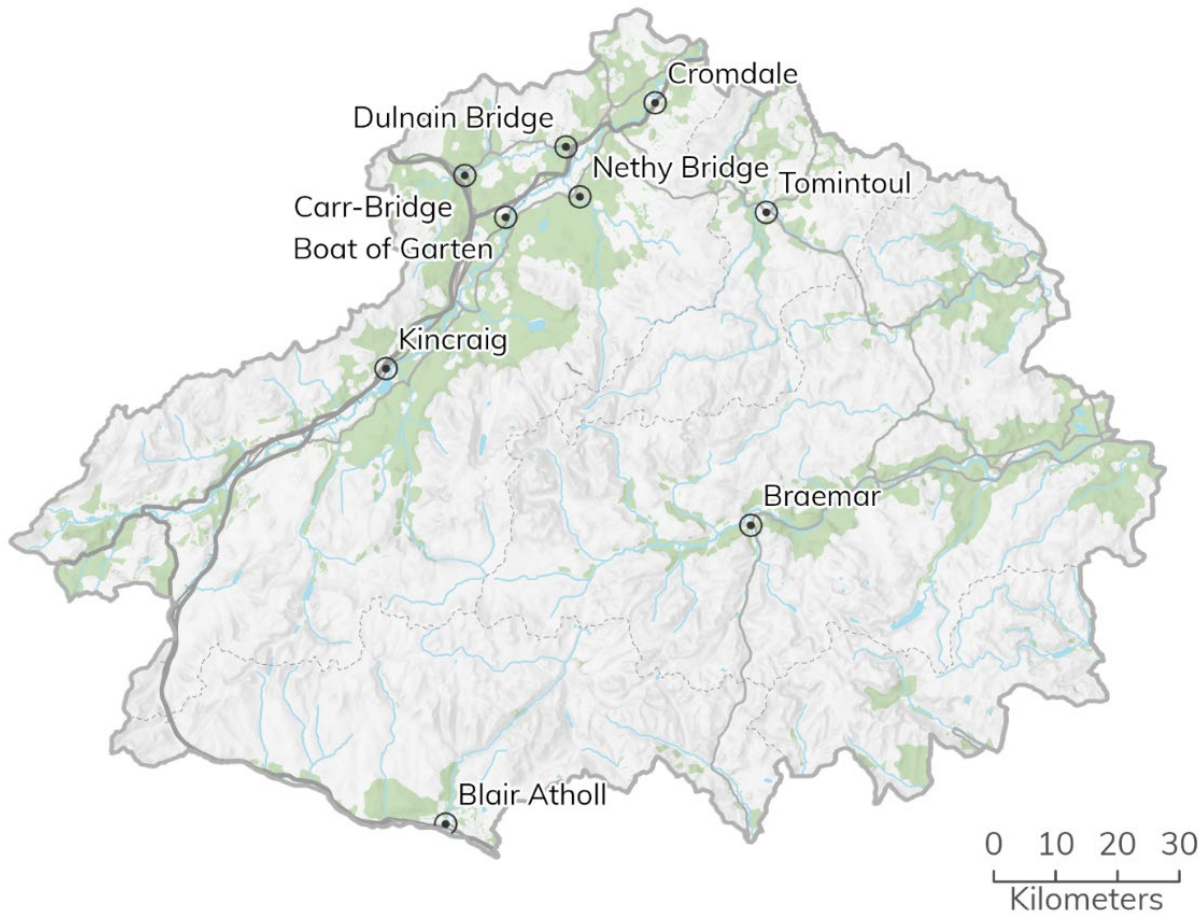


Figure 27 Village centres (Intermediate settlements) in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

This section provides a summary of the information gathered by the Village Health Checks Report (CNPA488).

Two types of survey were conducted - an in-person study and a desktop study. The desk top study provided an overview of the villages and services, with the site visits allowing officers to verify data gain a deeper understanding into the sense of place within the settlements.



Blair Atholl

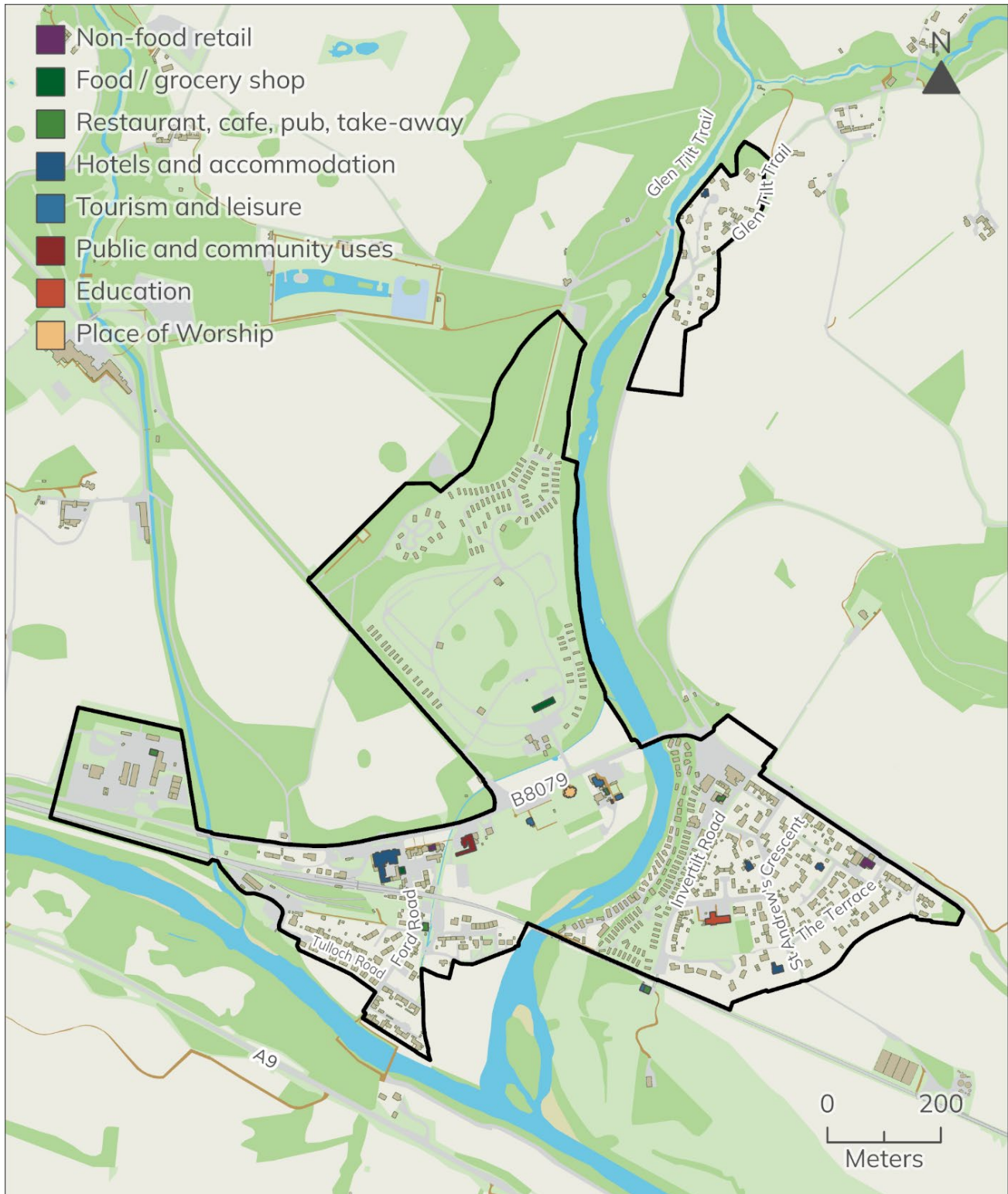


Figure 28 Business composition and distribution in Blair Atholl in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).



The historic village of Blair Atholl is in Highland Perthshire at the southern edge of the Cairngorms National Park. The village lies on flat land nestled between the Rivers Garry and Tilt, within the wider Grampian Mountain range. Blair Atholl benefits from strong transport links, including its own railway station with direct access to Perth and other key destinations, as well as proximity to the A9. It also hosts Scotland's largest youth Scout camp, held biennially attracting over 1,200 international participants, further strengthening its identity as a destination village.

The village layout is linear and walkable, blending historic stone buildings with newer residential and tourist focused structures. It is well provisioned with easily accessible key amenities like the train station, with rivers and forests enhancing its scenic appeal. Blair Atholl's identity is anchored in its heritage and role as a gateway to Cairngorms National Park, with highlights including Blair Castle and the Scout camp. An increase in second homes and short term holiday lets risk weakening year round community ties and straining local services.

Natural spaces and riverside paths connect key spots such as a visitor centre, independent shops, and a repurposed watermill café. Limited upkeep, environmental concerns, and tourist season pressures could reduce the quality and accessibility of shared spaces.

The flat terrain supports walking and cycling, but formal infrastructure like dedicated paths, signage, and bike parking is sparse. The A9 upgrade works may temporarily restrict movement due to a lack of alternate village routes. A9 dualling may reduce visibility for local businesses in the long run and cause short term disruptions. There is good train access via the Highland Main Line, but bus services are infrequent, and bus stops are poorly located. There is high dependency on private cars restricts accessibility, prompting calls for better local public transport options.

Well maintained public toilet facilities are located within the visitor centre. The site located to the left of the Parc Royal and Spa appears to be a vacant hotel with extensive facilities. However, work appears to starting / underway to renovate and bring the structure back to commercial viability.

Business composition

The various businesses located within the village offer a diverse range of services and amenities to the local population, with several also catering specifically to tourists and seasonal visitors. The castle, located at the heart of the village, serves as a year round attraction and plays a central role in sustaining the local tourism economy. In response,



a supporting industry has developed, encompassing accommodation, food services, and retail. Several shops and small enterprises situated along the main street contribute to both the immediate daily needs of residents and the broader visitor experience by the added ability to take a piece of Scotland home. Collectively, this business composition enhances the village's role as both a service centre and a tourism destination.

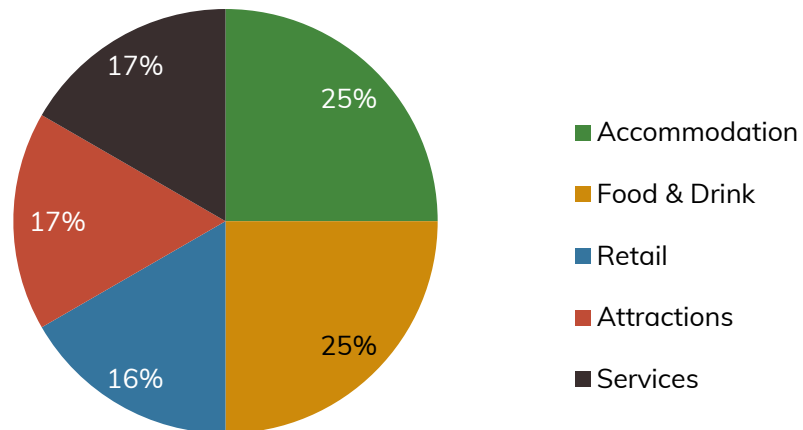


Figure 29 Business composition of Blair Atholl in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).

The village has a compact commercial centre, with shops and eateries concentrated around Ford Road and the B8079, while hotels and key tourist attractions are more dispersed, particularly near surrounding natural assets. Public services, including schools and places of worship, are centrally located and easily accessible, contributing to a well balanced layout that supports both residents and visitors. Approximately five minutes from the northern exit of the village lies the House of Bruar, one of Scotland's premier independent country living retailers. Offering a wide selection of high quality and luxury goods sourced from across the country, it further enhances the village's appeal as a destination for locals and tourists alike.

Threats to the village include:

- Growth in short term holiday lets and second homes¹⁵ may reduce permanent population.
- Flood risk in low lying areas¹⁶.

¹⁵ More information on short term holiday lets and second homes in the National Park is available in Schedule 13: Housing

¹⁶ More information on flood risk in the National Park is available in Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management.



- Seasonal congestion and high car dependency¹⁷
- Lack of investment¹⁸ may limit adaptability.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:

- Potential to improve signage, cycle parking, and footpaths¹⁹.
- Strengthen links between key attractions and village centre.
- Enhancing public realm and shared spaces.

¹⁷ More information on public transport in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

¹⁸ More information on the economy in the National Park is available in Schedule 21: Economic development.

¹⁹ More information on active travel infrastructure in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Boat of Garten

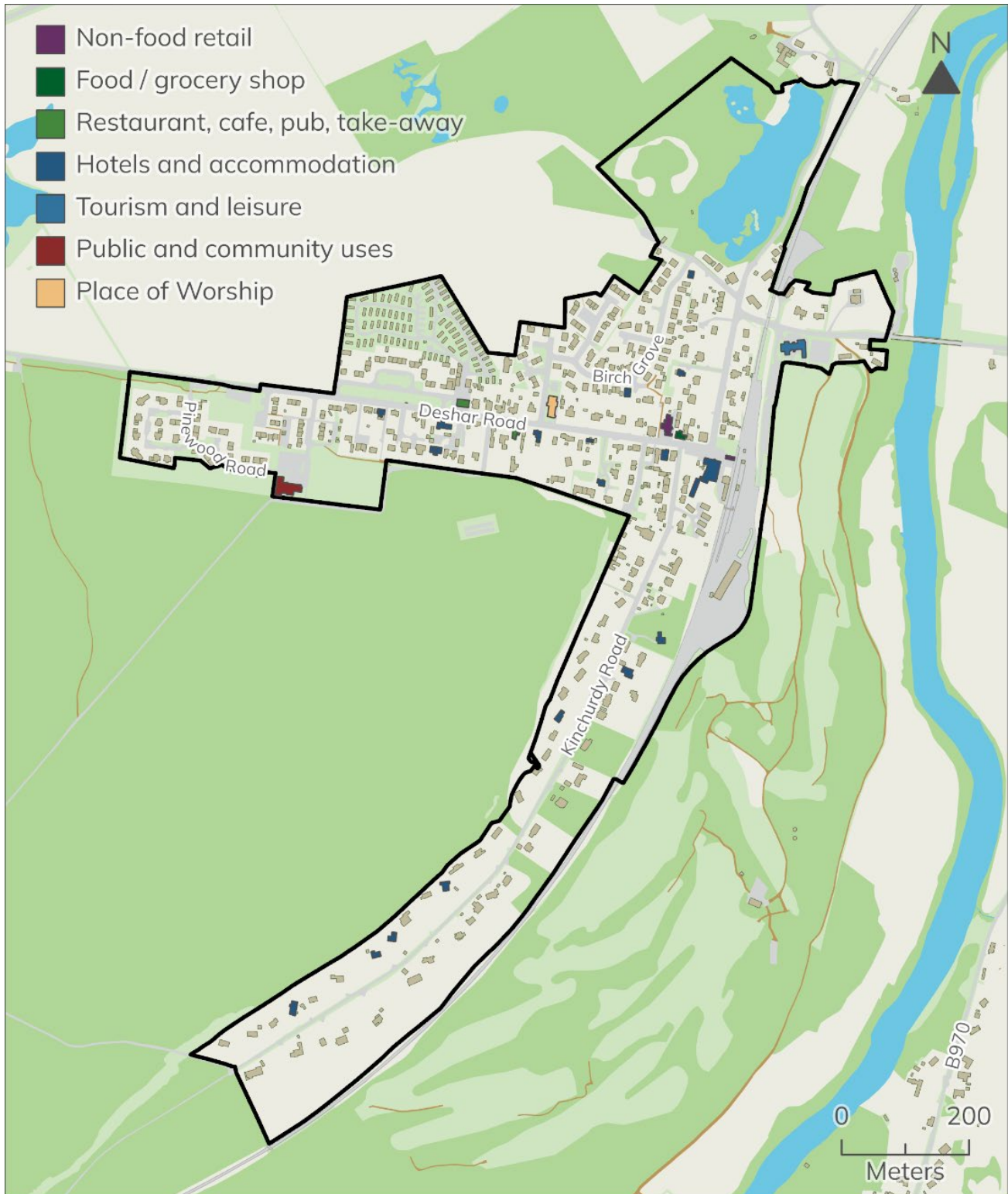


Figure 30 Business composition and distribution in Boat of Garten in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).



Boat of Garten also known as the 'Osprey Village,' is a small Highland settlement in Badenoch and Strathspey. It is historically linked to a former ferry crossing on the River Spey and appears on early maps including those of Pont (1600) and Roy (1750). The village expanded significantly following the introduction of the railway in 1863, with the heritage station and Boat House Inn remaining important landmarks. The built environment blends traditional granite architecture with more modern housing, and several local buildings including the 1896 Gallery and St Columba's Church retain historic and architectural interest.

Boat of Garten's village centre combines traditional architecture with newer developments, forming a vibrant focal area around the railway station, Boat House Inn, and community garden. A second hub near the community hall offers woodland trails, play spaces, and facilities like electric vehicle charging and camping, all blending naturally with the surroundings.

The village maintains a strong identity shaped by its railway heritage, natural surroundings, and cohesive architecture. Local features like the historic station, osprey sightings, and the Speyside Way enhance its sense of place for residents and visitors.

High quality public spaces are evident around central areas like the railway and community hall, featuring outdoor seating and a community garden. Though lacking a formal civic square, informal gathering spots make the village feel open and inviting.

Boat of Garten's pedestrian friendly layout includes wide pavements and low speed traffic zones, fostering safe walking conditions. Clear sightlines further enhance mobility, though cycling infrastructure remains minimal. Despite limited bike lanes, the village connects well to nearby towns via the Speyside Way. A community pump track provides recreational cycling space and encourages active travel.

Traffic in the village is generally light, but informal parking near popular spots can get congested. Dedicated parking is available at key locations like the community hall and golf club. Overuse of on street parking in the village in places detracts from the village's character.

Bus routes 37 and X37 connect Boat of Garten to nearby towns, though service frequency is low, especially on weekends. This reflects wider transportation challenges



common in rural areas of the National Park²⁰. Bus facilities are in good shape, offering shelter and real time timetables.

There are no dedicated public toilets in Boat of Garten. However, modern, and accessible facilities are available within the community hall when open to the public.

Business composition

Boat of Garten supports a modest yet vibrant business environment reflective of its scale and setting within the Cairngorms National Park. The village centre hosts a small cluster of essential services, including a local convenience store, post office, and a café. The presence of the heritage railway station, a key visitor attraction, helps to anchor several tourism oriented enterprises nearby, such as a bike hire and repair shop, a community run gallery, and seasonal visitor accommodation.

