



Cairngorms National Park village health checks 2025

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Introduction

Town centre health checks were conducted in the National Park from 2010 until 2018, when they were paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the process resumes, a village centre health check approach has been introduced to assess the resilience of local villages. With the first village centre health check being conducted in 2025.

The importance of this report's generation is due to several key factors, when analysing the impact that village centres can play in the decision making process. Such checks can aid 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.

The Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 spatial strategy classifies the towns and villages of the Cairngorms National Park as Strategic, Intermediate and Rural Settlements. Town centre boundaries have been identified for the Strategic Settlements, with the most recent town centre health checks conducted in summer 2023. This document may be accessed via the following link:

- <https://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Cairngorms-National-Park-Town-Centre-Health-Check-Report-2023.pdf>

This report focuses on the Intermediate Settlements, namely (Figure 1):

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

The data presented within this report will be used to monitor the implementation of the National Park Partnership Plan 2022 as well as community action plans, which in turn will aid in the preparation and formation of the next Local Development Plan.

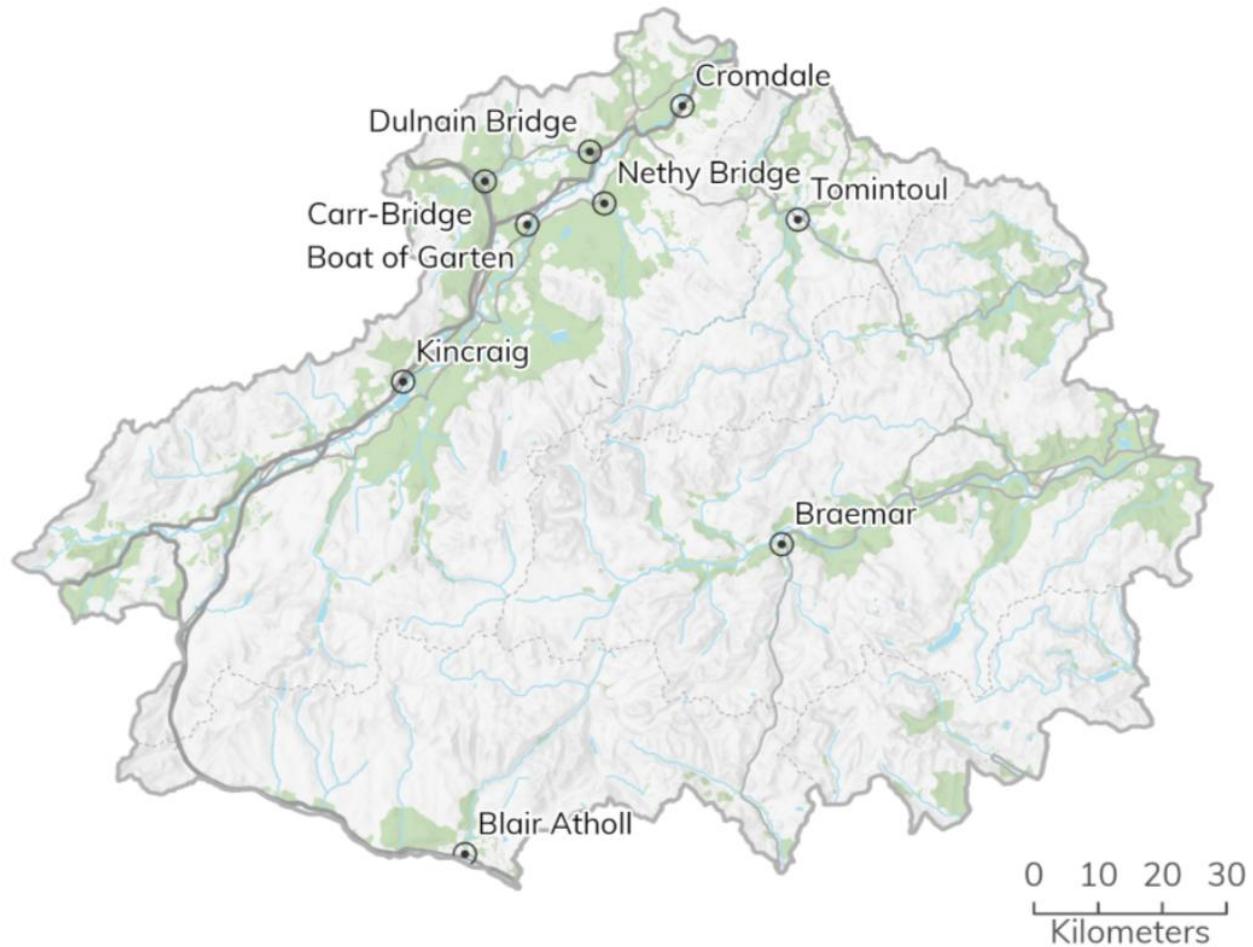


Figure 1 Village centres (Intermediate Settlements) in the Cairngorms National Park.

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Policy context

National Planning Framework 4

National Planning Framework 4 Policy 27 promotes a 'town centre first' approach, encouraging development that supports the vitality and viability of city, town, and local centres. While the policy specifically references city and town centres, its principles are applicable to village centres, which serve as crucial hubs for rural communities. Village centre health checks contribute to these aims by providing evidence on the current condition, functionality, and potential of rural centres. This information can inform future policy and planning decisions that align with the 'town centre first' principle. Specifically, Policy 27a 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.'

Policy 15 expands upon the importance of local living, a concept in which residents can meet most of their needs within a reasonable distance of their homes, this is typically achieved through the 20 minute neighbourhood model. While the policy acknowledges that this model will need to be adapted to suit rural and low-density areas, the core aim remains: to improve access to services, facilities, and employment locally. Village centre health checks can support the implementation of this policy by assessing how well local services meet community needs and identifying any gaps that limit local living. The findings can help shape future Local Development Plan policies that enhance service accessibility and support the sustainability of village communities.

Policy 14 highlights the priority that should be placed upon the six qualities of successful placers, as Local Development Plans should seek to provide clear expectations for local context, characteristics as well as considering the general connectivity of the area. Therefore, the results of such village centre health checks can aid in the creation of the next Local Development Plan.

The following policies are also considered when conducting a village centre health check; Policy 7 promotes protection of historic assets, Policy 9 encourages reuse of brownfield and vacant land, Policy 13 supports active and sustainable travel, Policy 17 enables rural housing where appropriate, Policy 24 promotes digital connectivity, Policy 28 supports retail development in rural areas, Policy 29 encourages rural economic development, Policy 30 supports sustainable tourism. Health checks can highlight opportunities to enhance as well as sustainably support areas that have been highlighted throughout the village health centre check.



Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021

The Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan provides a policy framework to guide sustainable development across the Cairngorms National Park's rural and remote communities. Its policies aim to balance the need for housing, economic growth, and infrastructure with the protection of the unique landscapes and cultural identity.

The adopted Local Development Plan promotes sustainable rural development by supporting appropriate housing and economic activity within and around existing settlements. Policies 1.2 and 1.3 guide housing growth by encouraging development within established rural settlements while allowing for limited housing in the countryside where it meets specific criteria. Economic priorities are addressed through the 'Town Centre First' approach (Policies 2.1.b and 2.1.c), which favour developments that enhance the vitality of settlement centres or, where located out with these boundaries, directly support local community needs. Policy 2.5.b protects existing economic sites, ensuring that redevelopment or change of use only occurs where the site is demonstrably unsuitable for business and poses negative impacts on local character or amenity. Further support for rural economies is provided by Policy 4.41, which encourages economic development that diversifies local opportunities, enhances existing facilities, or contributes to a more resilient, year-round economy. In line with landscape protection principles, Policy 5.2 addresses the visual and environmental impact of private roads and ways, ensuring that access infrastructure is sensitively integrated into the landscape.

Place Principle

The Place Principle, which underpins the National Performance Framework, encourages collaboration across sectors and with communities to improve outcomes by promoting a shared understanding of place. Village centre health checks support this by identifying existing assets, service gaps, and opportunities for improvement in turn providing valuable, place based data that reflects local needs and priorities. This information can help inform future community action plans or local Place plans and guide investment and development in a way that is inclusive, sustainable, and tailored to the unique character of each village.



Methodology

Survey approach and structure

Two types of survey were conducted, an in person study as well as a desktop study. One to find out how up to date information about the places is online, which could aid in ease of navigation for tourists as well as aiding locals with finding services and opening times. The second study being in person was in part to cross check the information produced in the first survey as well as allowing the teams to gain a deeper understanding into the sense of place within the settlements. For the sake of the report the term sense of place is defined as follows:

'Sense of Place describes the unique character and identity of a location, shaped by its physical setting, history, and how people use, navigate, and experience it. It reflects the connection communities have with their environment and contributes to local distinctiveness, cohesion, and quality of life.'

Survey team structure

In May 2025, three teams in total were sent out over the course of two days, with Cromdale being surveyed by all the teams to familiarise them with the methodology and equipment. Splitting the intermediate settlements in such a manner aided in reducing the load on resources as well as allowing for the data to be collected within a reasonable period.

Table 1 Survey team structure.

Villages surveyed	Team
Cromdale, Blair Atholl, Carrbridge	Team 1
Cromdale, Boat of Garten, Dulnain Bridge	Team 2
Cromdale, Tomintoul, Braemar	Team 3

Criteria and indicators for assessment

Inventory of village centre businesses and other non-residential uses

In addition to the quantitative data gathering recording business types, qualitative information is gathered about several aspects of the physical environment and accessibility of each village centre. These are observations made by the reporting officers about how they experienced the village centres, and what they felt are their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.



Observations for each village centre were based on the following indicators:

Public spaces / realm

The health check also considers how public spaces within each village centre are used, how they interact with the wider village centre and what opportunities may exist to improve them in a way that can benefit of the whole village centre. 'Squares may often be historic marketplaces, particularly in rural contexts, that now function as gathering places for local events. It is important to critically appraise how well a village square supports the variety of uses that it is expected to support.' (Town Centres Toolkit, 2015, Page 19) The health check also includes observations about village centre high streets if present, considering how people used them and what made them pleasant spaces or not.

Physical environment

Appearance, condition, and physical structure of the village centre (including any constraints, opportunities, and assets). This may include comments about Pavements and streets clutter, signage, cracks, potholes etc, Cleanliness and / or comments on the public realm furniture i.e. seating, bins number, condition, and age. This may also include conditions of buildings, shop fronts, window displays and hanging baskets.

Condition of the historic environment and assets, considering their contribution to the village centre's structure and noting any that enhance the village centre.

Evidence of investment by users – noting any recent or ongoing improvements to the built environment that could benefit the village centre.

Sense of place

Sense of place is a key component of this study as it provides insight into how village centres function not only in physical terms but also through their emotional, social, and cultural significance. While quantitative data identifies the presence and type of facilities, the assessment of sense of place explores how spaces are perceived and experienced by users. It encompasses the atmosphere, character, and identity of a location elements that contribute to community cohesion, local pride, and visitor engagement. This approach seeks to identify what makes each settlement distinctive, the extent to which village centres are perceived as welcoming and vibrant, and how future investment might enhance their role as focal points for community life and economic activity.



Accessibility

Ease of movement is fundamental in encouraging footfall. The perception that a village is easy to navigate and walk around will affect how people use it and how often. When conducting the health check, accessibility of the village centre is appraised by examining how easy it is to move around and for example if there are suitable crossing places.

‘Most Scottish villages have a main or high street which acts as a central spine for footfall and activity. Villages can develop in several ways around their high streets, and not always to the benefit of pedestrians, so it is important that their success as an active and bustling thoroughfare for people on foot is continually appraised.’ (Town Centres Toolkit, 2015, Page 19).

In addition, the impact of traffic, availability, and suitability of parking, cycling facilities and public transport are also examined through the health checks to help understand the wider aspect of accessibility. This includes observing the impact of traffic on the village centres, noting what provision there is for cyclists and what level of public transport is available.

Traffic and congestion

The presence of vehicles in village centres significantly influences accessibility, safety, and the overall character of the area. High traffic volumes can create congestion, detract from pedestrian experience, and undermine the visual appeal of heritage settings. Informal parking such as on verges or roadsides may obstruct movement and reduce accessibility, especially for those with mobility needs. In contrast, well-planned formal parking helps manage vehicle flow and supports safer, more attractive village environments. Assessing parking provision is therefore essential to understanding how village centre’s function, particularly during periods of high visitor activity.

Public transport and connectivity

Access to public transportation within intermediate settlements is a key stage in both reducing car dependency as well as achieving sustainability targets. The need for increased public transportation was also highlighted within several community action plans, emphasising its role in improving accessibility to essential services, supporting local economies, and enhancing social inclusion for residents without private vehicles.

Environmental observations

Environmental observations assess how natural features, green infrastructure, and environmental risks shape the function and experience of each village centre. It includes the condition of open spaces, trees, and planting, as well as proximity to rivers,



woodland, or walking routes. Potential constraints such as flood risk or erosion will also note. These observations help to understand how the natural environment supports place identity, community use, and long term resilience.

Community input and local insight

Community input and local insight are integral to this study and are primarily drawn from existing community action plans. These documents, developed through prior local engagement, provide valuable context on community priorities, perceived challenges, and aspirations for village centres. While direct consultation with individuals is not planned to take place during the site visits, the community action plans offer a grounded understanding of how residents experience and value their local environment.