While the range of businesses is limited, those present are well integrated into the community and contribute positively to local identity and economic resilience. A number of services, such as electric vehicle charging, a community hall with event facilities, and small scale camping service, enhance the village's capacity to support both residents and seasonal visitors.

Most of the business activity is concentrated around Deshar Road and Birch Road, with the village's retail shops, food outlets, and hospitality venues. There are accommodation offerings and tourist facilities spread throughout the village, located near natural features like rivers and green spaces. Public services, including community buildings and a place of worship, are also present, indicating a well balanced and accessible village that supports both residents and visitors.

Threats to the village include:

- Growth in holiday lets reducing year round housing availability²¹.
- Ageing population and affordability challenges for younger residents.
- Service viability being at risk without increased local footfall.
- Visual character potentially threatened by additional seasonal parking pressures.
- Limited investment may constrain future infrastructure upgrades.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:

²⁰ More information on the economy in the National Park is available in Schedule 21: Economic development.

²¹ More information on short term holiday lets and second homes in the National Park is available in Schedule 13: Housing.



-
- Enhancing signage, crossings, and formalised cycle infrastructure.
 - Developing more formalised public realm and event space.
 - Promoting tourism²² and active travel links with natural assets and heritage sites.
 - Leveraging the community hall as a central hub for services and events.
 - Strengthen transport connections to Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey²³.

²² More information on tourism in the National Park is available in Schedule 23: Tourism

²³ More information on public transport in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Braemar

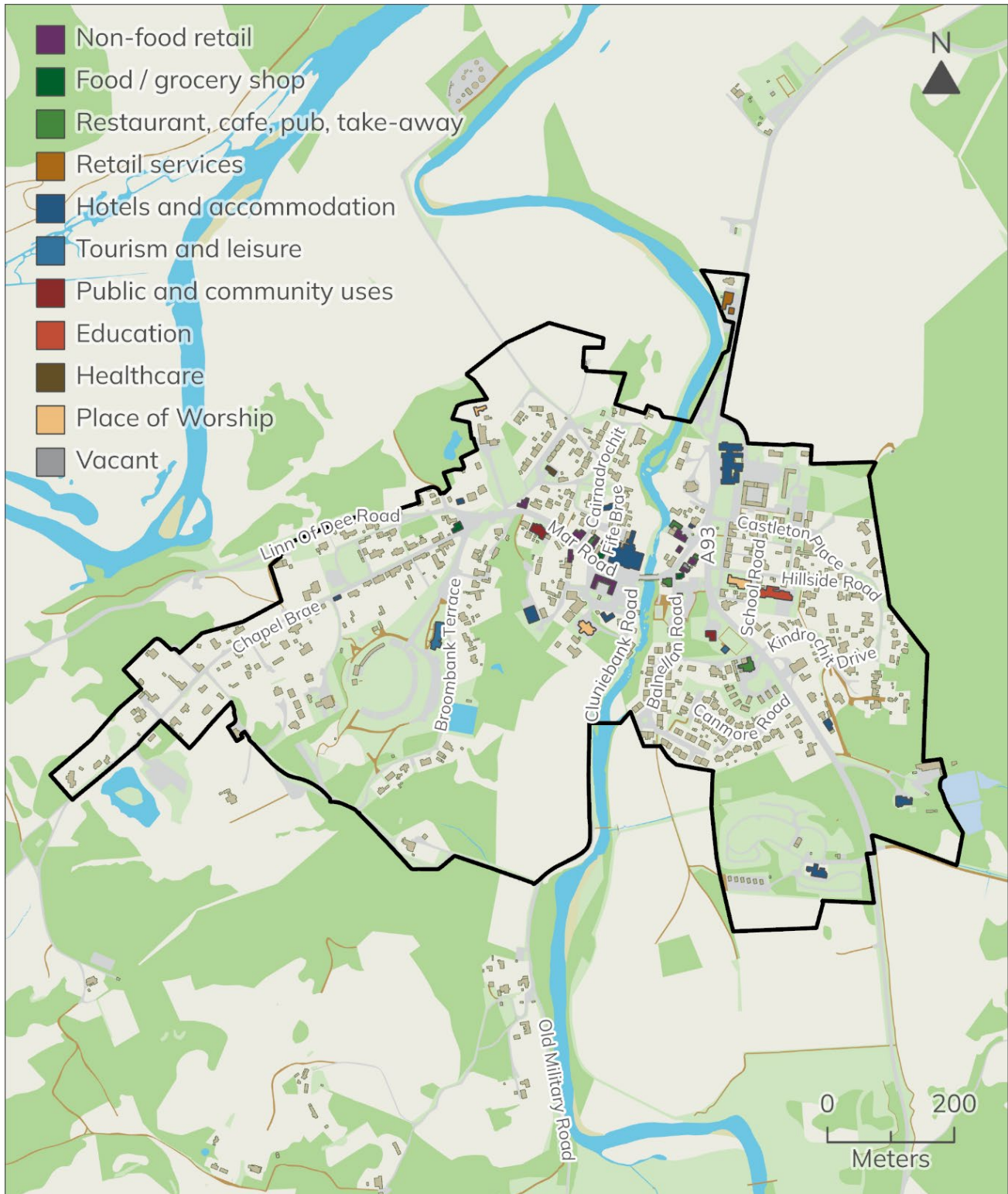


Figure 31 Business composition and distribution in Braemar in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).



Braemar is a historic and culturally vibrant village located within the Cairngorms National Park, known for its strong royal connections and long standing traditions. One of the village's most celebrated events is the Braemar Gathering, held annually and dating back to 1832. Just outside the village stands Braemar Castle, a distinctive five storey turreted landmark constructed in 1862.

Braemar features several well kept public areas, including Memorial Park, The Mews courtyard, a community garden, play areas, woodlands, and amenity spaces. These contribute to the village's sense of place. Braemar retains essential community infrastructure, including a post office, which plays a vital role in supporting both residents and visitors, particularly given the village's size and remoteness. Despite its rural location, Braemar has strong road links to Aberdeen, Dundee, and Perth, making it attractive for residents and tourists. Rising short term holiday lets could threaten housing availability for permanent residents.

Public spaces in Braemar are thoughtfully maintained and enhance community use and visual appeal. Memorial Park and the Highland Games Centre act as cultural anchors with landscaped grounds and seating. The community garden and The Mews courtyard offer informal gathering spots. Families benefit from distributed play areas and natural walking trails. Yet, narrow pavements and lack of crossings present accessibility issues, especially for those with mobility needs.

Braemar's layout consists of a central street with both paved and well maintained unpaved side streets accessible by bike, making the village passively bike friendly. Traffic through the village centre is moderate and manageable. Free parking is available at the central car park and Memorial Park, which also hosts useful amenities like public toilets, covered seating, and a café within landscaped grounds.

Braemar has bus stops in central areas and near Memorial Park with adequate facilities. There are services to Banchory and Aberdeen, including early mornings, evenings, and weekends. However, travel access across the National Park is limited outside these service hours. There are also well maintained and centrally located toilets in the village.

Business composition

Braemar has a varied business offer for its size, with a strong focus on tourism, hospitality, and outdoor recreation. The village centre includes several hotels and guest houses, notably The Fife Arms, as well as cafes, pubs, restaurants, and specialist retail such as gift shops and outdoor equipment suppliers. Recent changes include the relocation of the chocolate shop and the closure of a local bistro.

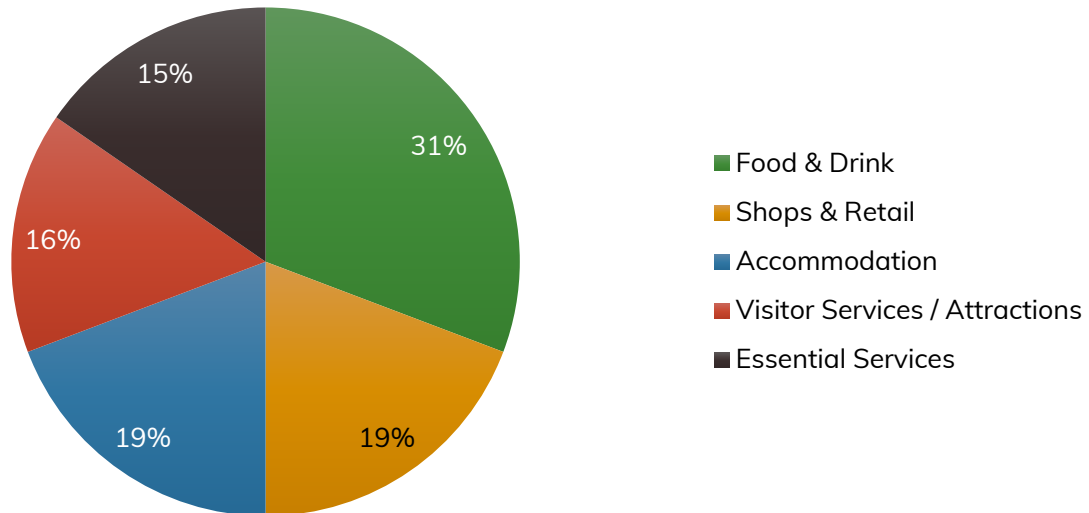


Figure 32 Business composition of Braemar in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).

Threats to the village include:

- Flood risk²⁴ from Clunie Water and climate change impacts²⁵.
- Ageing population.
- High rates of second home ownership and holiday lets²⁶.
- Youth isolation from poor out of hours public transport
- Potential loss of services if permanent population declines
- Reliance on seasonal tourism²⁷ may affect long term sustainability.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:

- Enhancing cycle facilities and improve pedestrian crossings.
- Promoting year round tourism through events and exhibitions.
- Expanding accessible infrastructure at car parks and public toilets.
- Developing flood resilience strategies to protect key assets.
- Supporting local housing initiatives to retain young families.
- Improving public realm through continued investment in amenity spaces.

²⁴ More information on flood risk in the National Park is available in Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management.

²⁵ More information on climate change impacts is available in Schedule 4: Climate change.

²⁶ More information on short term holiday lets and second homes in the National Park is available in Schedule 13: Housing.

²⁷ More information on the economy and seasonal tourism in the National Park is available in Schedule 21: Economic development and Schedule 23: Tourism.



Carrbridge

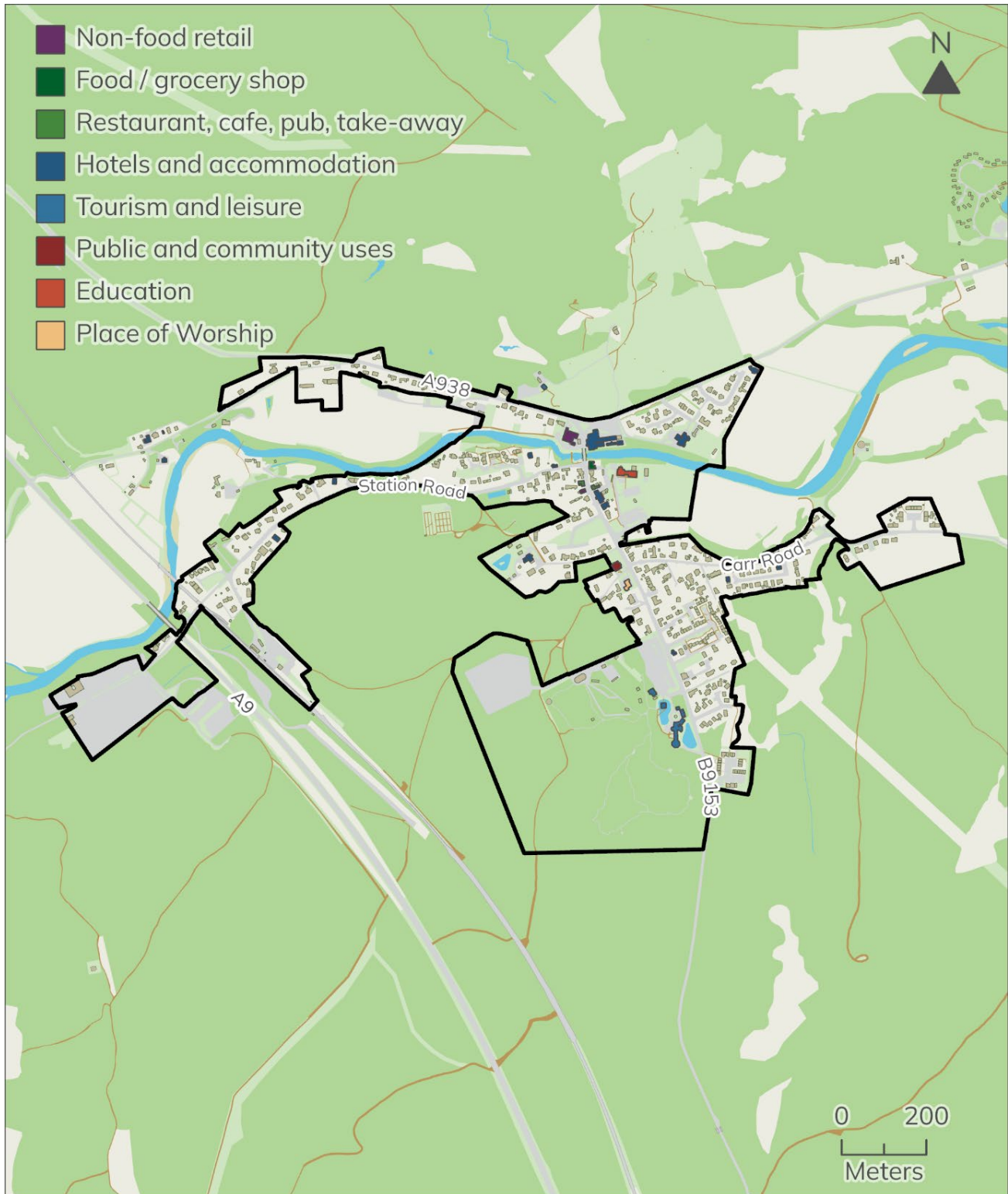


Figure 33 Business composition and distribution in Carrbridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).



Carrbridge is a small village located in the northern part of the Cairngorms National Park, known for its historic stone bridge and strong ties to the region's tourism economy. Positioned near the A9 corridor and within easy reach of Aviemore, the village plays a strategic role as both a residential community and a visitor destination. Its name derives from the iconic packhorse bridge built in 1717 which stands as one of the oldest of its kind in the Highlands and remains a defining landmark of the village.

The village is located in a woodland setting with the historic 18th Century stone bridge as the central landmark. The village layout is linear along the B9153 with mixed traditional and newer buildings. Green spaces and woodland paths connect to natural attractions, but commercial hubs are limited. Traffic congestion occurs near key junctions during busy periods. There is a strong local identity tied to heritage and forest surroundings. Rising second home ownership and holiday lets are affecting demographics. There are also concerns over housing and employment may prompt younger residents to leave.

The village green and playground are well maintained and used by the community. Paths into surrounding woodland exist but lack clear signage or accessibility. The pedestrian pavements are inconsistent through the village, limiting full walkability. Scenic walking and cycling routes exist, but lack of infrastructure hinders active travel. Missing signage, storage, and lack of dedicated lanes also reduce practicality.

There are high levels of vehicle traffic due to A9 access and tourism, especially near the historic bridge. Limited designated parking risks overflow issues and pedestrian safety. The community action plan for Carrbridge highlights the need for enhanced service provision and better bus stop infrastructure as these would improve connectivity and resilience, especially for those reliant on sustainable transport options.

Well maintained public toilets are located to the rear of the bus stops within the main car park of the village.

Business composition

Carrbridge hosts a modest yet diverse range of businesses that serve both the resident population and the seasonal influx of visitors. The village's commercial offering includes a convenience store, cafés, and several hospitality establishments such as guest houses, a hotel, and restaurants. The Landmark Forest Adventure Park acts as a key economic anchor, significantly contributing to local visitor numbers and supporting associated services. Additionally, small independent retailers and service providers, including a local garage, contribute to the village's economic resilience. While limited in scale, the



business composition aligns closely with Carrbridge's role as a rural service centre and gateway tourism destination within the National Park.

Threats to the village include:

- High levels of second home ownership and short term lets²⁸ potentially reducing housing availability.
- Outmigration of young people due to housing and job scarcity.
- Overflow parking²⁹ could undermine village character.
- High visitor footfall potentially causing erosion and habitat disturbance³⁰.
- Environmental risks from flooding and climate change impacts³¹.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:

- Improving signage, pedestrian access, and cycle infrastructure.
- Strengthen tourism management to protect natural assets.
- Designating and enhancing village centre public spaces.
- Clarify and improve toilet and parking provision.
- Increasing housing supply to retain young residents.
- Upgrading bus infrastructure and service frequency.

²⁸ More information on short term holiday lets and second homes in the National Park is available in Schedule 13: Housing.

²⁹ More information on parking in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

³⁰ More information on visitor impacts is available in Schedule 23: Tourism.

³¹ More information on climate change impacts is available in Schedule 4: Climate change.



Cromdale

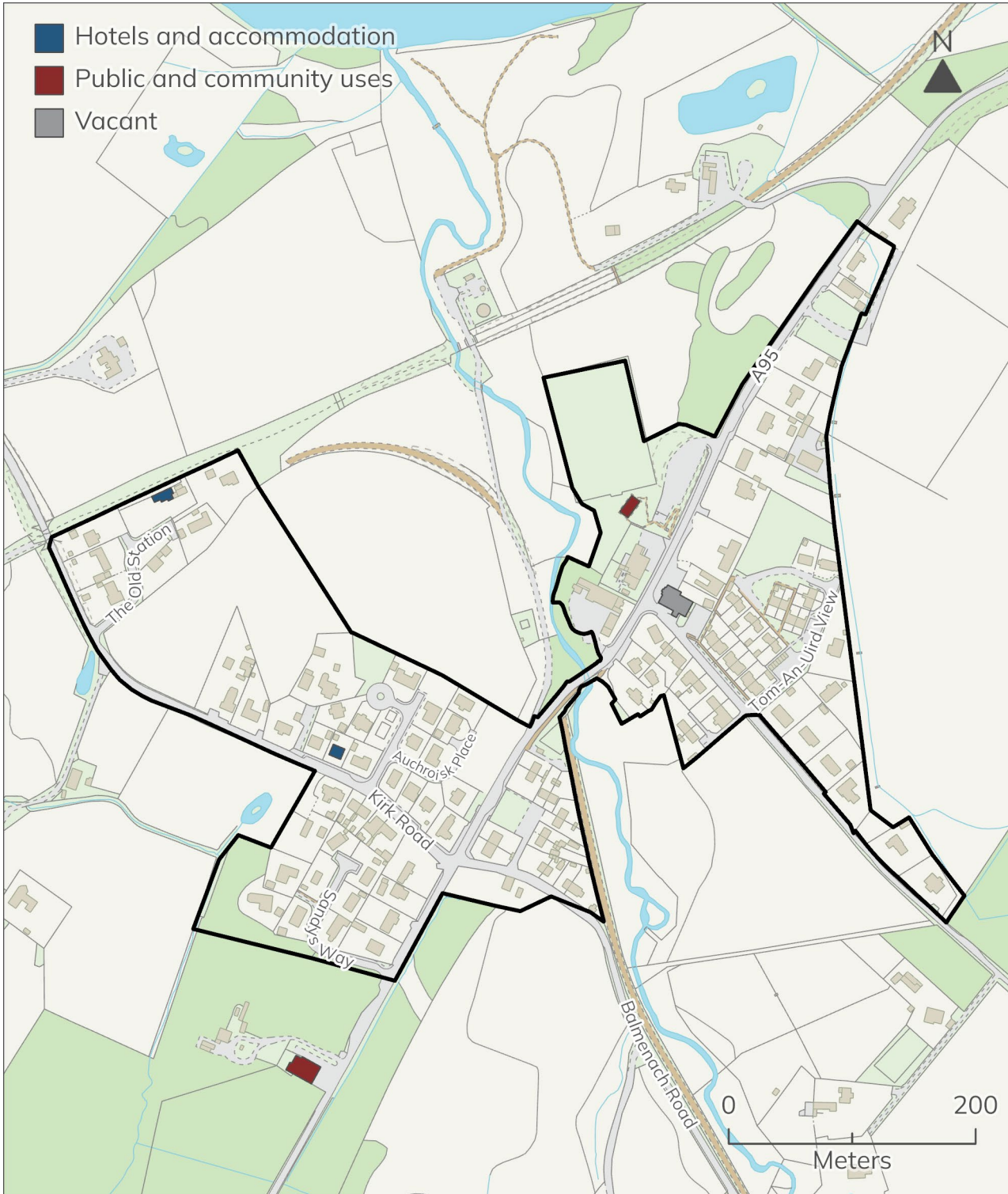


Figure 34 Business composition and distribution in Cromdale in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).



Cromdale is located in Badenoch and Strathspey, situated along the A95 where it crosses the Cromdale Burn. The village centre is not clearly defined, but the location of the vacant Haugh Hotel, to the west of the burn, suggests the area's historic heart. The hotel, a traditional stone built building, has been unoccupied for over five years. Nearby features include a red telephone box, a post box set into the wall, and Adventure Speyside an outdoor activity business occupying the former school building. This sits beside the playing field, play park, a car park, and a pavilion (which houses currently closed public toilets). At the southern end of the village stands the Cromdale Community Hall, a prominent stone civic building that marks a formal gateway into the village.

Cromdale's physical layout is long and linear, with notable buildings like the Haugh Hotel and Community Hall hinting at a possible village centre. However, the dominance of the A95 road disrupts cohesion and contributes to a fragmented, vehicle focused environment. Some spaces like the green area near the Community Hall and the riverside are visually pleasant but underused, with limited amenities and poor upkeep, especially in children's play areas.

The village lacks a strong sense of place, primarily due to disconnected facilities and the absence of a defined central hub. While the Community Hall adds civic value, other potential gathering spots are poorly linked. Public space is functional but uninspiring, with limited opportunities for informal social interaction or events due to the lack of a dedicated square or open green spaces (beyond the sports pitches).

Cycling and pedestrian movement are constrained by the lack of infrastructure: narrow pavements, uneven surfaces, and no formal crossings make navigation difficult. Traffic, especially from heavy goods vehicles, reportedly often exceeds speed limits and visually dominates the village. Parking is a mix of formal and informal areas, occasionally obstructing services. Though Cromdale has a sheltered bus stop and weekday service, the lack of clear signage or timetable information makes public transport feel inaccessible to newcomers.

While the hotel and public toilets are not operational, they remain visible assets with the potential to be reopened. Adventure Speyside provides one of the few active businesses within the village, and while there are no shops or traditional retail units in the centre, the nearby Balmenach Distillery (located one mile north) contributes to the local economy with its Caorunn gin visitor experience.

The public toilets are located inside the pavilion beside the football pitch, car park, and play area. They are currently closed but remain signposted both with a brown tourist



sign on the roadside and signage on the building itself. The step free access is present but narrow and steep.

Threats to the village include:

- Traffic speed and volume³² pose safety risks and reduce village appeal.
- Over reliance on informal parking leads to obstruction and visual clutter
- Closure of public toilets limits accessibility and visitor experience.
- Fragmented layout and lack of investment may weaken long term cohesion and vitality.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:

- Reactivation of the Haugh Hotel to anchor a revitalised village centre.
- Improving signage, public toilet access, and community event space.
- Enhancing play area and surrounding public realm for greater use.
- Developing safe pedestrian crossings and cycle routes.
- Use pavilion and adjacent open space for informal gatherings or local events.

³² More information on traffic volumes in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Dalnain Bridge

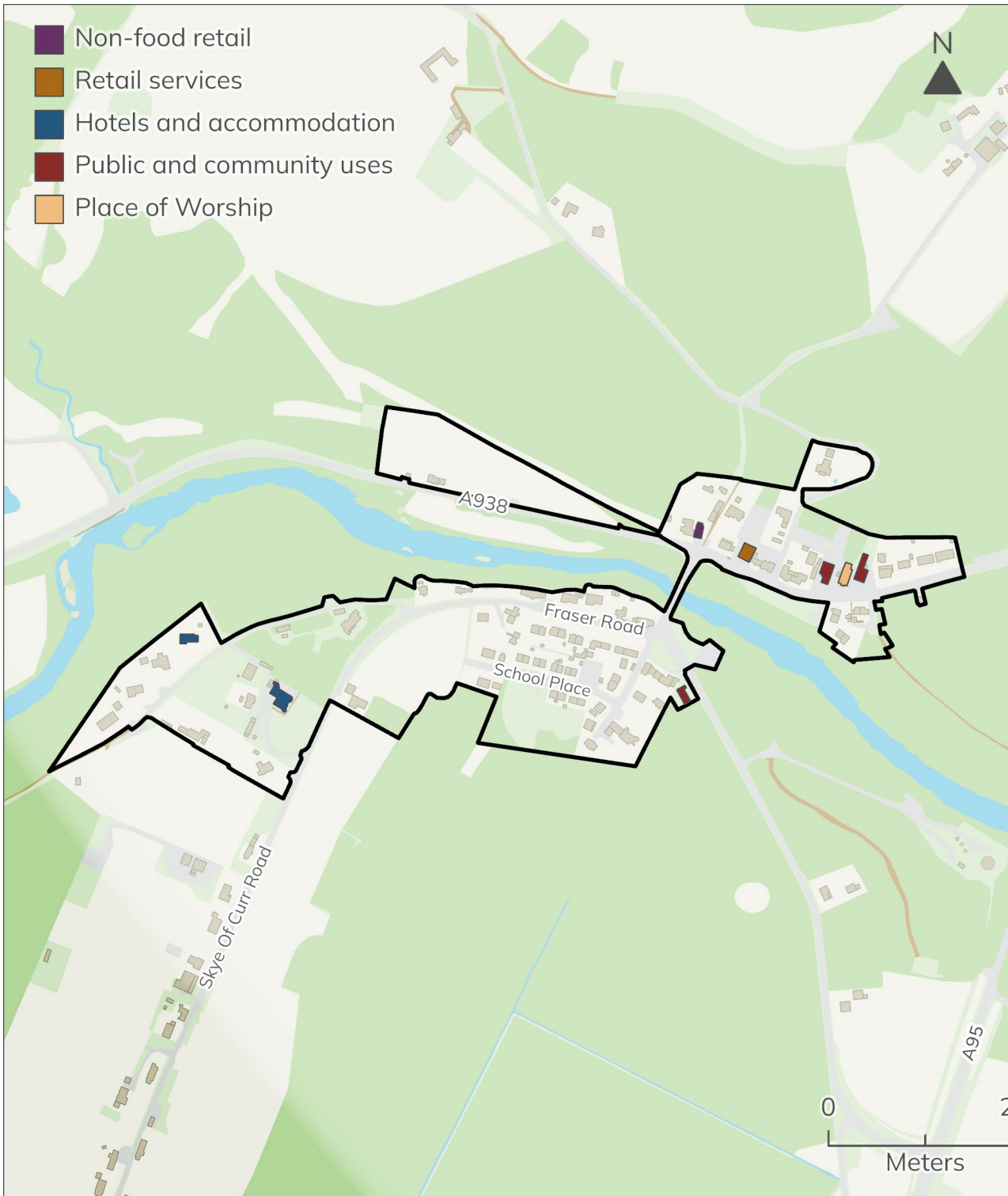


Figure 35 Business composition and distribution in Dalnain Bridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).



Dalnain Bridge is a small, yet active village divided by the River Dalnain into three distinct areas including the unique crofting community of Skye of Curr. Situated at the junction of the A938 and A95, it serves as a local hub for surrounding towns traveling to Inverness, offering amenities including a garage, post office, and play park although the sale of its churches has reduced community spaces. Its architecture blends traditional granite landmarks with modern housing at its edges, reflecting both heritage and growth.

Dalnain Bridge has a fragmented layout across the A938 and the River Dalnain, which divides it into three distinct zones including the crofting community of Skye of Curr with its strong, independent identity. Though there's no formal village centre. A natural focal point has emerged near the post office, garage, and community hall, enhanced by the well kept green space, benches, and a war memorial. Public realm areas are modest but thoughtfully maintained. However, the connection between the areas either side of the river feels broken by a long standing bridge footpath closure, limited cycling infrastructure, and raising concerns about traffic speeds and pedestrian safety.

Community woodland paths connect the village to nearby heritage and ecological sites, offering valuable recreational and cultural engagement. Transport access is limited particularly for residents without cars with minimal bus services and poorly signposted cycle and walking routes. Although the play park and open spaces show community pride, challenges in wayfinding, connectivity, and access, especially for those in Skye of Curr, point to a need for improved infrastructure and integration. Overall, Dalnain Bridge combines scenic natural surroundings and local stewardship with structural limitations that affect movement and unity.

Business composition

Dalnain Bridge supports a modest but functional business composition reflective of its small population and rural character. The village includes a limited number of customer facing businesses, primarily focused on essential local services and small scale tourism. Key facilities include a garage and a post office, with accommodation offered through local guesthouses and self catering providers. While the overall business offer is minimal, it plays a vital role in maintaining village life and ensuring access to basic goods and services. The lack of retail or hospitality venues is typical of settlements of this scale but also highlights the importance of retaining and supporting existing businesses to sustain community resilience.

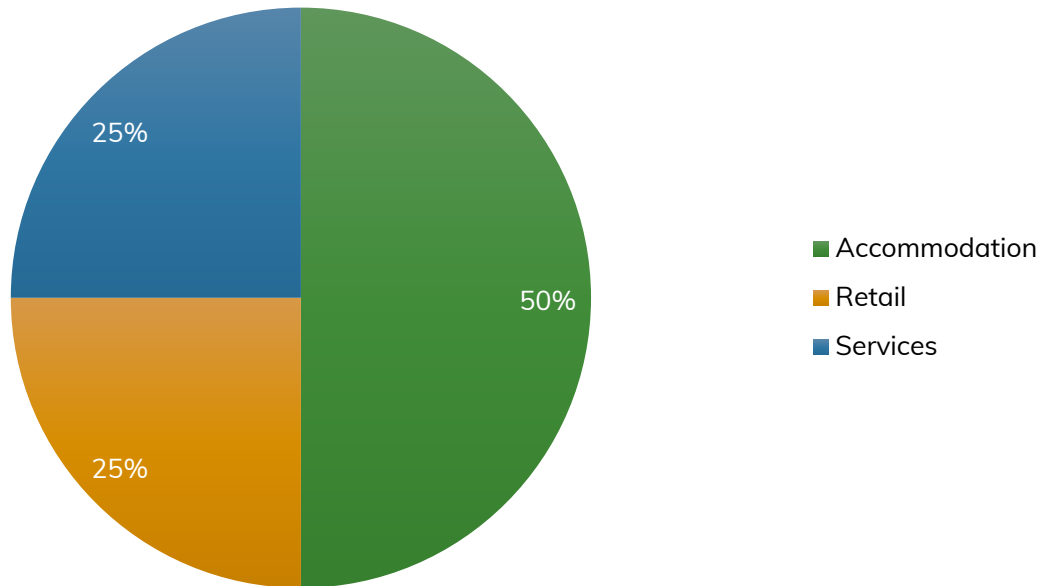


Figure 36 Business composition of services in Dulnain Bridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).

Threats to the village include:

- Infrequent public transport services³³.
- Post office may close if not used.
- Bridge in poor state of repair and hinders movement.
- Lack of dedicated cycle infrastructure³⁴.
- On street parking detracts from visual quality of street scape.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:

- Village would benefit from grocery / retail and / or café facilities.
- Enhancing the woodland walks and trails – create circular route.

³³ More information on public transport in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

³⁴ More information on active travel infrastructure in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Kincraig

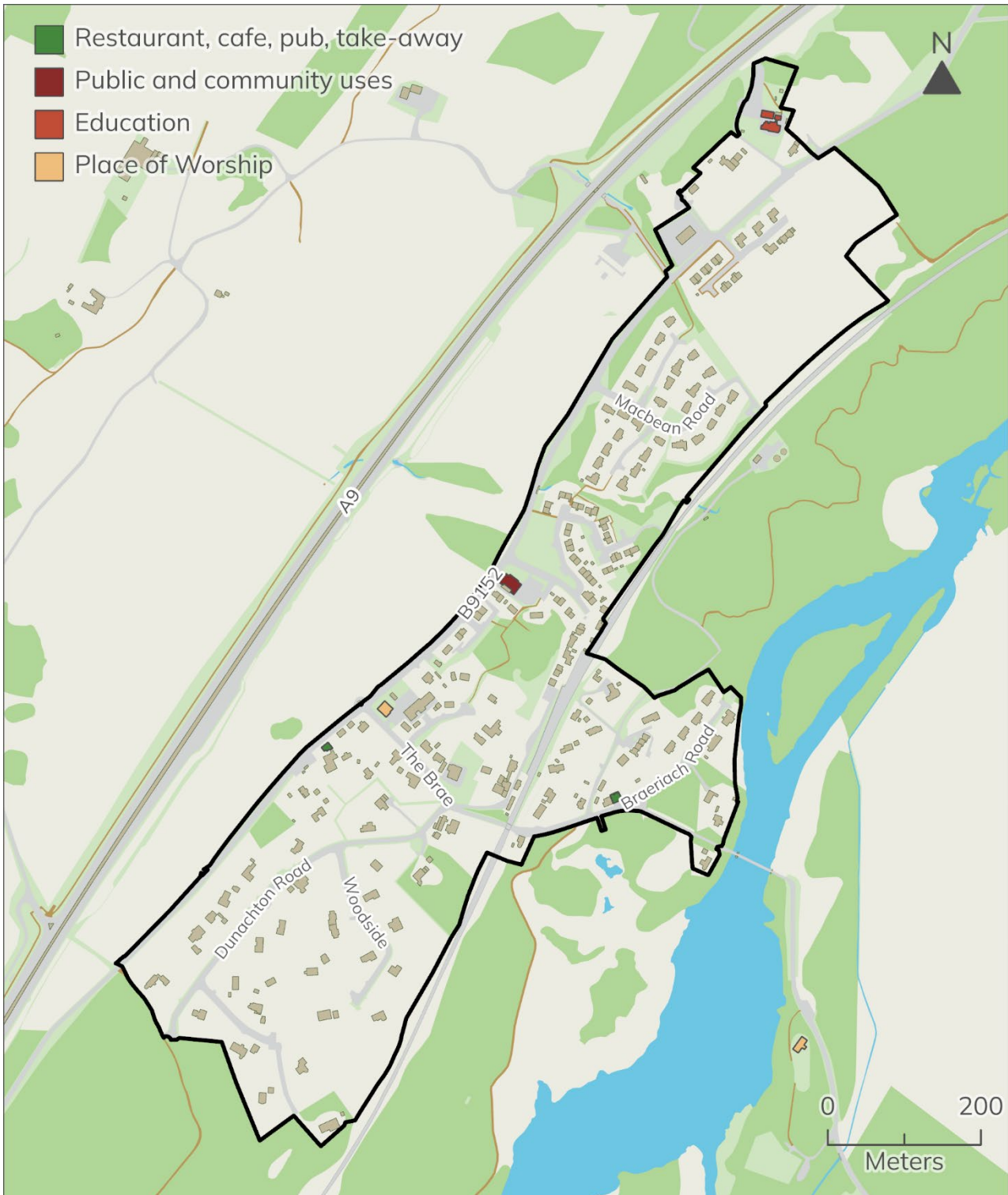


Figure 37 Business composition and distribution in Kincraig in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).



The built environment of Kincaig is widely dispersed, with no clearly defined village centre or square. Services and homes are spread along the B9152 and surrounding rural roads. Local amenities include a primary school and a repurposed former post office, which now serves as a café and art gallery. Despite this, the village lacks dedicated commercial space or clustered amenities. Public realm features such as benches, bins, and communal green space are minimal, and wayfinding or signage is limited. The visual environment is dominated by residential properties and natural landscape, with some traditional stone buildings and the local war memorial being in good condition both contribute to a sense of heritage.

The village's character is closely tied to its natural surroundings and proximity to destinations like the Highland Wildlife Park, which adds educational and economic value. Despite this, the lack of a central civic space and growing reliance on short term holiday accommodations raise concerns about long term residency and community cohesion.

The village currently faces several infrastructure challenges. There are no dedicated public toilets, though limited access is available via the community hall. Public spaces are sparse, with few benches or gathering areas, and while green space exists near the River Spey, it remains disconnected from village planning. For cyclists and pedestrians, there are no formal bike lanes or parking, despite the presence of a repair hub, and pavements are inconsistent or missing altogether. Traffic on the B9152 is generally light, yet informal parking can cause disruption during busy times due to the limited number of marked spaces. Public transport includes bus routes to Aviemore and Kingussie, with well maintained shelters and timetables, although some stops pose accessibility issues owing to difficult road crossings.