Flooding

Where relevant flood risks and settlements that fall within the catchment of a potentially vulnerable area, risks will be identified and mitigation measures discussed. These mitigations will be made up of proposals taken from the community action plans, flood risk management plans and local flood risk management plans.

There are seven Potentially Vulnerable Areas identified within the National Park boundary (Figure 2) identified within the Cycle 2 flood risk management plans and local flood risk management plans, which cover years 2022 – 2028. Combined, there are approximately 1,760 people and 1,110 homes and businesses currently at risk from flooding within these areas. This is likely to increase to 2,570 people and 1,580 homes and businesses by the 2080s due to climate change. However, this report will focus on the two Potentially Vulnerable Areas that cover the intermediate settlements surveyed within this report (Table 2). Between Blair Atholl and Nethy Bridge Potentially Vulnerable Areas, there are 230 people and 190 homes and businesses currently at risk from the effects of flooding with this number expecting to rise.

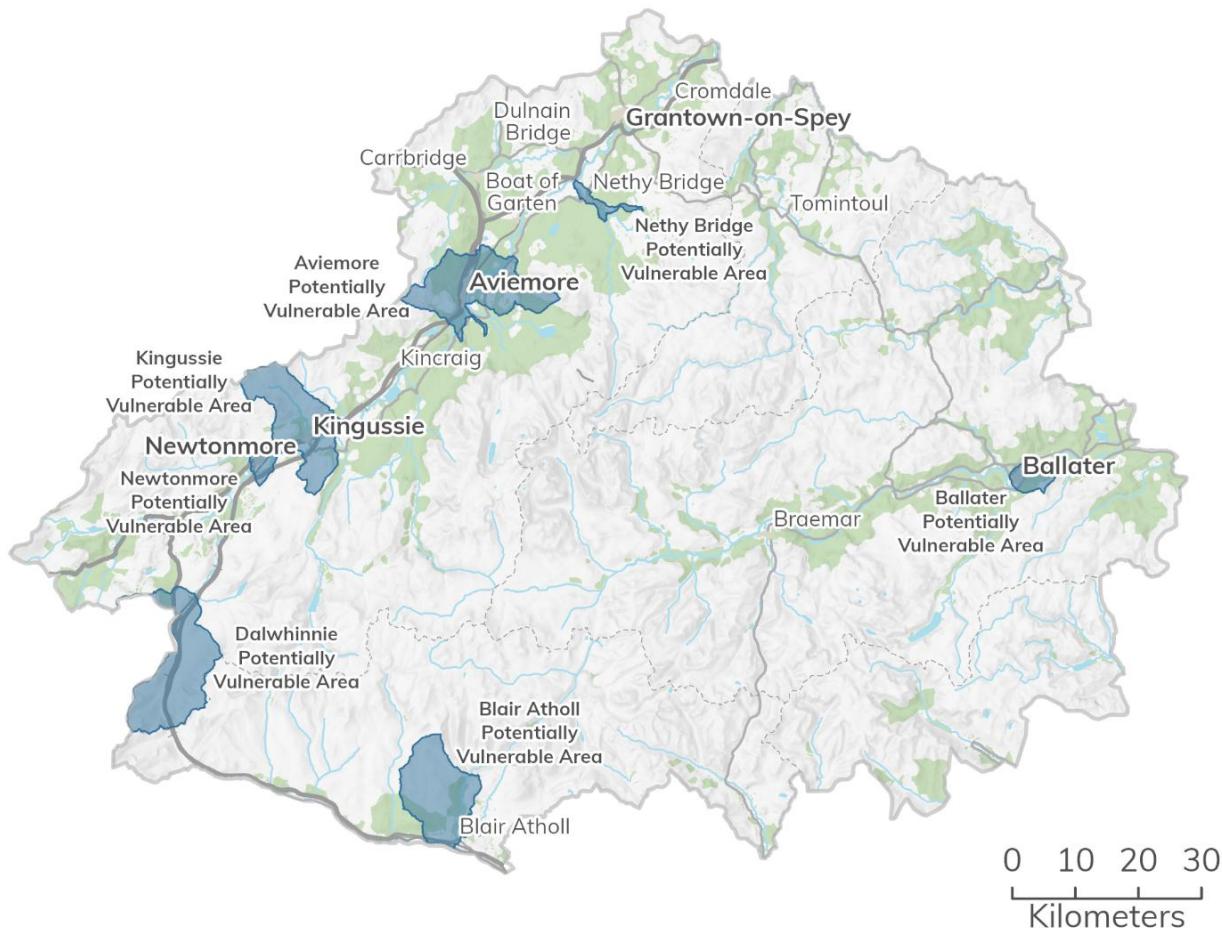


Figure 2 Potentially vulnerable areas located within the Cairngorms National Park boundary.

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Table 2 Number of people and homes and businesses within Potentially Vulnerable Areas within the Cairngorms National Park.

Area	River catchment	Number of people at risk	Number of homes / businesses at risk	Number of people at risk by 2080	Number of homes / businesses at risk by 2080
Blair Atholl	Tay	50	70	80	100
Nethy Bridge	Spey	180	120	200	130



The objectives and actions for the Potentially Vulnerable Areas are set out within their relevant flood risk management plans and local flood risk management plans. These are summarised within the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. It is recognised that objectives and actions may change through the Cycle 3 of the flood risk management cycle. The Proposed Plan will need to take account of the Potentially Vulnerable Areas in the formation of its spatial strategy, site selection and placemaking and the Park Authority will need to engage with Scottish Environment Protection Agency to ensure that any emerging changes can be accounted for. For further information, see:

- <https://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Cairngorms-Strategic-Flood-Risk-Assessment-2024.pdf>

Use of data and reporting outcomes

This includes business inventories, physical condition assessments, accessibility evaluations, and observations related to sense of place. Findings are then fed into the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis profiles for each settlement, highlighting key strengths, challenges, and opportunities. The data supports evidence based recommendations for future planning, investment, and policy alignment, particularly in relation to the Local Development Plan and community priorities. Outcomes are presented in a consistent format to ease comparison across settlements and to inform wider strategic decision-making within the National Park.



SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis used in this village centre health check is tailored to reflect the rural context and scale of each community. It draws on site observations, spatial mapping, and available local insights to evaluate key factors influencing the vitality of the village centre. Strengths identify existing assets such as community facilities, active businesses, or good connectivity. Weaknesses highlight current challenges, including vacant units or limited services. Opportunities focus on areas for improvement or growth, such as underused spaces, tourism potential, or digital upgrades. Threats consider future risks, including population decline, or environmental pressures. This approach ensures the analysis is proportionate, place based, and relevant to the unique function of village centres.