Threats to the village include:

- High proportion of second homes and short term³⁵ let's could reduce long term residency and community cohesion.
- Lack of infrastructure may limit appeal to young families and working residents.
- Parking during busy periods may cause disruption.
- Flood risk³⁶ from nearby River Spey may require future monitoring and mitigation.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:

³⁵ More information on short term holiday lets and second homes in the National Park is available in Schedule 13: Housing.

³⁶ More information on flood risk in the National Park is available in Schedule 19: Flood risk and water management.



- Develop community focal points or enhance space around the community hall.
- Formalise cycle facilities and expand signage for active travel.
- Integrate natural assets such as river and loch access into village layout.
- Support local services and improve community infrastructure through investment.
- Leverage existing assets (for example café, trails, Wildlife Park) to reinforce identity and attract visitors.



Nethy Bridge

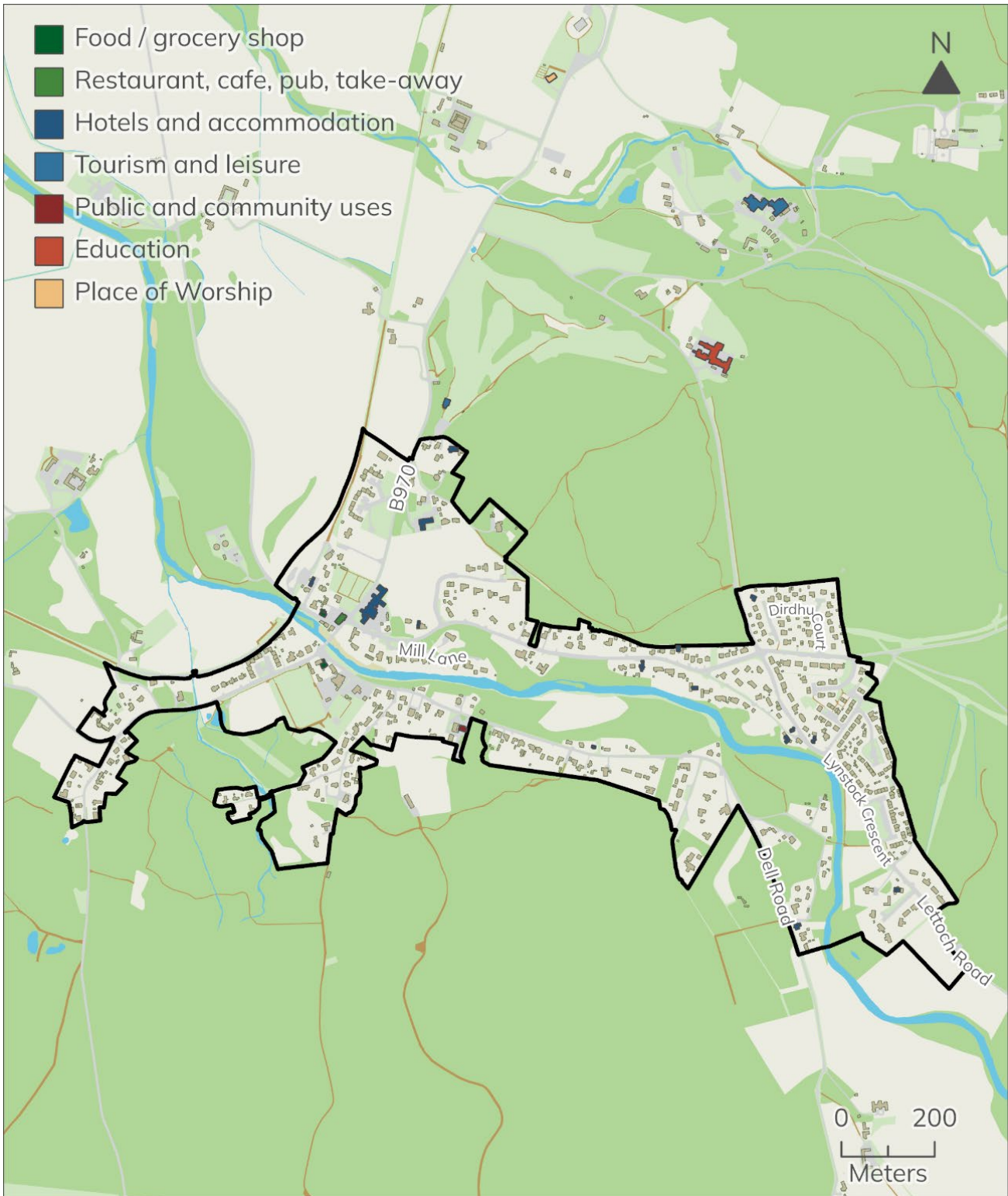


Figure 38 Business composition and distribution in Nethy Bridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).



Nethy Bridge, affectionately called 'Nethy,' is a tranquil village nestled beside the ancient Abernethy Forest in the Badenoch and Strathspey area of the Scottish Highlands. The village gained popularity during the Victorian era and was renamed in the 1860s after the arrival of the railway, though traces of its original name, Abernethy, remain in local institutions. A seasonal visitor centre at the heart of the village offers public toilets and serves as a hub for tourist information, maps, exhibits, and children's activities.

Nethy Bridge is rich in heritage with Victorian architecture and historic landmarks, with the Nethy Bridge Hotel, Nethy House Café, and Telford's granite bridge serving as central features that enhance the village's heritage charm. Castle Roy and Abernethy Kirk mark the northern threshold to the village. The community hall, well maintained village centre, and traditional elements like signage and a Victorian drinking fountain make the area welcoming and functional. As housing becomes more mixed further out, the village's "forest village" character / sense of place remains strong, despite signs of seasonal occupancy and empty dwellings.

The riverside green space beside the visitor centre features well maintained seating, planters, and heritage displays, offering a tranquil stop for visitors. Recreational facilities like tennis courts and playparks are in good condition, though some outlying areas, such as Braes of Balnagowan, show signs of neglect. Cycling infrastructure is minimal, with a few dedicated paths and racks but no sheltered storage or cycle lanes on main roads. Despite poor regional cycling links and pedestrian gaps like Dell Road and the bridge crossing, the village remains easy to navigate.

The village centre experiences occasional traffic congestion, especially near the shop and narrow central bridge. Parking is informal but generally adequate, with high demand around central amenities during peak periods. Sheltered bus stops are available in key areas but are in only fair condition. The village is served by two limited bus routes with limited services, particularly on weekends, underscoring transport challenges for those without private vehicles.

Business composition

Nethy Bridge supports a modest but locally important mix of businesses that serve both residents and visitors. The business landscape is shaped by the village's dual function as a residential community and a popular destination within the Cairngorms National Park. Local services such as a village store, café, and farm shop are complemented by tourism oriented enterprises, including guest houses and outdoor activity providers.

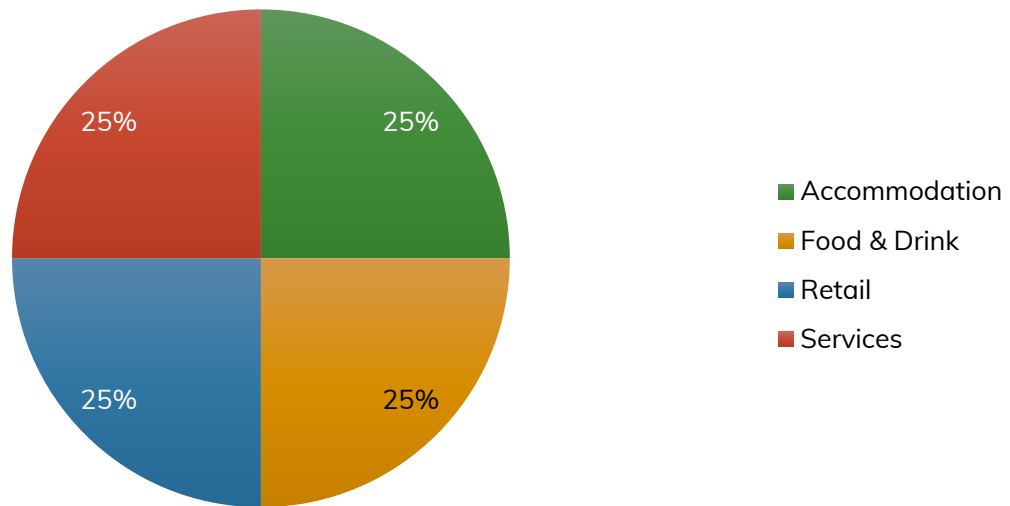


Figure 39 Business composition in Nethy Bridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).

Threats to the village include:

- Infrequent public transport services³⁷.
- Lack of dedicated cycle infrastructure.
- On street parking detracts from the visual quality of the streetscape.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:

- Large open spaces next to the village hall could be used or pop up farmers / local markets.

³⁷ More information on public transport in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Tomintoul

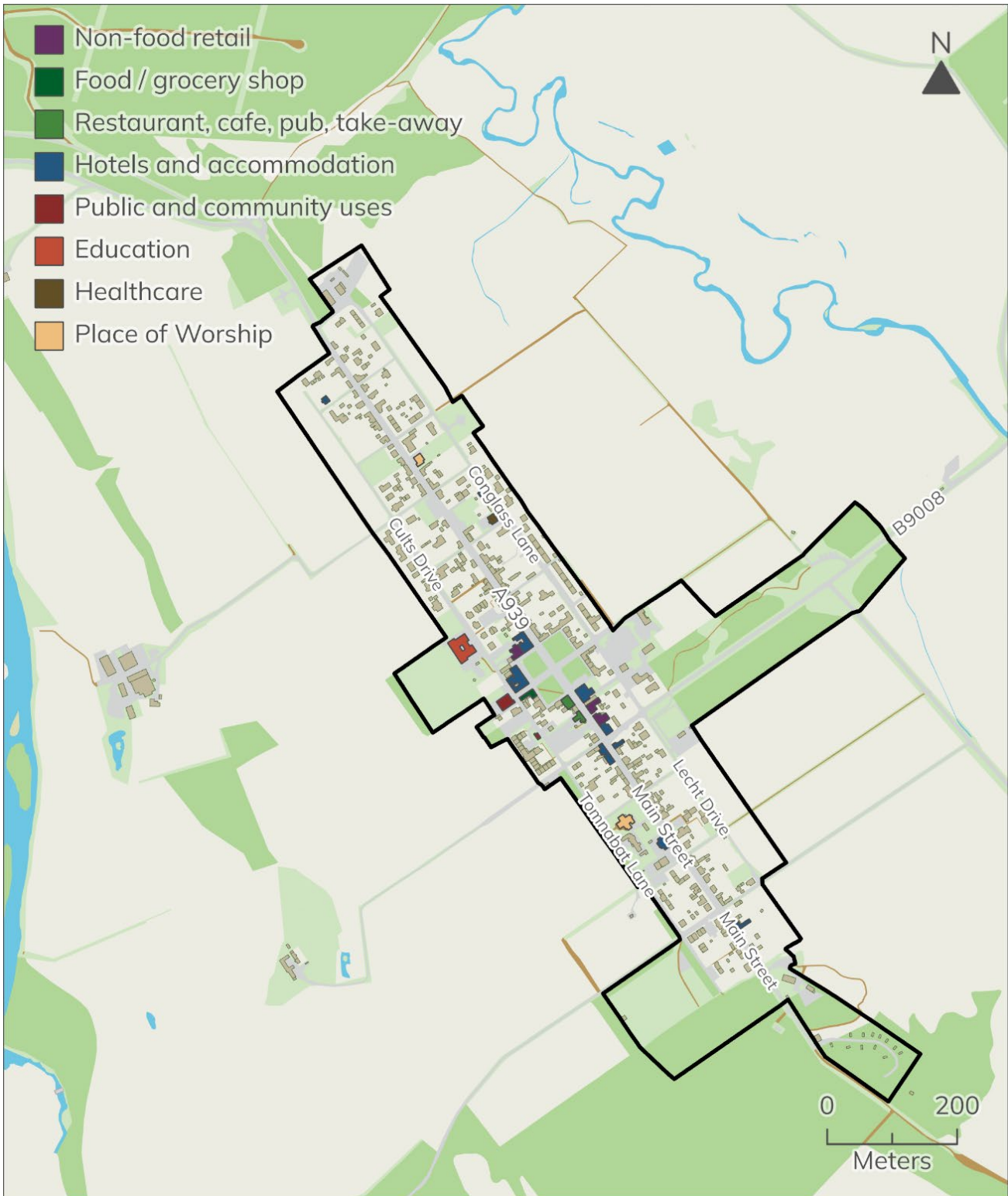


Figure 40 Business composition and distribution in Tomintoul in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).



Tomintoul is a well preserved planned village situated along the A939 in the Moray area of the National Park. As a planned village, the stone buildings are of high quality and a consistent style, which creates a strong local identity. Tomintoul's central square is the village's focal point, enhanced by attractive landscaping, heritage style street furniture, and consistent architectural design.

The village store, community owned discovery centre and post office (with automated teller machine – known as an ATM) are all located here together with three hotels with restaurants and / or bars. Essential amenities including the primary school, library, medical centre, and churches are all within easy walking distance, creating a cohesive and accessible setting. Public toilets are well signed and adjacent to the public car park.

The village's planned layout and maintained stone buildings promote a strong, authentic sense of place and identity. The central square supports both community life and visitor experience through accessible amenities and welcoming design. The square offers a well equipped and inviting space with mature trees, benches, bins, and planters. A nearby enclosed play area further enriches the public realm, with varied equipment and natural play elements enhancing appeal.

Two quiet lanes parallel to the main street support safer pedestrian and cyclist movement through the village. Pavements with tactile paving and effective wayfinding make navigation straightforward, though narrow and uneven spots on the high street may hinder accessibility. Despite being on the A939 route, Tomintoul experiences low traffic volumes and a calm atmosphere. Free parking along the street and in the main car park meets current needs, although a formal crossing could further improve pedestrian safety. Public transport is limited, with two bus services offering connections to Dufftown and Grantown-on-Spey on a restricted schedule. A sheltered bus stop with seating and signage helps support basic transport access, though frequency may hinder wider connectivity.

Business composition

Tomintoul supports a balanced and locally rooted business environment, with a commercial focus that reflects its role as both a rural service centre and a popular tourist destination. The village's economy appears to be focused on hospitality and retail services, including several hotels, guest houses, cafés, and restaurants that cater to both residents and visitors alike. Local shops such as a general store, gift shops, and specialist retailers are concentrated around the central square, contributing to a compact and walkable town centre. Community owned facilities such as the Discovery



Centre and public services including the post office and medical centre support towns local community.

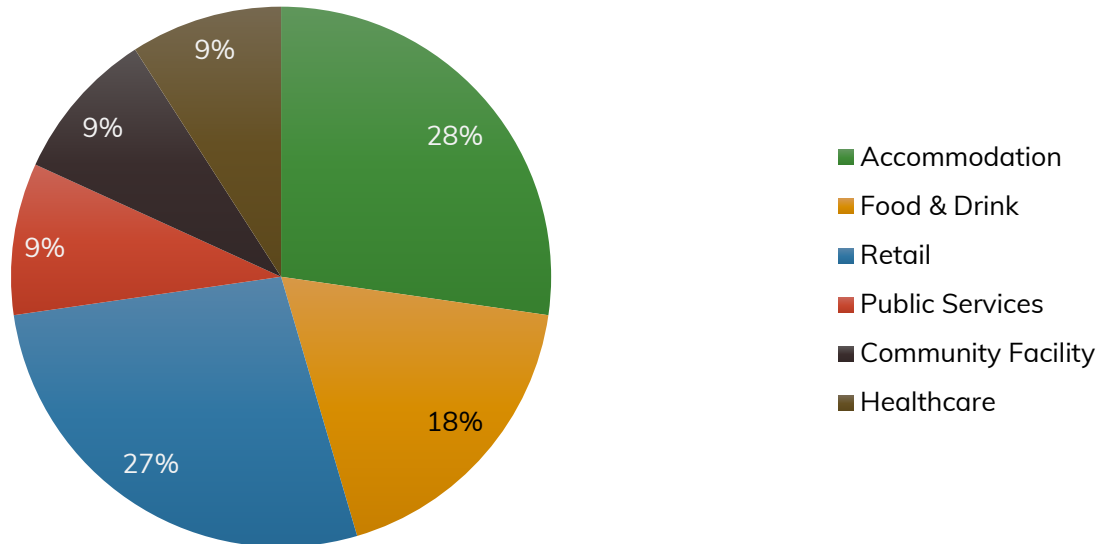


Figure 41 Business composition of Tomintoul in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025 (CNPA488).

Threats to the village include:

- Low frequency of public transport³⁸ may isolate residents without cars.
- Limited accessibility may affect future housing or demographic growth.
- Over reliance on key businesses around the square may reduce resilience if closures occur.
- Potential for increased car use if transport issues are not addressed.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:

- Install formal pedestrian crossing to enhance safety and calm traffic.
- Enhance promotion of village trails and nature access.
- Strengthen cycling support through storage, signage, or bike hire options.
- Use central square for events or seasonal programming to boost footfall.

Village centre health checks implications for Proposed Plan

Based on the evidence gathered in the village health checks, this section provides a summary of the implications for the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

³⁸ More information on public transport in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



Second homes and short term holiday lets

The high number of short term holiday lets and second home ownership³⁹ within the Cairngorms National Park has been noted throughout this schedule (and is analysed in Schedule 13: Housing) with The Highland Council introducing a let control area (and other local authorities considering them) in an effort to protect existing housing from being used as short term lets. In addition to the data taken from the community action plans, evidence of need can also be drawn from the Cairngorms National Park resident and worker survey 2024 – 2025 (CNPA538). While this data cannot be used to quantify need in terms of the housing land requirement, it does highlight the experiences, including barriers to finding affordable housing, of those living and working in the National Park.

Vacant and derelict land and buildings

Vacant and derelict land and buildings should be appraised for allocation for various uses, including residential development to support the local need for housing. This will support National Planning Framework 4 Policy 27 (CNPA008) of supporting an increase in the mix of town centre uses and supporting residential development on vacant or derelict sites. It will also meet Policy 9's requirement for local development plans to set out opportunities for the sustainable reuse of brownfield land including vacant and derelict land and empty buildings.