Table 3 SWOT analysis breakdown.

Step	Action	Details
1	Conduct a site visit	Observe buildings, businesses, public spaces, and infrastructure; note any vacant or derelict properties.
2	Map the village	Create a map showing non-residential uses and identify patterns such as clusters, gaps, or opportunities.
3	Identify strengths	Consider existing assets that support the village centre
4	Identify weaknesses	Identify current challenges
5	Identify opportunities	Highlight realistic improvements
6	Identify threats	Consider future risks



Findings

This section presents the key findings from the health check of each village centre, including an overview of the settlement, business composition, qualitative observations, a SWOT analysis, and a map showing the spatial distribution of businesses and non-residential uses.

Blair Atholl

Blàr Ath Fhodla

Sitting at an altitude of 130 metres, the historic village of Blair Atholl is in Highland Perthshire at the southern edge of the Cairngorms National Park. The name Blair Atholl derives from the Gaelic word blàr, meaning 'field' or 'plain.' 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 plays host to Scotland's largest youth Scout camp, which is held biennially and attracts over 1,200 international participants, further strengthening its identity as a destination village.



Figure 3 The Blair Atholl community village hall



Figure 4 A snapshot of the rural setting of the village



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 5).

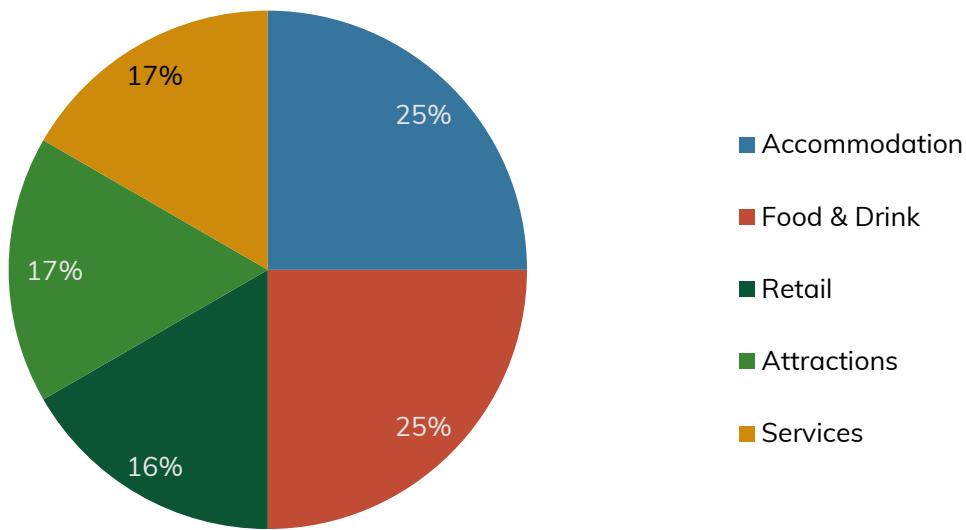


Figure 5 The business composition of Blair Atholl.

The village has a compact commercial centre (Figure 6), 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 goods sourced from across the country, it further enhances the village's appeal as a destination for locals and tourists alike.

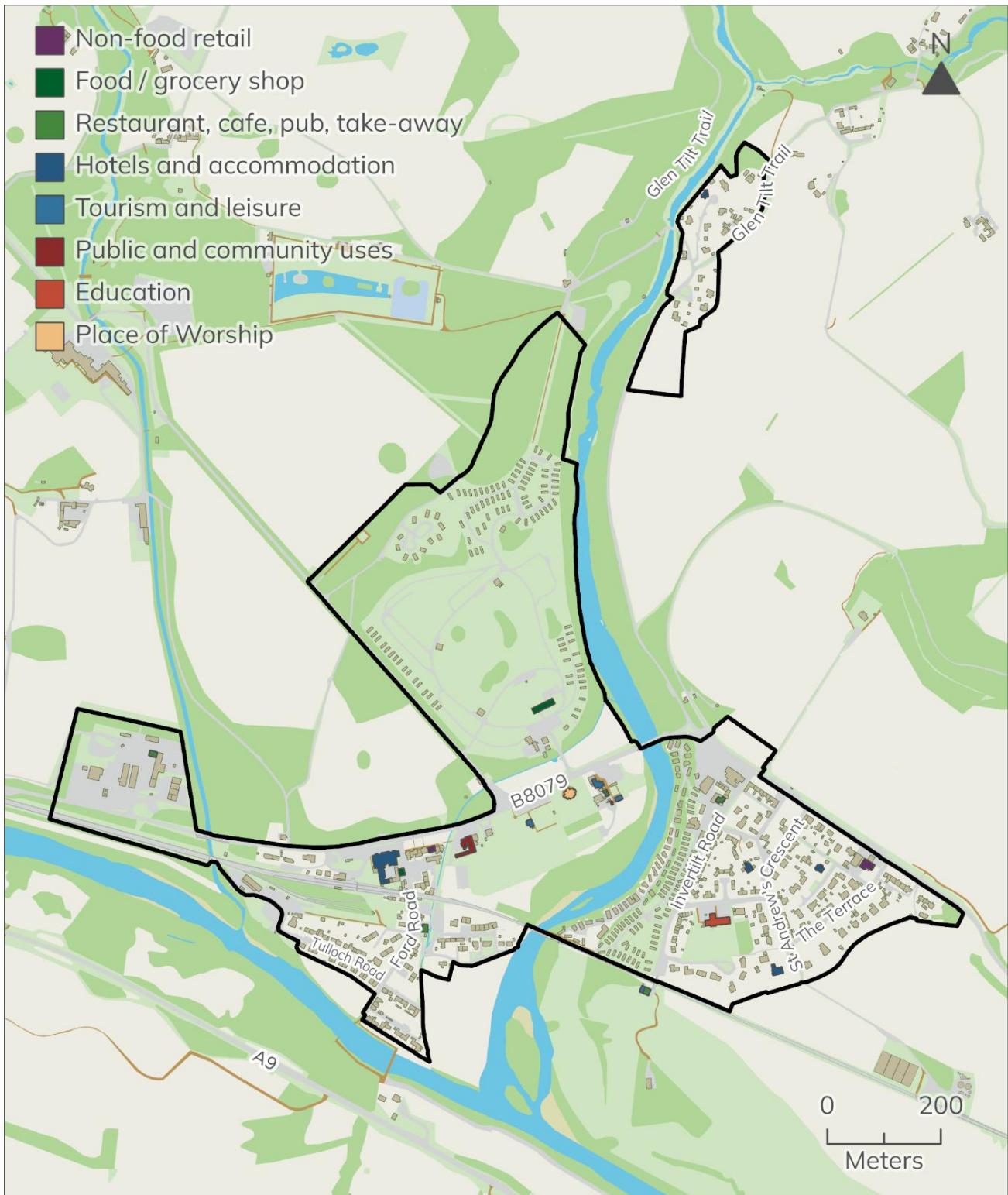


Figure 6 The business composition of Blair Atholl .



Public toilets

Public toilet facilities are located within the visitor centre and are in a good condition and state of repair upon visit.

Vacant land / buildings

The site located to the left of the Parc Royal & Spa appears to be a vacant hotel with extensive facilities. However, work appears to be starting / underway to renovate and bring the structure back to commercial viability.



Figure 7 Vacant site located to the left of the Parc Royal Spa.



Figure 8 Vacant site located to the left of the Parc Royal Spa.

Assessment of village centre characteristics

Physical environment

Blair Atholl's setting combines historic village character with strategic location and access. The built environment includes a mix of traditional stone buildings and newer residential and tourist-oriented structures. The village centre exists in a linear fashion and sits near key amenities, the train station, and commercial premises, although some may be seasonally operated. The relatively flat topography makes the village walkable, and its natural surroundings, including proximity to rivers and forested areas, reinforce a strong sense of place.



Figure 9 Blair Atholl railway station.



Figure 10 Blair Atholl village greens located beneath the castle.

Sense of place

Blair Atholl has a defined and recognisable identity, rooted in its heritage, location, and role as a southern gateway to the Cairngorms National Park. The presence of the Scout camp, historical buildings, and railway infrastructure contributes to this character. Blair Castle, an iconic stately home, plays a central role in shaping the village's identity. Located just outside the village centre, the castle is the ancestral seat of the Dukes of Atholl and a major tourist attraction, drawing visitors for its architecture, history, extensive gardens, and estate grounds. The castle also contributes to local employment and seasonal footfall, aiding in keeping the settlement relevant to tourists with the bypassing of the A9.



Figure 11 The Blair Atholl castle.



Figure 12 The Blair Atholl castle gate leading to the formal drive towards the gate house.

However, the potential growth in second homes and holiday lets may erode the sense of year-round community and reduce the level of permanent residency. This, in turn, could challenge efforts to maintain local services and social cohesion.

Public spaces / realm

The village benefits from a mixture of natural open spaces and scenic riverfronts, which run alongside and through the intersecting road that continues the length of the village. Upon entering the village from the southern A9 slip road located on the banks of the River Tilt is a visitor centre with accompanying museum displaying the history of the village.

Continuing to follow the road into the village centre village are a series of greens and pathways which connect to small independent shops as well as the hotel. A small water way intersects the greens leading to the water mill café, a prior watermill now repurposed as a café with the original features left intact, further following of the water course leads to residential and agricultural areas. although public realm investment appears to be limited. A lack of regular maintenance and potential environmental pressures, such as flood risk, could impact the quality and usability of shared spaces. During high tourism periods, congestion and parking demand may put additional pressure on these areas.



Figure 13 The Blair Atholl village visitor centre as well as the museum.



Figure 14 Blair Atholl village visitor centre as well as the museum and accompanying car park.

Cycle facilities and ease of movement.

The village's relatively flat terrain offers good potential for active travel, although the current provision of formal cycling infrastructure is limited, walking around the village is generally feasible, especially in the centre, but improvements in signage, designated paths, and cycle parking could help support sustainable movement. Any road diversions or construction activity related to the A9 upgrade may temporarily reduce ease of movement, as alternative roads through the village are not present.



Figure 15 An example of paved road located within the village.



Figure 16 An example of unpaved road located within the village.

Traffic and parking

The dualling of the A9 may have both short and long term impacts on Blair Atholl. In the short term, construction traffic and diversions could affect access and movement within the village. In the longer term, the rerouting of through traffic could reduce the visibility of local businesses and amenities to passing drivers. Within the village itself, car



dependency is high, this could be due to a variety of factors including the necessity to access goods and services outside of the village. Congestion during busy periods can be an issue. Parking infrastructure is limited with public parking being provided by the local museum, the Blair Atholl hotel also offers parking, however it was unclear if the parking was available for public usage.



Figure 17 Image of the visitor centres car park taken at 4pm (off peak).



Figure 18 Car parking located outside of the village hall.

Public transport

Blair Atholl benefits from a railway station on the Highland Main Line, which provides regional and national connectivity. However, other public transport services appear limited, particularly in terms of frequency according to residents and weekend coverage. The reliance on private vehicles remains high, and the village's accessibility to non-drivers is therefore restricted. With locals mentioning that maintaining rail access and improving local bus options as priorities as one of the main bus stops within the village is currently poorly placed' could support a more resilient and inclusive transport network.



Figure 19 Bus stop located opposite of the village greens with restricted access due to a lack of pavement and formal crossing points.



Figure 20 Cover remains in good condition, with an up to date timetable placed on the outside face of the shelter.

Environmental observations and flooding

Blair Atholl's riverside location at the meeting of the Rivers Tilt and Garry offers significant scenic and ecological value but also presents environmental risks. Parts of the village lie within a designated Potentially Vulnerable Area identified in the Cycle 2 flood risk management plans (2022 – 2028), with flooding particularly around the River Tilt highlighted as a known concern. This risk is expected to increase due to climate change. Ongoing monitoring and consideration of flood mitigation measures will be essential, especially as the Cairngorms National Park's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and related plans evolve. Despite these challenges, the village's green infrastructure and open public spaces appear well maintained, supporting local amenity and landscape quality.



Strengths

- Strong heritage and historic character
- Attractive natural setting and riverside location
- Flat, walkable terrain
- Well-maintained greens and paths
- Rail access supports connectivity.
- Regular visitor footfall from major attractions.

Weaknesses

- No defined village centre or square.
- Limited retail and service offer.
- Underdeveloped cycle infrastructure and signage
- Infrequent bus service with poorly located stop
- Insufficient public parking and unclear private parking access

Opportunities

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

Threats

- Growth in second homes may reduce permanent population.
- Flood risk in low-lying areas.
- Seasonal congestion and high car dependency.
- Lack of investment may limit adaptability.

Figure 21 Strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats analysis for Blair Atholl.



Boat of Garten

Coit a' Ghartain

Boat of Garten (Gaelic: Coit a' Ghartain; originally: 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.

Business composition

Boat of Garten supports a modest business environment reflective of its scale and setting within the Cairngorms National Park. The village 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.

Figure 22 illustrates the layout of Boat of Garten village, highlighting the distribution of key services and amenities.