Electric vehicle charging

With the widespread transition to electric vehicles⁴⁰, added charging sites and / or infrastructure will be required and should be supported by the Proposed Plan.

Active travel infrastructure

The Proposed Plan should support the enhancement of active travel infrastructure within village centres, including the provision of secure and visible cycle parking, improved signage, and road layout modifications to support wheeling and safer pedestrian movement⁴¹. These interventions align with the National Planning Framework 4's strategy for creating sustainable, healthier, and more inclusive places.

³⁹ More information on short term holiday lets and second homes and short term lets in the National Park is available in Schedule 13: Housing

⁴⁰ More information on electric vehicle infrastructure in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.

⁴¹ More information on active travel infrastructure in the National Park is available in Schedule 11: Sustainable transport.



The Proposed Plan should seek to support additional active travel infrastructure in village centres, for example cycle parking and changes to road layouts to support wheeling in the village centres, supporting National Planning Framework 4's strategy for creating sustainable places.

The Proposed Plan should reflect any local and emerging traffic and parking schemes by community groups in the town centres that support better pedestrian movement and minimise the negative effects of vehicle traffic.

Other types of centres

There are other local centres identified close to town centres that support greater accessibility to local shops and services and also provide a focus for community activities / facilities.

Granish Way in Aviemore (Figure 42 and Figure 43) has been identified as a local centre. Services located at this centre include a local Coop, veterinary centre, two takeaways, a bike shop, dentist and a beauty salon.

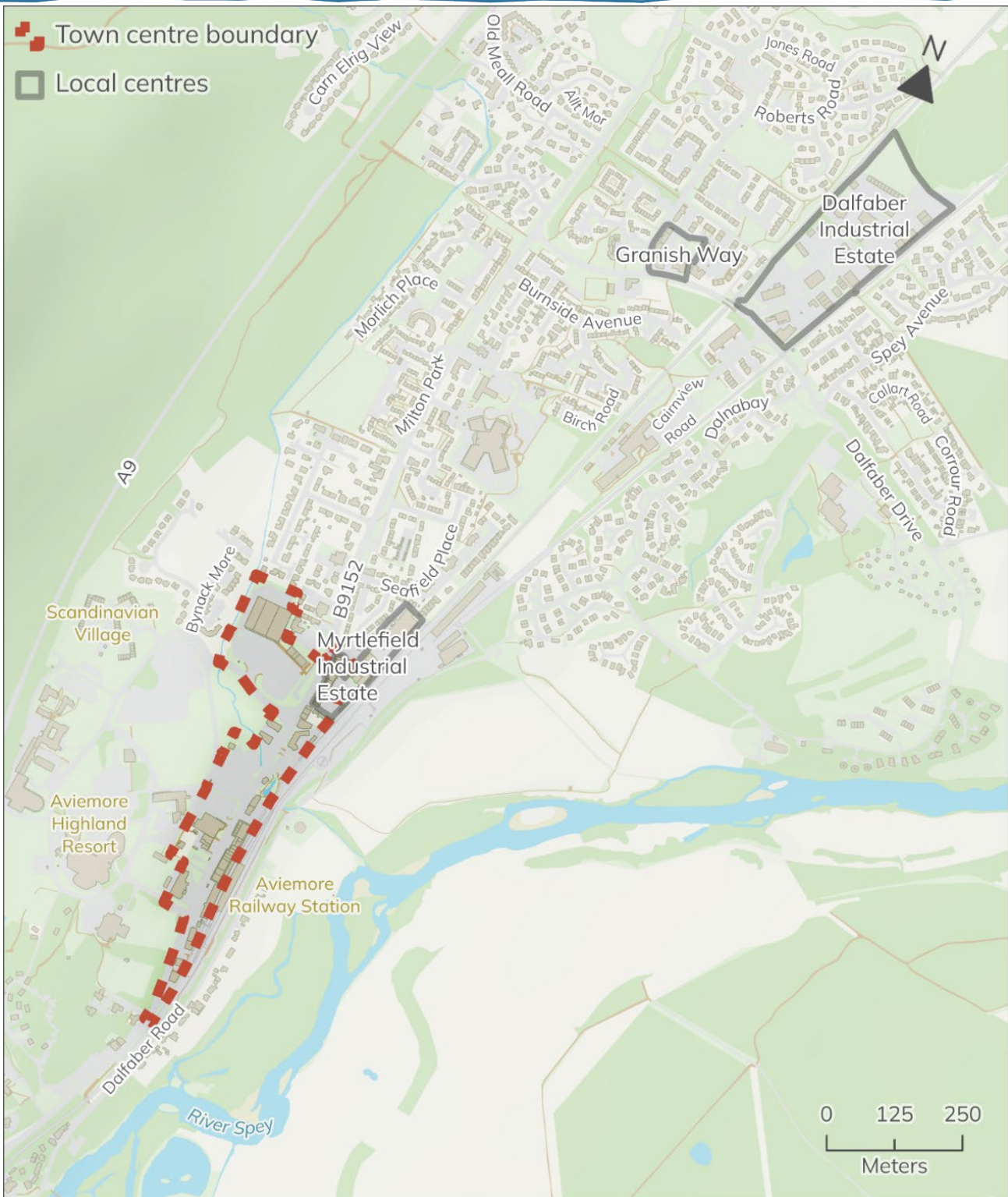


Figure 42 Map showing the local centres in Aviemore in proximity to the town centre boundary. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

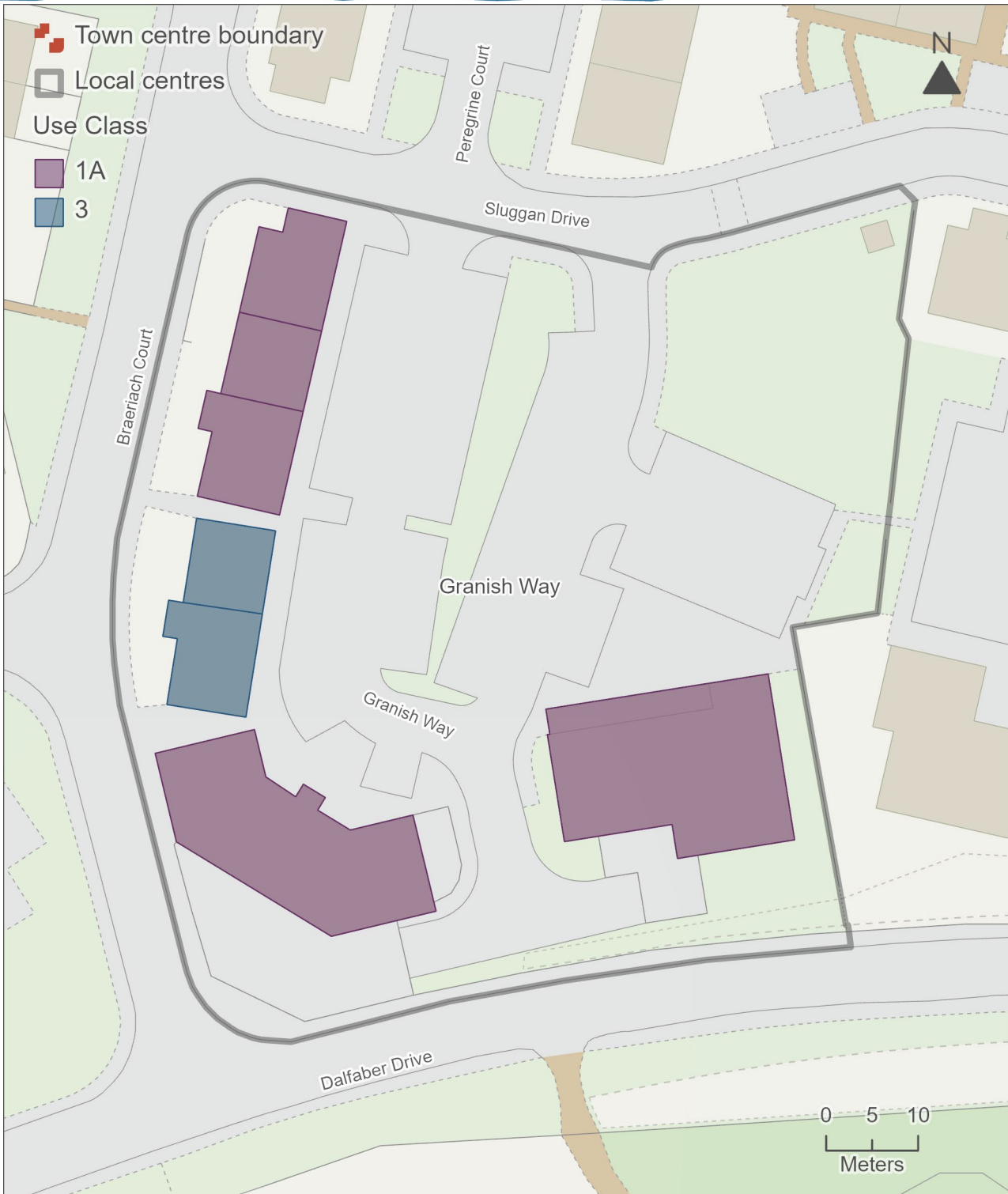


Figure 43 Granish Way 'local centre' in Aviemore in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Employment Land Audit 2025 (CNPA335).



Other local centres that have been identified through the 2025 Employment Land Audit (CNPA335) which offer retail services, are:

- Dalfaber Industrial Estate in Aviemore (Figure 44) – which includes a café, garage, tool and hardware retailer, kitchen showroom, laundrette, beauty salon, veterinary centre and fudge retailer.
- Myrtlefield Industrial Estate (Figure 45), the retail units of which are within the Aviemore town centre designation but that includes a café, hardware store, homeware retailer, and beauty salon outwith the town centre boundary.
- Achnagonlin Industrial Estate (Figure 46) near Grantown-on-Spey – which includes a bakery, bike shop, garage and veterinary.

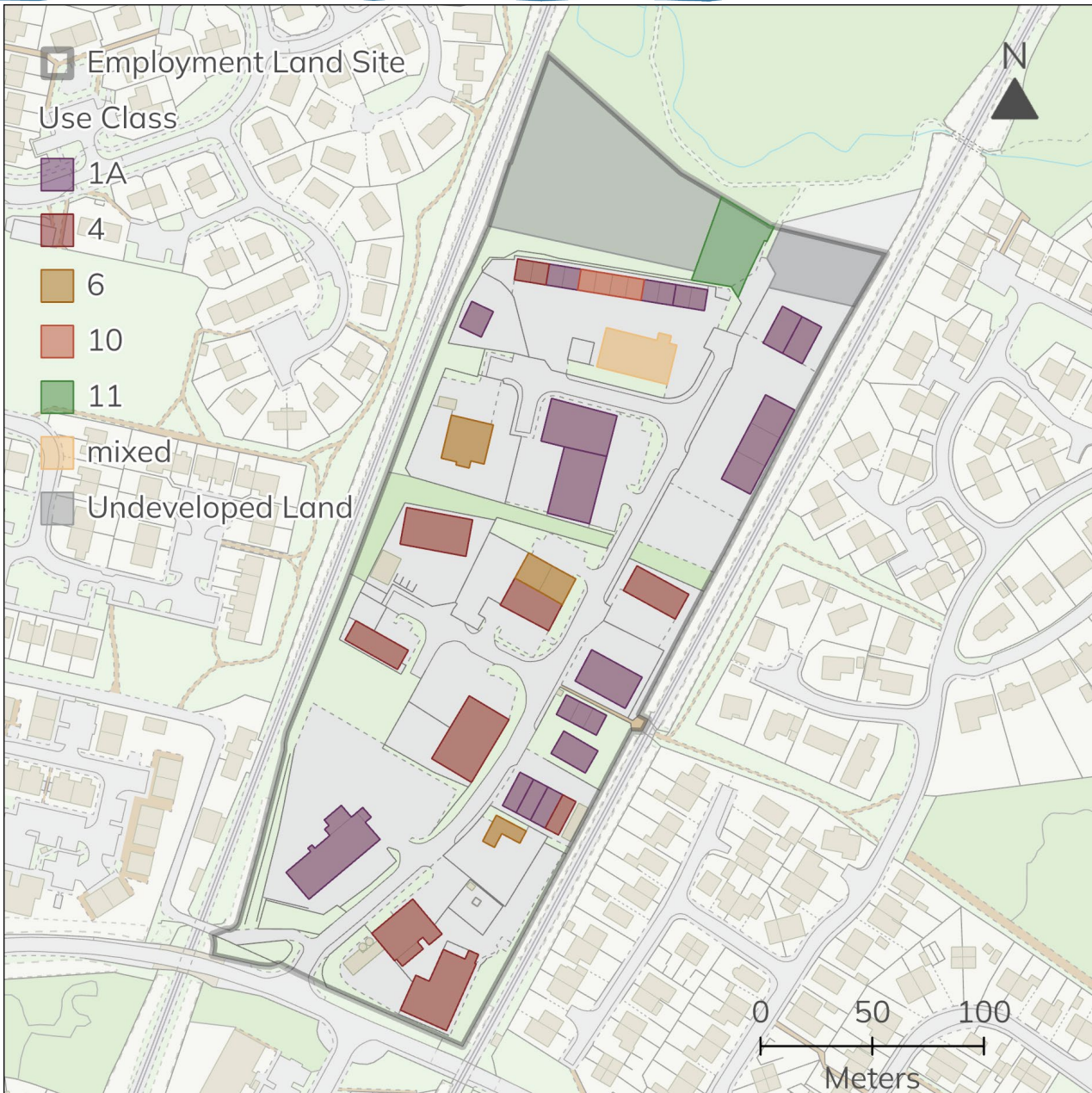


Figure 44 Dalfaber Industrial Estate, Aviemore. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Employment Land Audit 2025 (CNPA335).



Figure 45 Myrtlefield Industrial Estate, Aviemore. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Employment Land Audit 2025 (CNPA335).



Figure 46 Achnagonlin Industrial Estate, Grantown-on-Spey. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Cairngorms National Park Employment Land Audit 2025 (CNPA335).

Summary of retail information

This section provides a summary of the proportion of units (including vacant units but excluding residential) designated as Class 1A retail units in the town centres and other identified centres that offer significant retail offerings. Across all the town centres and other centres with a significant proportion of retail offerings there is around 33,200 m² of retail (1A use class) building footprint in operation in the National Park (Table 2). This



comprises 234 retail units. With the exception of Newtonmore town centre (Table 2), at least one third of the building footprint in each centre operates for retail purposes.

There are also additional retail offerings dispersed across the smaller village settlements as discussed in the previous section that contribute to the overall distribution of retail services across the National Park.

Table 2 Retail Class 1A breakdown with identified retail centres in the Cairngorms National Park. Data from the Cairngorms National Park Employment Land Audit 2025 (CNPA335) and Town Centre Health Checks 2023 (CNPA078)

Centre	Total number of units	Operating Class 1A units	Percentage of units operating as Class 1A	Total Class 1A building footprint (sqm)	Percentage of total unit footprint in centre designated as Class 1A
Aviemore	76	52	68.4%	12,209.3	58.3%
Ballater	59	40	67.8%	5,620.07	51.7%
Grantown-on-Spey	75	59	78.7%	8,938.1	51.2%
Kingussie	59	40	67.8%	3673.1	33.8%
Newtonmore	14	3	21.4%	617.7	15.7%
Granish Way, Aviemore	7	5	71.4%	1,063.6	85.2%
Dalfaber Industrial Estate, Aviemore	31	16	51.6%	4,667.0	43.3%
Myrtlefield Industrial Estate, Aviemore	21	13	61.9%	1,966.7	40.3%
Achnagonlin Industrial Estate, Grantown-on-Spey	13	6	46.2%	2,509.3	33.0%



The need for additional local retail facilities to support 20 minute neighbourhoods may need to be considered, particularly in relation to any significant new residential allocations in the Proposed Plan.

Town centre retail provision analysis 2016 to 2023

Data collected from the town centre health checks (CNPA078) provides a timeline for change from 2016 to 2023⁴². No equivalent data is available for the smaller centres, so this section looks only at the change in town centre provision (1A use class) and vacant buildings in the town centres. In the context of the current Local Development Plan, the town centres are only located in the strategic settlements of Aviemore, Ballater, Grantown-on-Spey, Kingussie and Newtonmore.

The number of retail units in all the town centres in the National Park rose from 138 in 2016 to 163 in 2023 (Figure 47). Proportionally retail businesses made up 59.4% of all non residential units within the town centres in 2023, slightly higher than the 53.1% recorded in 2016. In 2018 the number of retail units in all town centres fell from 138 in 2016 to 107 in 2018 and only accounted for 40.1% of all non residential units in the town centres.

⁴² There is no historic data on the composition the village centres or other centres.

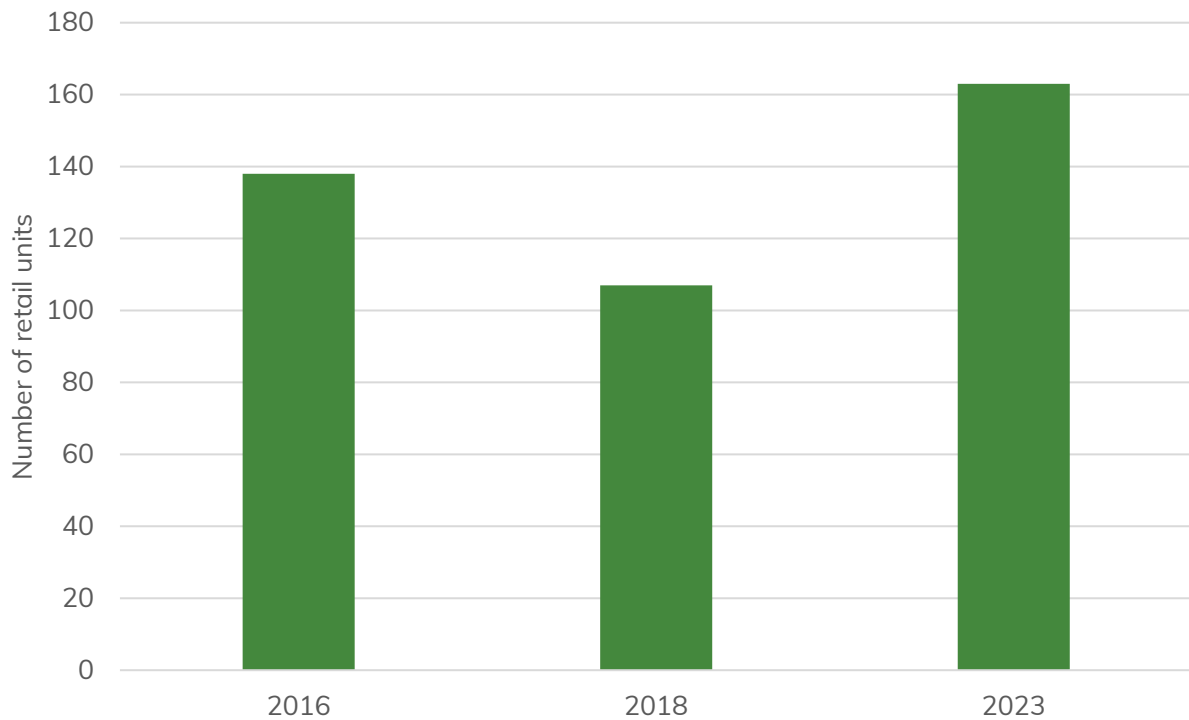


Figure 47 Combined number of retail units (1A use class) in all the five town centres in the strategic settlements in the Cairngorms National Parks from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks (CNPA078) (CNPA1317).

Between 2016 and 2023 there has been an increase in retail units in all the town centres (Figure 48) with the largest increases in Aviemore (+9) and Ballater (+8). The smallest gains have been in Newtonmore (+1) and Kingussie (+3).

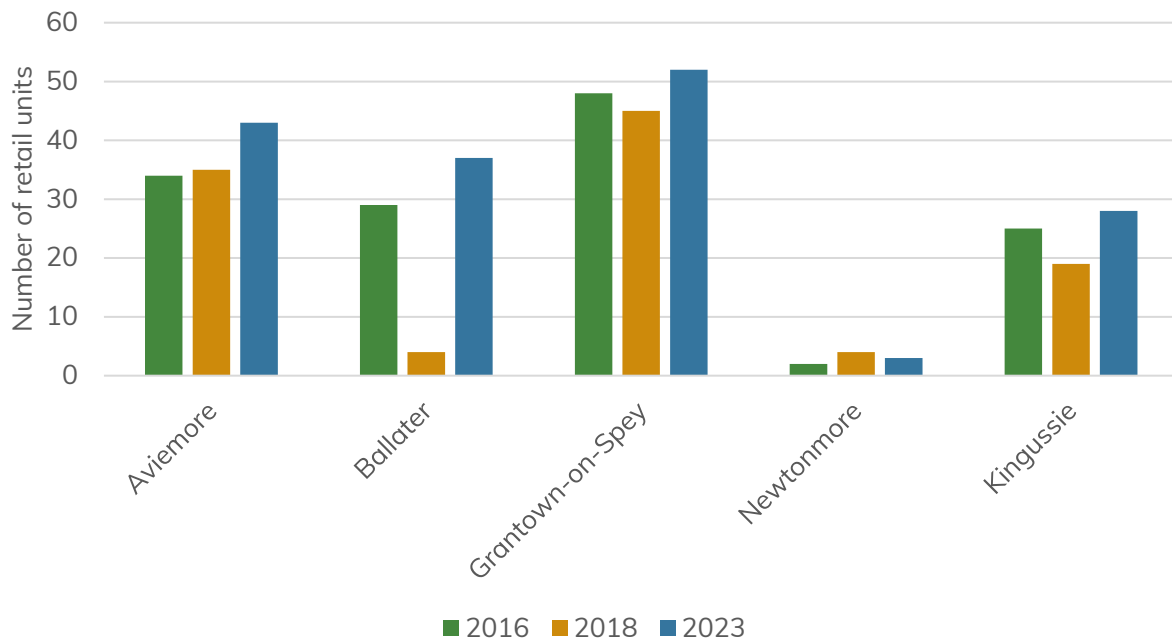


Figure 48 Number of retail units (1A use class) in the town centres in the Cairngorms National Park from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks (CNPA078) (CNPA1317).

The proportion of retail units relative to the total non commercial units in the town centres have increased in most notably in Kingussie from 42% in 2016 to 58% in 2023, and in Ballater from 53% in 2016 to 63% in 2023 (Figure 49). Proportionally the number of retail units has fallen in on Aviemore from 60% in 2016 to 57% in 2023 (Figure 49).

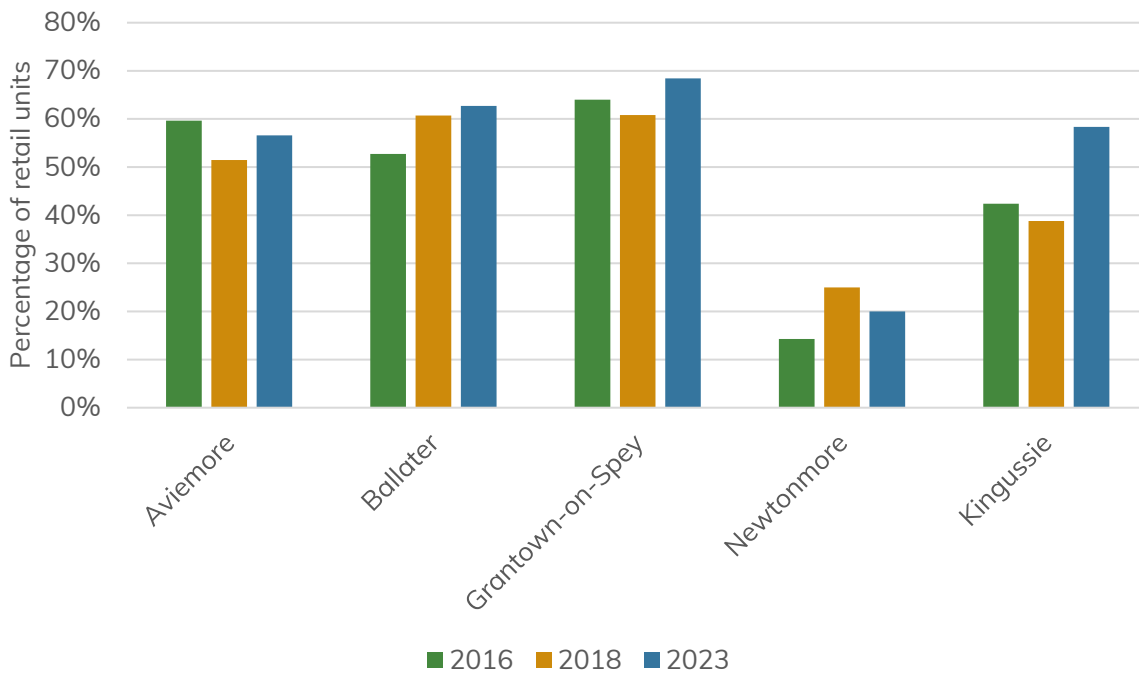


Figure 49 Percentage of all units recorded with a 1A use class units in the town centres in the Cairngorms National Park from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks (CNPA078) (CNPA1317).

Vacancy rates across all town centres

The number of vacant units in all the town centres in the National Park fell from 31 in 2016 to 15 in 2023 (Figure 50). Proportionally vacant units made up 5.5% of all non residential units within the town centres in 2023, significantly lower than the 11.9% recorded in 2016. In 2018 the number of vacant units in all town centres fell from 31 in 2016 to nine in 2018 and only accounted for 3.4% of all non residential units in the town centres.

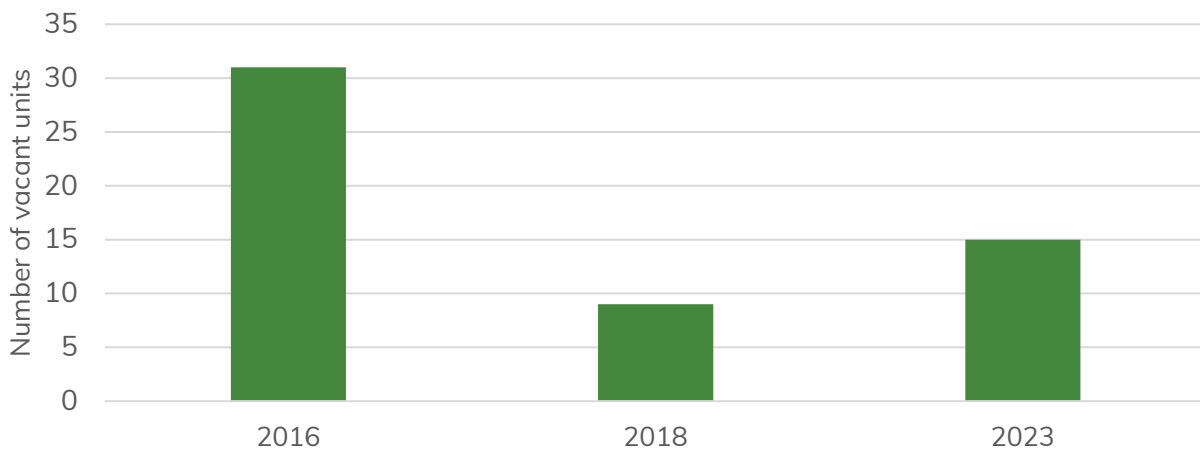


Figure 50 Combined number of vacant units in all the five town centres in the strategic settlements in the Cairngorms National Parks from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks (CNPA078) (CNPA1317).



Between 2016 and 2023 there has been an increase in vacant units only in Aviemore, which rose from three in 2016 to six in 2023, and Newtonmore from one in 2016 to three in 2023 (Figure 51). The increase in the number of vacant units is most notable in Newtonmore, which only had 14 non residential units recorded in the town centre, meaning the vacant units account for 20% of all non residential units (Figure 52).

In Ballater, Granttown-on-Spey and Kingussie the number of vacant units has decreased between 2016 and 2023 (Figure 51). The proportion of units recorded as vacant in Aviemore has slightly increased from 5% in 2016 to 8% in 2023 (Figure 52) however it should be noted that the total number of non residential units in Aviemore has increased from 57 in 2016 to 76 in 2018.

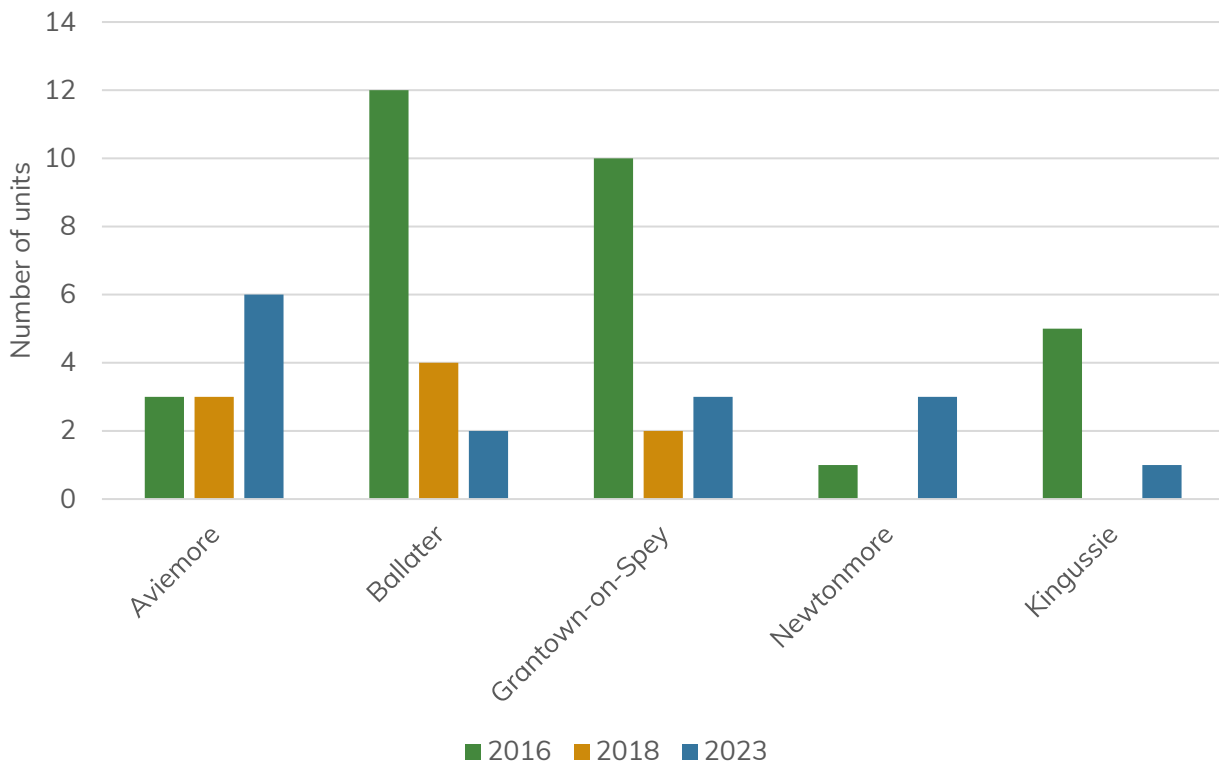


Figure 51 Number of vacant units in the town centres in the Cairngorms National Park from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks (CNPA078) (CNPA1317).

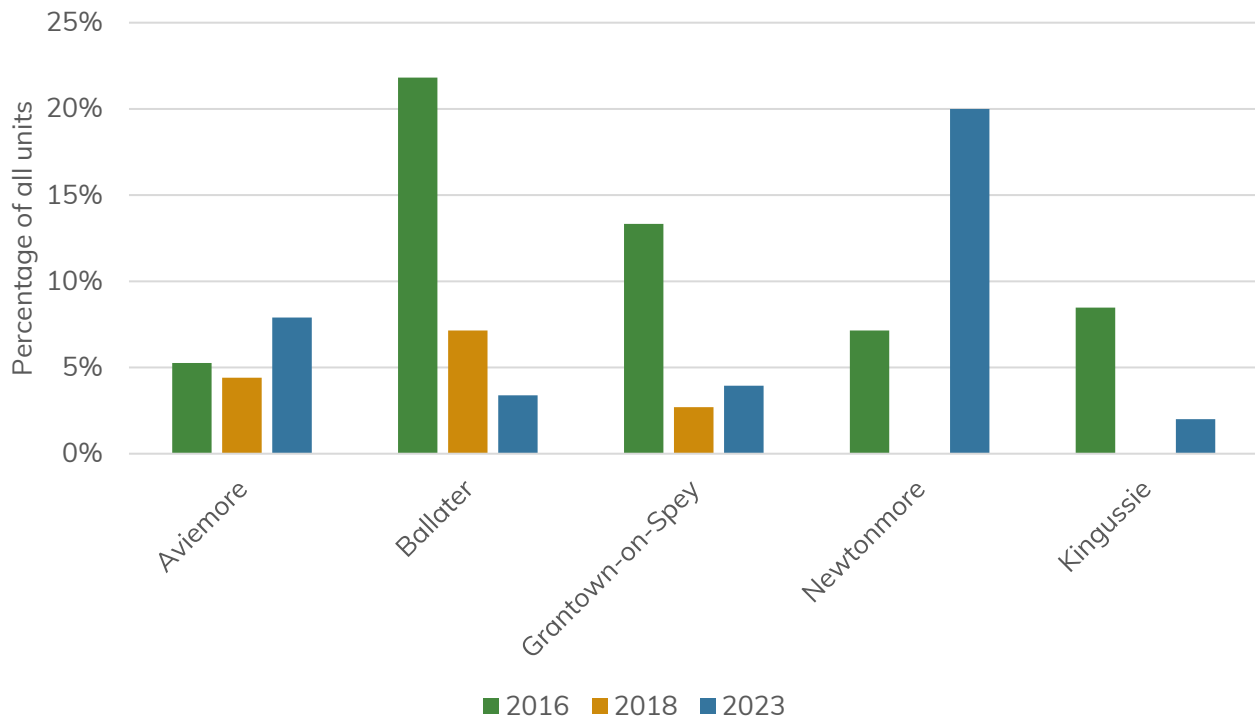


Figure 52 Percentage of all units recorded as vacant in the town centres in the Cairngorms National Park from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks (CNPA078) (CNPA1317).

Non retail clusters

The planning system plays a crucial role in managing clusters of different uses to support diverse, vibrant, and sustainable town centres. In the National Park, it may be important to acknowledge and address concerns that can arise from an over concentration of takeaways.

Criterion (c) of Policy 27 of National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008) states that development proposals for non retail uses will not be supported if further provision of these services will undermine the character and amenity of the area or the health and wellbeing of communities, particularly in disadvantaged areas. These uses include:

- Hot food takeaways, including permanently sited vans.
- Betting offices.
- High interest money lending premises.

Hot food takeaways

Food Standards Scotland's report, Overview of the Total Food and Drink Landscape in Scotland (CNPA487), highlights a significant drop in 'out of home' food and drink spending in 2021 compared to 2019, likely due to lingering effects of the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions. Among the 'out of home' food sectors, only quick service



restaurants experienced an uptick in trade during that time. Meanwhile, there was a substantial surge in online out of home orders, with food delivery apps playing a key role in boosting the home delivery market (for example meals bought from restaurants or takeaways but eaten at home). According to the report, the average person placed 14.9 delivery orders in 2021, compared to 36.6 dine-in occasions. In 2023, food on the go continued to account for the largest share (59.0%) of out of home consumption occasions in Scotland (CNPA486).

Public Health Scotland and the Food Standards Scotland have created the 'Eating Out, Eating Well Framework' (CNPA485), which has informed the development of the National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008). This framework explores policy measures aimed at improving public health by addressing the influence of the out of home food environment. Proposed actions include implementing planning policies that support healthier food options.

The clustering of hot food takeaways can have a detrimental impact on health and be a factor in limiting healthy food options. Schedule 18: Health and safety reports on the clear links between obesity risks, poor health and takeaways.



More information on takeaways, locations and the proximity of takeaways to secondary schools in the National Park is available in Schedule 18: Health and safety.

Betting offices and high interest money lending premises.

The Scottish Government expressed concern over the excessive concentration of betting offices and high interest money lending premises, prompting changes to permitted development rights in 2017. These establishments were removed from Class 2 of the Use Classes Order (Scotland) (CNPA1216), meaning that converting premises into bookmakers or payday loan shops now requires planning permission. The government's decision was driven by worries about the social impacts of these businesses and their potential negative effects on town centres.

Further amendments were introduced in March 2023 with the creation of Class 1A, which merges former Class 1 (shops) and Class 2 (offices accessible to the public). However, betting shops and high interest money lending premises remain outside this classification.