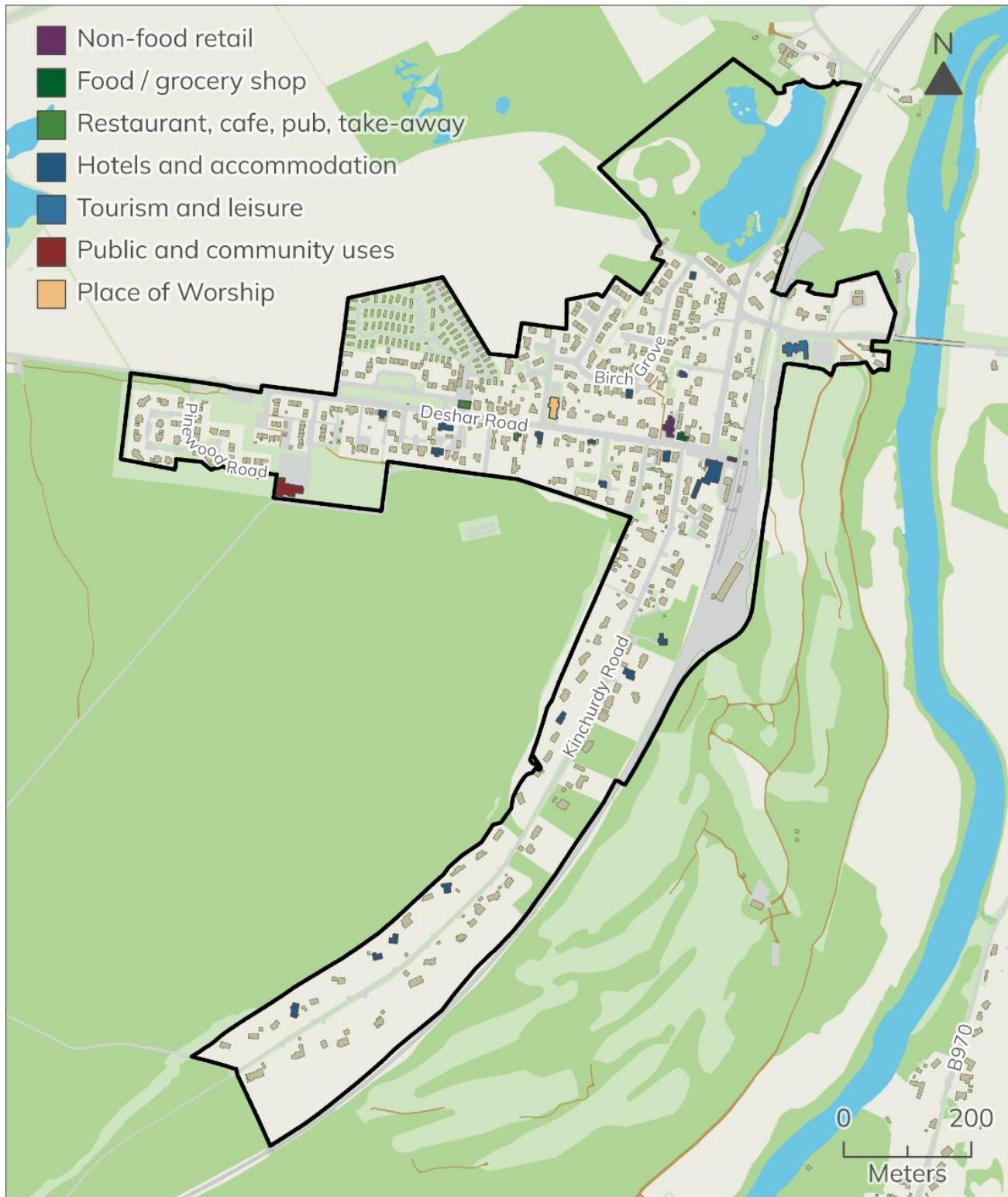


Figure 22 The business composition of Boat of Garten.



Public toilets

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.



Figure 23 Boat of Garten community hall with adjoining car park.



Figure 24 Alternative view of the provided car parking space outside of the community hall.

Assessment of village centre characteristics

Physical environment

The village centre comprises a mix of well-preserved traditional buildings and newer developments. The area around the railway station and Boat House Inn offers a strong focal point, supported by a community garden and local businesses such as a bike shop. These amenities contribute positively to the streetscape and help sustain a vibrant village centre. A secondary hub has emerged around the modern community hall, located near woodland trails and recreational space, including a playing field and children's playpark. This site also includes electric vehicle charging points and camping facilities, all designed to integrate well with the natural setting.



Figure 25 The Boat house inn and how it is connected to the village.



Figure 26 The Railway station as well as its accompanying carparking.

Additional green space can be found near Grampian Crescent on Deshar Road, which is also home to the main bus stop and a public noticeboard. This area blends post-war housing with more traditional buildings and supports everyday community life.



Figure 27 Green space located near Deshar Road



Figure 28 Ease of access to informal green space, as well as well-kept roadways allowing for active travel



Figure 29 information board located near Grampian Crescent

Sense of place

Boat of Garten retains a strong sense of identity rooted in its natural surroundings, railway heritage, and architectural continuity. Historic buildings such as the railway station and nearby inn help anchor the village visually, while the presence of osprey and proximity to the Speyside Way add to its appeal for both residents and visitors. The layout encourages casual interaction, supported by community-led planting, public art, and well-used green spaces.



Figure 30 The Boat house inn.



Figure 31 1896 art gallery

Public spaces / realm

The public realm is generally of high quality, especially around the railway and community hall areas. Facilities such as a community garden, outdoor seating, and accessible woodland trails offer a variety of spaces for leisure and community gathering. While the village lacks a formal civic square, multiple informal gathering points contribute to a welcoming and walkable environment.



Figure 32 Signage as well as various pathways linking to the Speyside way.



Figure 33 Signage as well as various pathways linking to the Speyside way.

Cycle facilities and ease of movement

Boat of Garten is a broadly pedestrianised village with wide pavements kept in good condition as well as limited traffic flowing throughout. The traffic that does flow through is constrained to 20 miles per hour that enhances safety throughout the village. Clear sightlines and good visibility help support safe movement on foot. Cycling infrastructure is limited, with only basic, uncovered cycle parking. Other than a dedicated multi use path to the primary school, there are no dedicated cycle lanes along main routes.



However, there are additional connections to both Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey, via the Speyside Way. While the route to Aviemore is well suited to cycling, the route to Grantown-on-Spey is less so, with users needing to use sections of road, and the off-road section having multiple gates to cross.



Figure 34 Bicycle pump track.



Figure 35 Roads within the village are in serviceable condition allowing for cycling to be a viable mode of transport.

The presence of a community pump track offers a valuable recreational asset for cyclists of all ages and abilities. It not only encourages active travel but also helps foster cycling skills and community engagement, contributing to the village's broader sustainable mobility offer.



Figure 36 Bicycle pump track.