There are currently no betting offices or high interest money lending premises in the Cairngorms National Park. The Proposed Plan will consider not supporting a change of use for premises to operate as a bookmaker or a pay day loan shop in the National Park.

Drive throughs

There are no drive through businesses currently operating in the Cairngorms National Park. The Park Authority will consider restricting drive through development in the town and village centres as it could have a negative effect on both health (see Schedule 18: Health and safety) and character of the existing built environment.

Development for drive throughs outwith the town centre boundaries and village centres may be acceptable if it helps to promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area. An example of where this may be acceptable is along the A9, in areas where the development would bring economic benefits to the area, for example by providing local jobs.

During the preparation of the Proposed Plan, including through the call for sites and ideas process, the Park Authority will consider whether there is a need for such uses having regard for:

- Any existing provision.
- Impacts and effects upon the existing network of roads.
- The existing retail offering and distribution in the local development plan area.



- Compatibility of drive throughs with wider uses.

Culture and creativity

The Cairngorms National Park is home to a rich and diverse range of settlements, each with its own distinct heritage and character. Local cultural and historical celebrations remain a vibrant part of community life, reflecting the individuality of these places. Town and village centres play a vital role in the maintenance and promotion of cultural and creative activities. National Planning Framework 4 (CNPA008) aims to safeguard local traditions and community events, recognising their valuable contribution not only to the renewal and vibrancy of individual settlements, but also to the broader economic health of the National Park.

The national Creative Learning Plan (CNPA476) sets out the importance of creativity in Scottish education. The vision of this plan is for a more creative Scotland and for its people to be proud of who they are and where they live. To achieve that, the plan identifies a need to be creative. To generate ideas, to invent, write, and express identity through the dramatic arts and film. The plan sets out the detail of how these aspirations will increase Scotland's resilience to change and release the potential of its people.

Schedule 7: Historic and cultural heritage highlights many areas and individual buildings of special architectural or historic interest. It provides details of the Cairngorms National Park's listed buildings, conservation areas, gardens and designed landscapes, designated battlefield sites, archaeological records and registered buildings at risk.

Schedule 23: Tourism provides further detail on visitor attractions, including whisky distilleries and heritage and nature based attractions, in the Cairngorms National Park.

There are a number of other cultural offerings available in the Cairngorms National Park, offering opportunities for employment and investment in this sector, including:

- Three dedicated arts and crafts businesses (Figure 54)
- Three cinemas (Figure 55)
- Thirteen art galleries (Figure 56)
- Forty one heritage attractions (Figure 57)
- Thirty three Community halls supporting cultural and creative activities (Figure 58)
- Fifteen music venues (Figure 59)

There may be some overlap between categories of venue, for example some art galleries also offer arts and crafts activities.



The Proposed Plan will seek to support these and further opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative, culture, heritage and arts sectors in the Cairngorms National Park.

Libraries

Libraries (Figure 53) also serve as cultural centres bringing communities together through creative activities such as knitting or children's classes. There are five public libraries in the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 53).

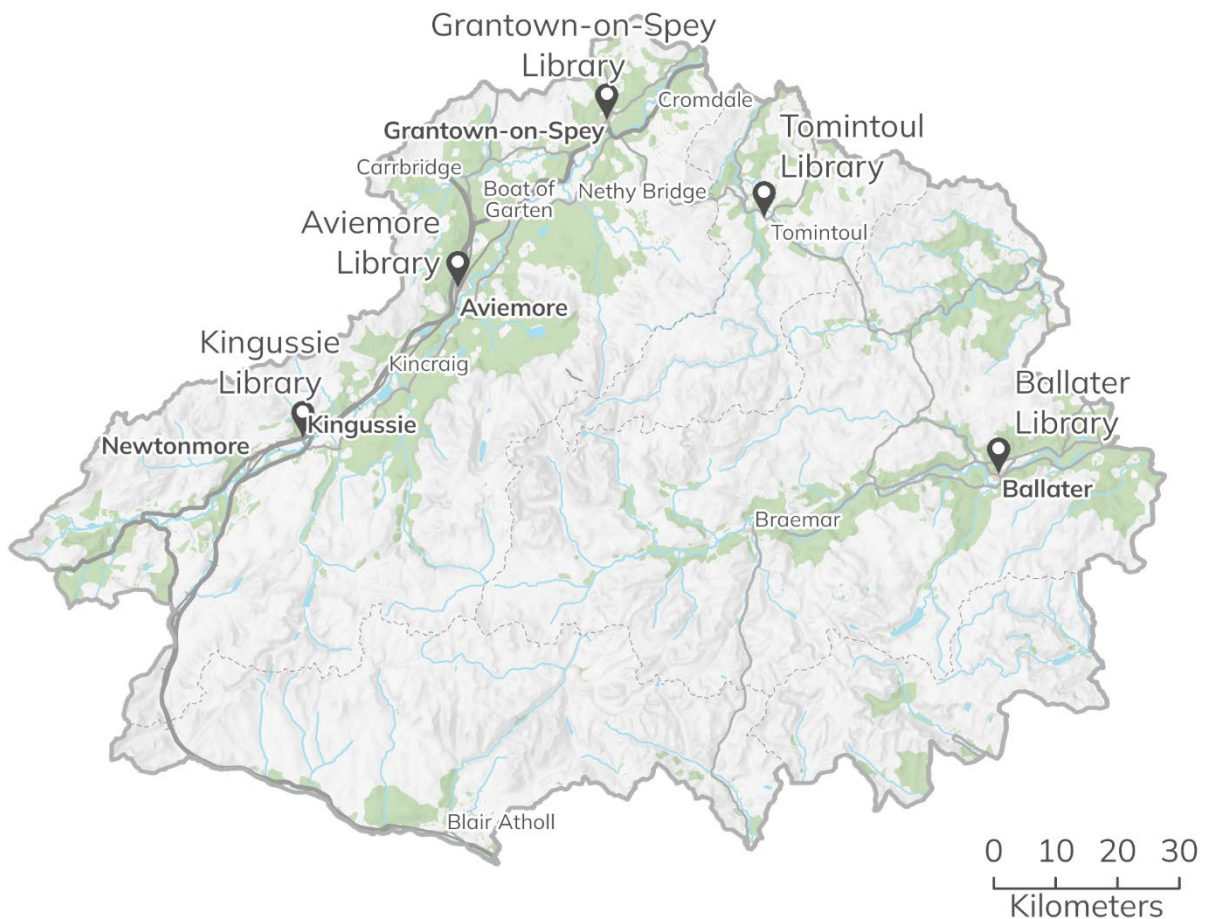


Figure 53 Location of public libraries in the Cairngorms National Park, 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

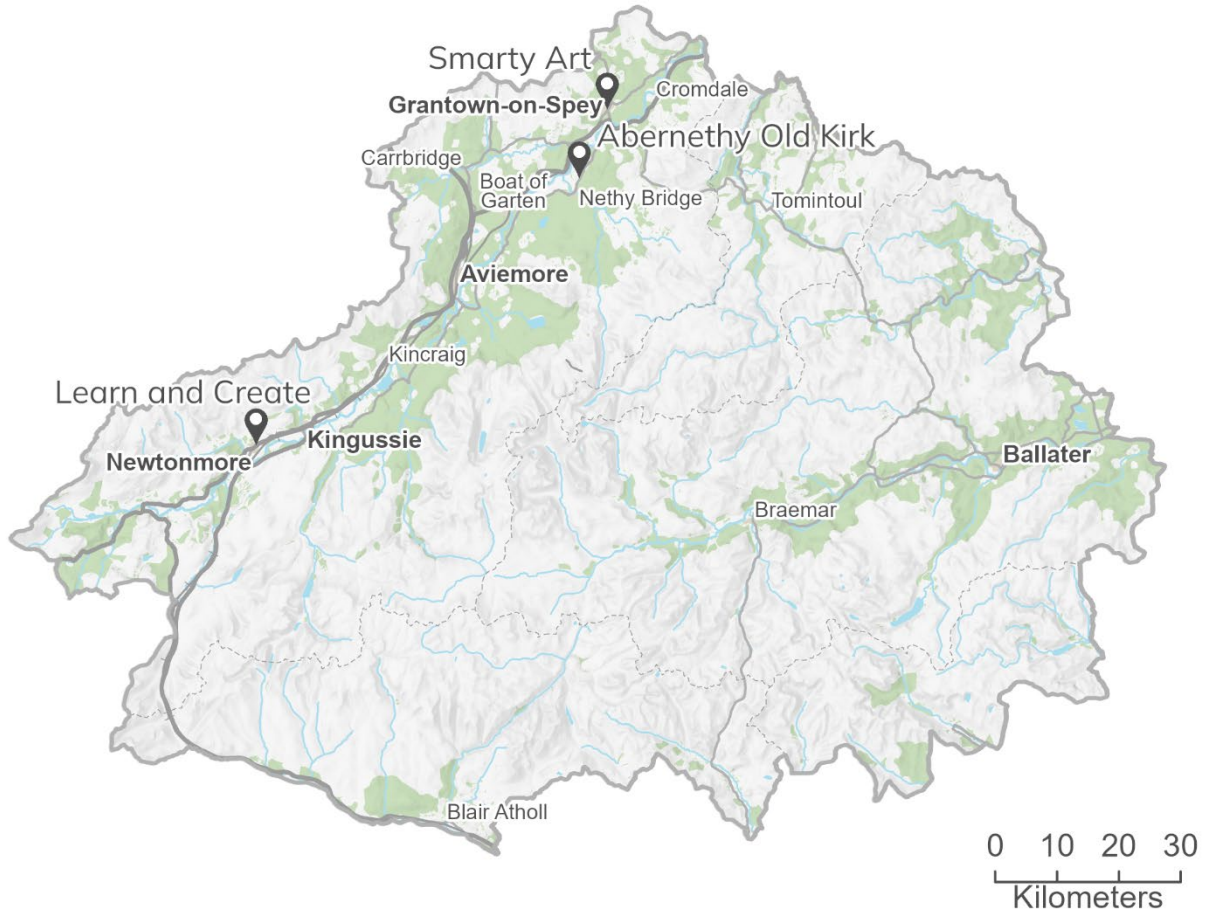


Figure 54 Arts and crafts services in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

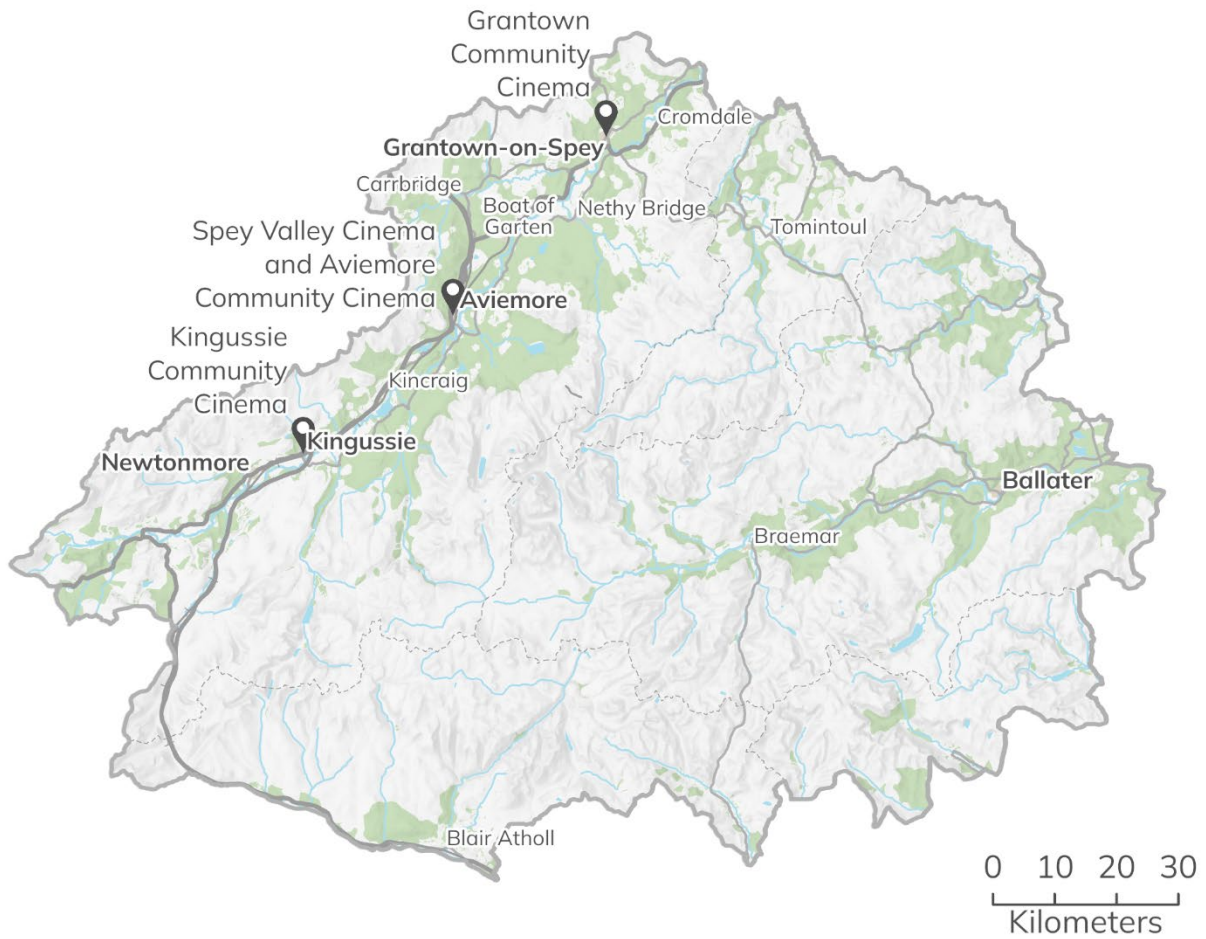


Figure 55 Cinemas in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

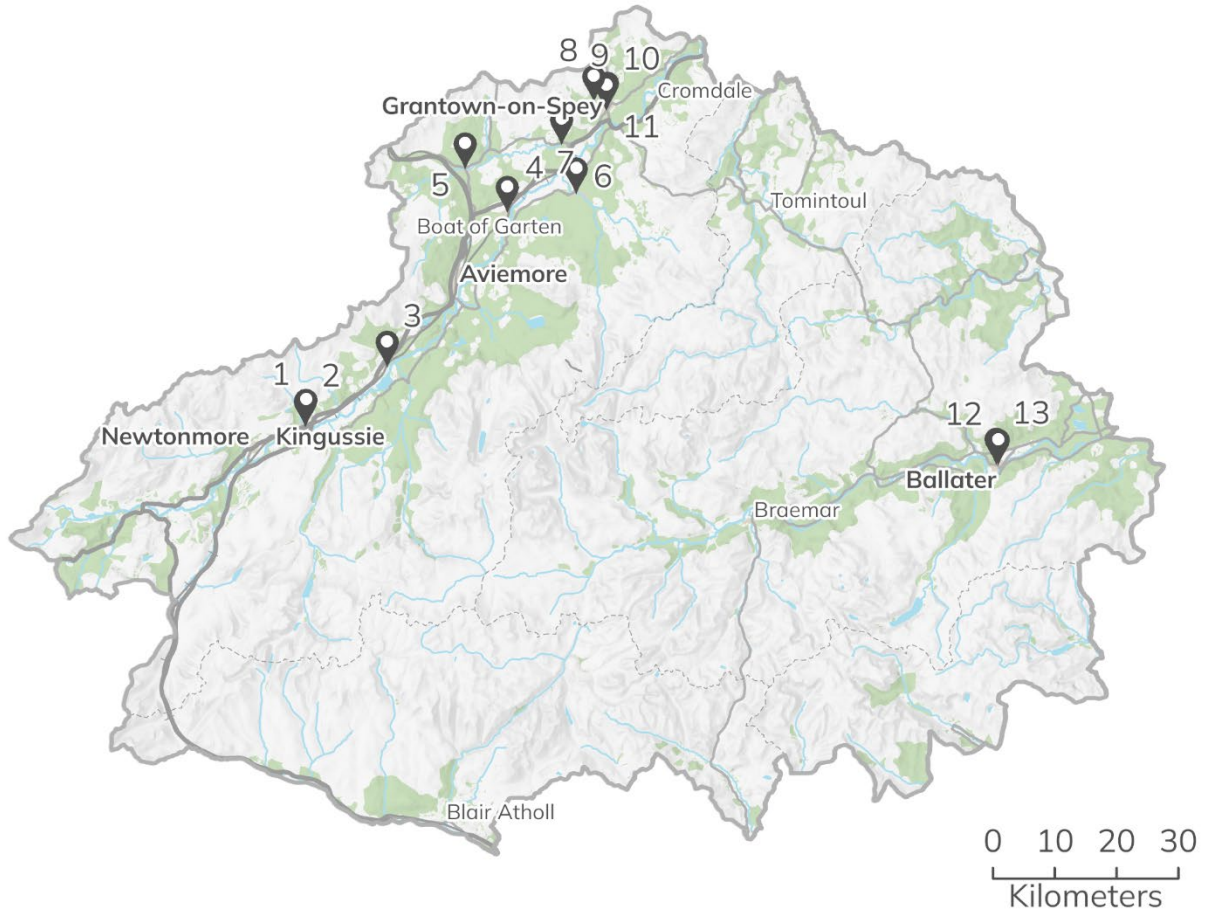


Figure 56 Art galleries in the Cairngorm National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

- 1 Chapel House Arts
- 2 Iona Gallery
- 3 The Old Post Office Cafe Gallery
- 4 1896 Gallery
- 5 Carrbridge Artists Studio
- 6 Arbor Gallery
- 7 Prigmore Art
- 8 Dreggie Mill Studio
- 9 Spey Bank Studio
- 10 Openspace Gallery
- 11 The High St Merchants: Gallery
- 12 Ballater Gallery
- 13 Larks Gallery



Type of attraction

- Museum / Visitor centre
- Castle / Fortification
- Hillfort
- Bridge
- Heritage railway
- Whisky distillery
- Gin distillery

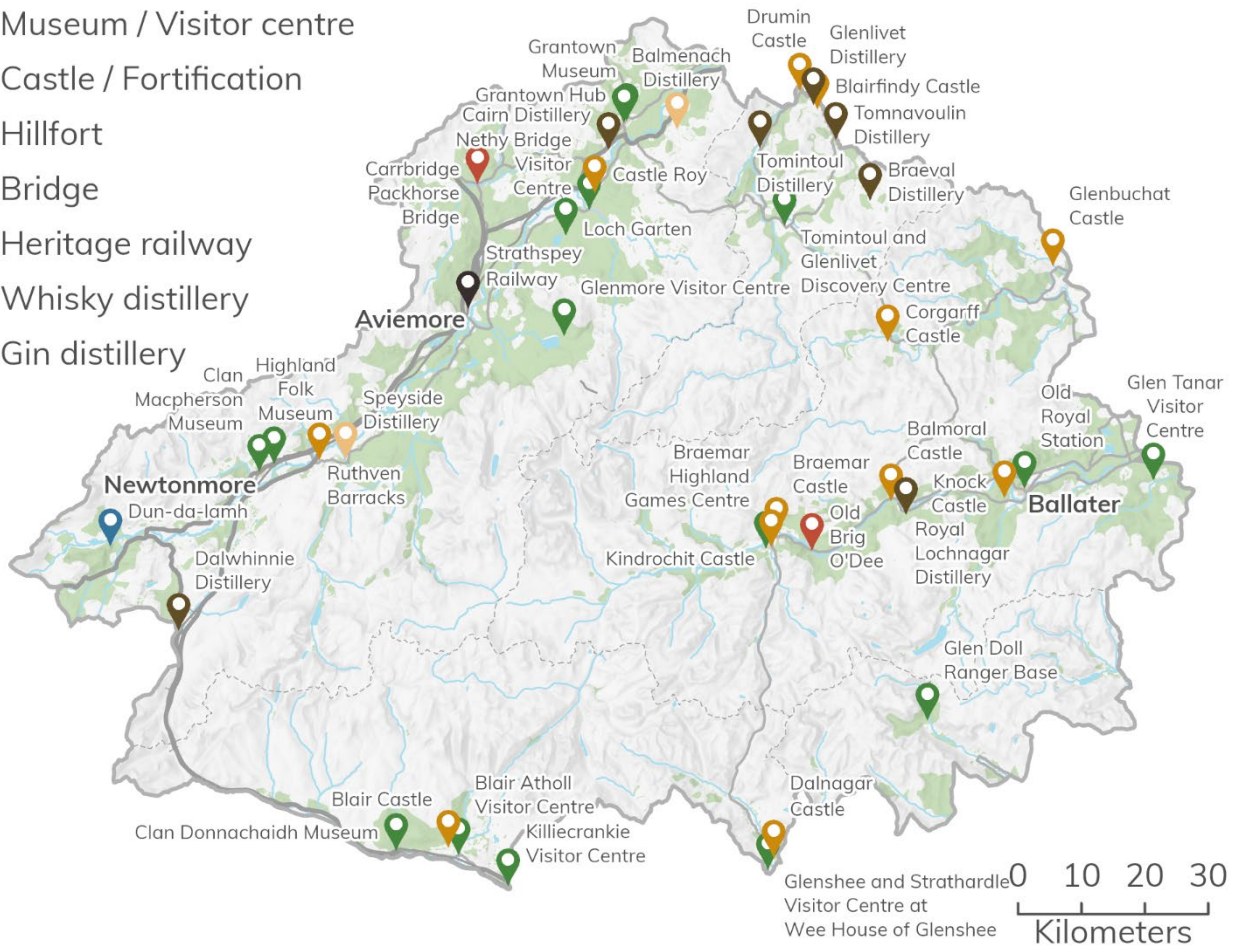


Figure 57 Heritage attractions in the Cairngorm National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

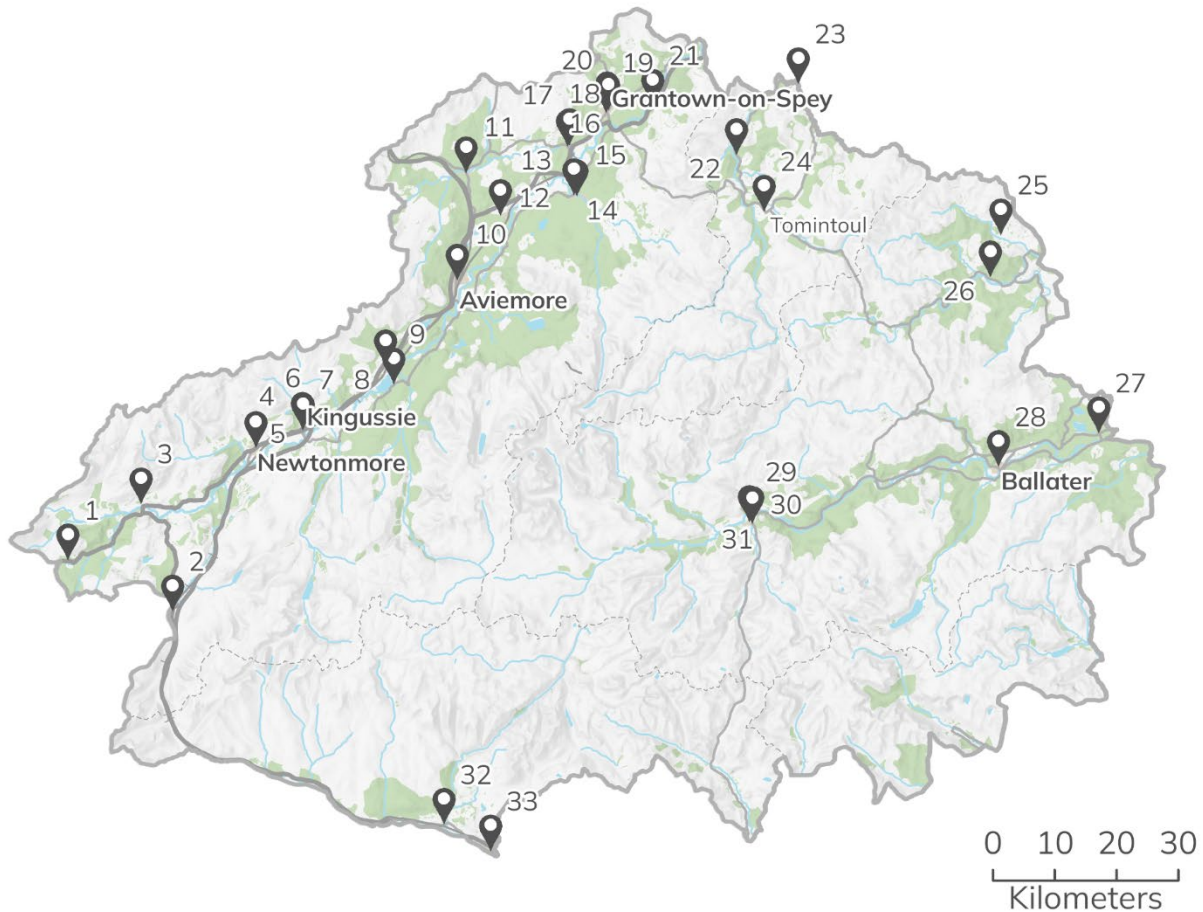


Figure 58 Community halls that may be used for cultural events and classes in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Kinloch Laggan Community Hall | 13. Dulnain Bridge Church Hall | 23. Glenlivet Public Hall |
| 2. Dalwhinnie Village Hall | 14. Nethy Bridge Community Centre | 24. Tomintoul Richmond Hall |
| 3. Laggan Village Hall | 15. Abernethy Parish Church Hall | 25. Glenbuchat Hall |
| 4. Newtonmore Village Hall | 16. Inverallan Church Hall | 26. Lonach Hall |
| 5. Caberfeidh Horizons Community Hub | 17. Dulnain Bridge Village Hall | 27. Kinord Hall |
| 6. Talla Nan Ros Hall | 18. Rifle Hall | 28. Victoria and Albert Hall |
| 7. Badenoch Centre | 19. Granttown Community Centre | 29. Braemar Village Hall |
| 8. Kinraig Community Hall | 20. The Royal British Legion Scotland Strathspey | 30. St Margaret's Church |
| 9. Insh Hall | 21. Cromdale Village Hall | 31. Castleton Hall |
| 10. Aviemore Community Centre | 22. The Green Hall | 32. Blair Atholl Village Hall |
| 11. Carrbridge Public Hall | | 33. Killiecranckie Village Hall |
| 12. Boat Of Garten Community Hall | | |

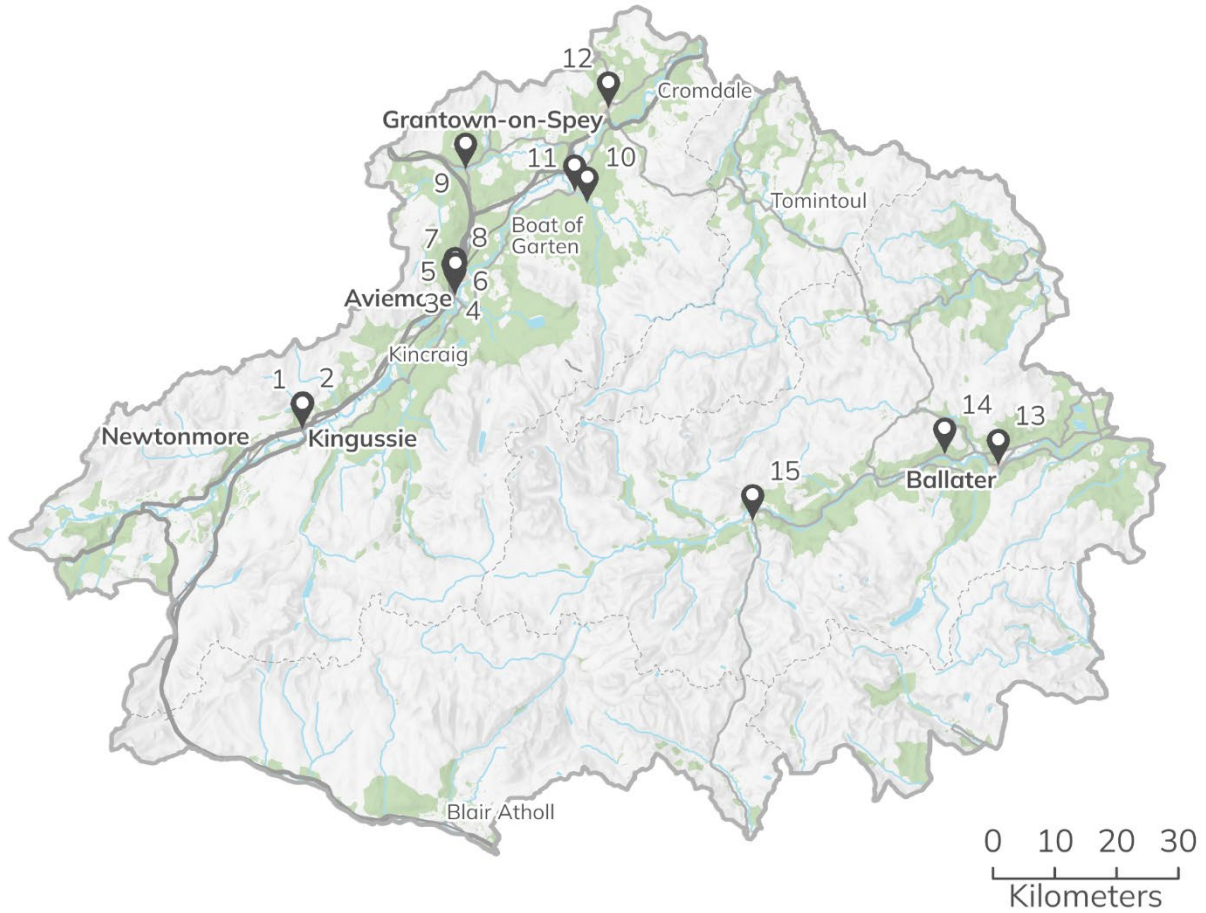


Figure 59 Music venues in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 1 | Silverfjord Hotel | 9 | Cairn Hotel |
| 2 | Badenoch Centre | 10 | Dell of Abernethy |
| 3 | Cairngorm Hotel | 11 | Nethybridge Hotel |
| 4 | The Old Bridge Inn | 12 | Royal British Legion |
| 5 | Macdonald Aviemore Resort | 13 | The Balmoral Bar |
| 6 | The Winking Owl | 14 | Coilacreich Inn |
| 7 | Aviemore Village Green | 15 | St Margaret's Braemar |
| 8 | The Vault Nightclub | | |



Evidence gaps

No outstanding evidence gaps have been identified.

Summary of stakeholder engagement

Early online map engagement highlighted the need to revitalise Grantown-on-Spey's High Street and suggested implementing regular town centre health checks to monitor activity and address issues proactively (CNPA026).

Engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities noted a reliance on expensive corner shops and limited access to affordable retail options. Recommendations included investment in budget shops and local produce markets to improve accessibility and support local livelihoods (CNPA028).

Children and young people expressed a desire for more shops, greater retail variety, and access to specific brands. Concerns were raised that Aviemore's retail offering is too heavily focused on tourists, limiting options for local residents. The need to tidy up the Aviemore High Street, improve pedestrian flow, reduce vacant premises, and enhance the overall layout to create a more appealing and functional retail environment were also highlighted as priorities (CNPA027, CNPA058, CNPA681, CNPA682, CNPA683, CNPA833, CNPA834 and CNPA835).

Engagement through the Kingussie Community Roadshow heard comments on retail considerations, with suggestions of potential improvements in accessibility and utilisation of town centre spaces (CNPA599).

Engagement through the Cairngorms 2030 and Planning Power game activities highlighted the importance of vibrant and resilient town and village centres. Participants supported strengthening local shops, services, and community spaces to ensure settlements remain active and attractive places to live and work. There was strong backing for focusing new development within existing centres to enhance accessibility and reduce reliance on cars, alongside calls to reuse vacant buildings and encourage mixed use spaces that combine housing, retail, and social functions. Participants stressed that supporting small, locally owned businesses is vital for sustaining community identity and economic resilience across the National Park (CNPA1104 and CNPA1105).



Public engagement on the schedule (see CNPA1362 for engagement version) was carried out from 14 August – 26 September 2025. Five 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).

The Proposed Plan should seek to:

- Review the town centre boundaries. Conduct a review of town centre boundaries to better reflect the National Planning Framework 4 definition of a town centre use, and to ensure that the centre includes shops, community services and leisure and cultural facilities which are accessible by the local population.
- Consider restricting further fast food and hot takeaways in areas where there is already a high proportion of these use types. This includes providing clear guidance on whether and where drive through developments may be supported.
- Reflect the aspirations and actions, where possible, set out in the community action plans.
- Reflect the town centre and village centre health checks findings including:
 - Appraising vacant and derelict land and buildings for allocation for various uses, including residential development to support the local need for housing.
 - Support electric vehicle charging infrastructure and active travel infrastructure in centres.
 - Support the extension of the Strathspey railway to Grantown-on-Spey.
 - Safeguard village services and amenities.
 - Preserve town and village cultural and historic assets.



- Identify the need for town centre strategies that sit within / alongside settlement strategies.
- Take into account feedback received from public engagement activities.
- Support opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative sector, culture, heritage and the arts.
- Support the sustainability and prosperity of the rural economy.
- Safeguard / protect cultural and historic assets from any adverse effects of development.
- Consider the need for additional neighbourhood retail facilities to support 20 minute neighbourhoods, particularly in relation to any significant new residential allocations that are proposed.
- Support new development in remote rural areas as appropriate, where it can help support community resilience and sustain fragile populations.
- Support a place based approach to rural development reflecting how the safeguarding of and investment in cultural and historic assets, which can underpin tourism, local identity and quality of place.
- Engage with estates to consider the aspiration of the estates and the public reflecting a balanced approach that supports vibrant rural economies.
- Consider support for rural or farm shops that support local living and the 20 minute neighbourhood principle.
- Consider including a local policy which reflects the 'new ways of working' which are specific to the National Park. National Planning Framework4 Policy 29(a) is clear that diversification of existing business will be supported. Policy 29(a)(ix) stipulates that 'small scale developments that support new ways of working such as remote working, homeworking and community hubs, will be supported'.

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)
- Scottish Forestry (C011)
- Ristol Consulting Ltd on behalf of The House of Bruar (C042)

Historic Environment Scotland (C002)

Historic Environment Scotland agrees that the evidence correctly identifies the characteristics of the Cairngorms National Park and the correct implications have been identified.



Scottish Forestry (C011)

Scottish Forestry believes that the matters are covered appropriately (CNPA1421).

The House of Bruar (C042)

The House of Bruar agrees that the evidence correctly identifies the characteristics of the Cairngorms National Park and that the correct implications have been identified.

McDonald's Restaurants Ltd (C049)

McDonald's Restaurants Ltd agrees that the evidence presented in this report correctly identifies the characteristics of the Cairngorms National Park. However, to be considered sufficient they request that the schedule be amended to meet National Planning Framework 4's requirement that local development plans need to 'consider, and if appropriate, identify areas where drive through facilities may be acceptable, where they wouldn't negatively impact on local living or sustainable travel'.

Park Authority response

The Park Authority agrees with the requested change and has amended the schedule to address McDonald's Restaurants Ltd 's concerns. Further engagement was undertaken with McDonald's Restaurants Ltd to agree the wording of the amendment, and they have confirmed that they are now satisfied that the schedule is sufficient and that they agree that the correct implications have been identified (CNPA1319).

Statements of dispute

Dan Walker (C076)

Dan Walker agrees that the evidence presented in this report correctly identifies the characteristics of the Cairngorms National Park, however, they do not agree that the evidence presented in this report is sufficient to inform the preparation of the next Local Development Plan, because the Aviemore town centre boundary should include the approach to the town along Grampian road from the south, to capture the derelict development site adjacent to the food outlets on the left of the road (Happy Haggis etc.).

Consequently, Dan Walker does not agree that the correct implications for the next Local Development Plan have been identified, stating that Aviemore 'requires a town



wide strategy to address the dire state of retail, house and public amenities across the town...'

Park Authority response

The town centre boundaries used within the town centre health checks are those within the adopted Local Development Plan 2021. As identified in the Evidence Report, town centre boundaries will be reviewed as part of the preparation of the Proposed Plan. It is not a requirement that they be reviewed as part of the Evidence Report.

The Park Authority disagrees with Dan Walker's dispute about town centre strategies, as the Evidence Report already acknowledges the need for town centres strategies to be identified during the preparation of the Proposed Plan. This may include Aviemore.