Traffic and parking

Traffic levels are generally low, though informal parking near the Boat House Inn and railway station can become congested. Larger parking areas are available at the community hall, golf club, and along Deshar Road. Excessive on-street parking in more historic or visually sensitive parts of the village may detract from its overall character, particularly during the tourist season.



Figure 37 Parking located to the rear of the Railway station.



Figure 38 An example of potential street parking located within the village.



Figure 39 An example of potential street parking located within the village.



Public transport

Public transport is limited, with Boat of Garten served by the 37 and X37 bus routes connecting to Grantown-on-Spey, Aviemore, Carrbridge, and Inverness. Services operate at reduced frequencies, with only a single service on Saturdays and none on Sundays, reflecting a wider challenge for rural accessibility across the National Park. The facilities provided, however are in good condition with shelter for inclement weather as well as an e-timetable to provide real time information on bus journeys.



Figure 40 Up to date public transportation information.



Figure 41 Bus stop in good condition with shelter as well as digital display providing up to date information.

Environmental observations

Boat of Garten benefits from its scenic woodland setting and proximity to the River Spey and the Speyside Way. These natural assets contribute to the village's popularity with visitors and support an active outdoor lifestyle. However, the growing pressure from short-term holiday accommodation has raised concerns over housing availability and community sustainability. Without appropriate infrastructure and housing policy intervention, the village may struggle to retain a balanced, year round population. These concerns are further amplified by an ageing demographic and the risk of service loss without continued strategic investment.



Strengths

- Well-preserved traditional architecture alongside newer development.
- Distinct identity rooted in natural setting, railway heritage, and osprey population.
- Heritage railway station and Boat House Inn function as strong visual anchors.
- Modern, accessible community hall with EV charging and recreational amenities.
- Walkable layout with wide pavements and 20mph traffic calming.
- Scenic woodland setting and proximity to the Speyside Way.

Weaknesses

- No dedicated public toilets outside the village hall's opening hours.
- No formal village square or civic centre.
- Limited commercial and retail offer.
- Basic cycle parking without covered storage.
- Lack of formal pedestrian crossings and dedicated cycle lanes.
- Public transport services are infrequent, with no Sunday service.

Opportunities

- Enhance signage, crossings, and formalised cycle infrastructure.
- Develop more formalised public realm and event space.
- Promote tourism and active travel links with natural assets and heritage sites.
- Leverage community hall as a central hub for services and events.
- Strengthen transport and cycling connections to Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey.

Threats

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

Figure 42 Strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats analysis for Boat of Garten.



Braemar

Bràigh Mhàrr

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. The event enjoys the continued patronage of the Monarch and serves as a key cultural moment that draws visitors from across the world, reinforcing Braemar's position as a centre for traditional Highland Games. Just outside the village stands Braemar Castle, a distinctive five-storey turreted landmark constructed in 1862. The castle features a star-shaped curtain wall and a historic 'laird's pit' dungeon, marking it as one of the Cairngorms National Park's most iconic built heritage sites.



Figure 43 Breamar Highland Games Centre.



Figure 44 Breamar Highland Games Centre.

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. While the desktop survey reflected this mix accurately, the site visit confirmed two recent changes not previously recorded: the relocation of the chocolate shop and the closure of a local bistro.

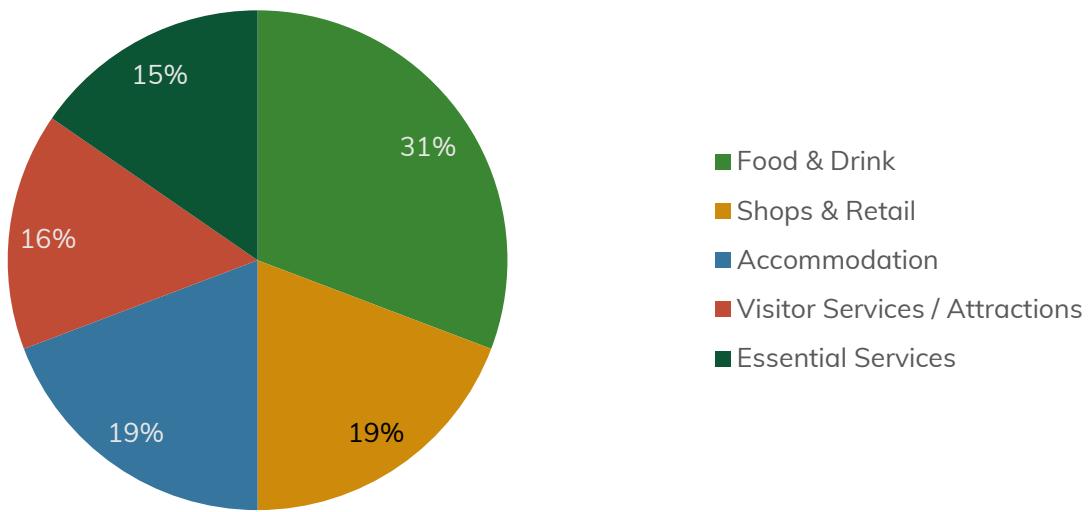


Figure 45 Business composition of Braemar.

This map illustrates the layout of Braemar, showing the distribution of key services and amenities (Figure 46).

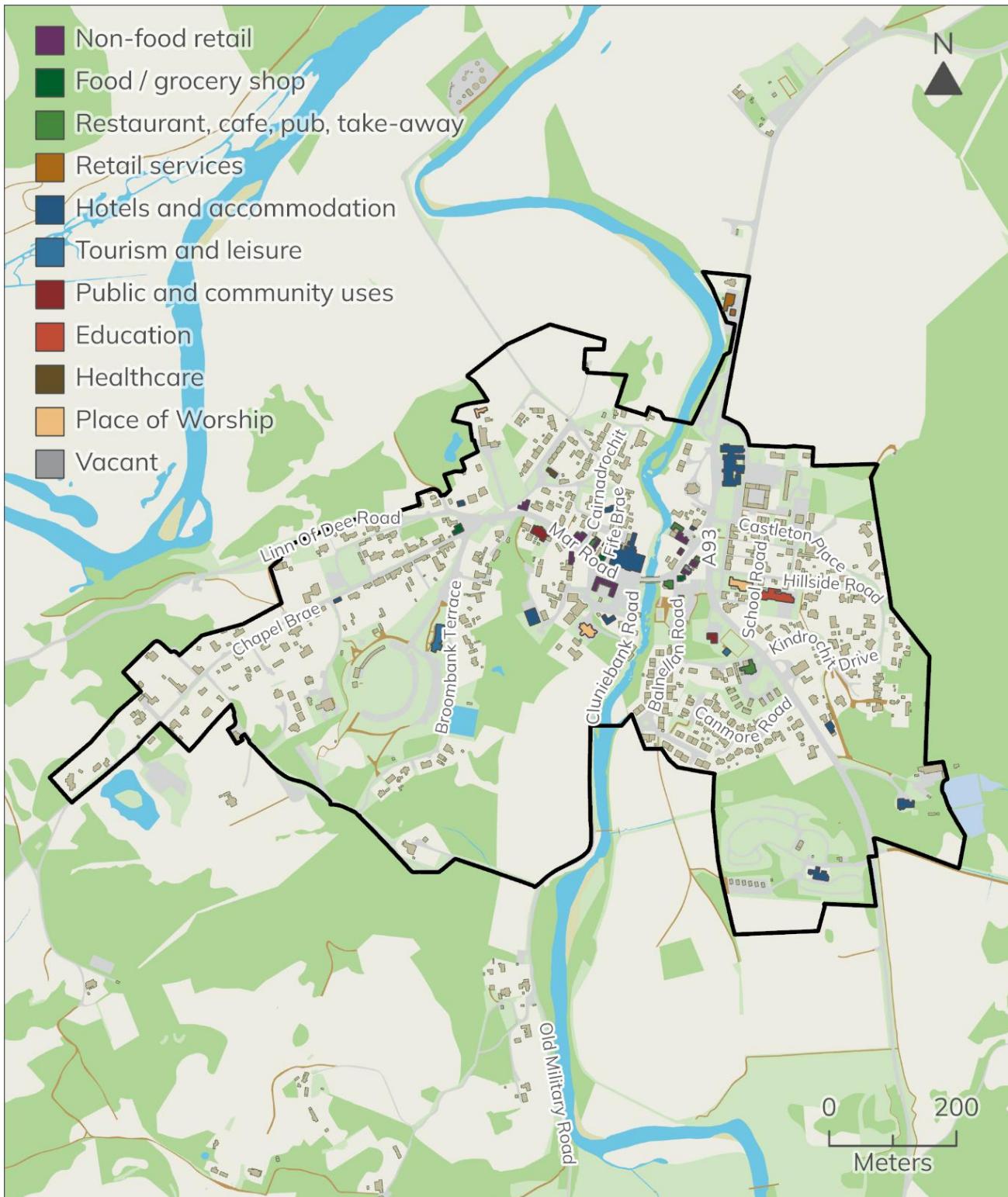


Figure 46 The business composition of Breamar.



Public toilets

The public toilets were open, clean, and provided level access. However, baby changing facilities were not available in the men's toilet, and although signposted in the women's, that facility was locked at the time of the visit.



Figure 47 Public toilets located at the entrance of the free carpark.

Assessment of village centre characteristics

Physical environment

There are multiple areas of public realm. Close to the centre, this includes the area around the Memorial Park (Braemer Highland Games centre) and a courtyard at The Mews. Both were well kept, with planters, bins, and benches. There is a community garden on the edge of the centre. Also, within Braemar, there are three children's play areas, St Margrets church exhibition space, amenity areas, woodlands and walks as well as a playing field and bowling green.



Figure 48 St Margrets exhibition space.



Figure 49 The Mews commercial hall.



Figure 50 Patisserie a short walk from the Fife Arms hotel.

Sense of place

Despite its rural location, Braemar benefits from good road connectivity, with the cities of Aberdeen, Dundee, and Perth all within a one and a half hour drive. These links offer residents access to a broader range of amenities and services while allowing the village to remain a desirable base for both living and tourism. 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. However, the rural setting also provides a set of challenges with young people mentioning that after operational hours for bus services they are cut off from the rest of the Cairngorms National Park due to lack of travel infrastructure.



Figure 51 Post office linked to the Co Op adjacent to the Fife arms hotel.



Figure 52 Bus stop located to the left of the Post office.



Meanwhile, the historic shift towards short-term holiday lets may reduce the availability of housing for permanent residents, particularly for young people and families, which could affect the demographic balance of the village. Without careful management and investment in sustainable housing and flood resilience, these pressures could impact Braemar's ability to maintain its keen sense of place and community cohesion.

Public spaces / realm

Braemar benefits from a range of well-maintained and accessible public spaces that contribute positively to its overall sense of place. The main area around the Memorial Park and the Braemar Highland Games Centre serves as a cultural hub, which could be used for events and gatherings. The space is well kept, with landscaped grounds, benches adding to the usability of the area outside of events.

In addition to the formal green spaces, Braemar also has a community garden located on the edge of the village centre, offering a more informal form of green space. The courtyard at The Mews provides another semi-public area with benches, information stands and planters, adding to the walkability and visual appeal of the village centre.

The village features three play areas spread throughout its neighbourhoods, offering amenities for families and contributing to Braemar's liveability. The woodlands and walking paths, including riverside routes and views of the surrounding mountains, strengthen the village's integration with its natural environment.



Figure 53 Viewpoint overlooking the south of the river



Figure 54 Well-kept war memorial instilling cultural heritage.



Although pavements are present throughout the centre, they are often narrow and uneven, and there are no formal pedestrian crossings, which may hinder accessibility, particularly for those with mobility issues or young children. Signage is adequate, but additional wayfinding or heritage interpretation could further enhance the experience for both residents and visitors.

Cycle facilities and ease of movement.

The village is built around a linear central street with a moderate elevation change, with side streets being a mixture of paved as well as unpaved. It is worth noting that the unpaved are in a good state of repair and thus can be traversed by bicycle. Whilst no formal cycle infrastructure was observed the layout of the settlement does lend itself to being bicycle friendly.



Figure 55 Well-kept paved roadways.



Figure 56 Well-kept paved roadways.

Traffic and parking

The road through the village centre has a reasonable amount of traffic and some congestion, but it does not dominate. There is a free car park in the centre of the village and additional free parking at the Memorial Park. The central car park has toilets, a picnic bench and a covered seating area and the Memorial Park has substantial landscaped grounds, an exhibition centre, and a café.



Figure 57 Parking available in front of the Fife Arms hotel.



Figure 58 Parking available alongside the Mews centre.



Figure 59 Free parking available within the highland games centre.

Public transport

There is a bus stop on either side of Marr Road in the centre of town and another with a shelter, timetable, and lighting close to the Memorial Park.

The 201 and 202 bus services provide half hourly services to Banchory, with hourly services to Aberdeen via Ballater. Journey time is 2 hours and 20 minutes to Aberdeen. There are buses in the evening and early morning and two hourly services at the weekend.



Figure 60 Bus shelter in good condition with up to date timetable.



Figure 61 Roadside bus stop with low levels of protection for those waiting in line of oncoming traffic.



Environmental observations

There are boards with maps highlighting walking trails throughout the village centre. There is no cycling infrastructure, which would be beneficial as the road through the village is narrow.

The bridge over Clunie Water gives good views of the water below and there are long views of mountains in all directions.

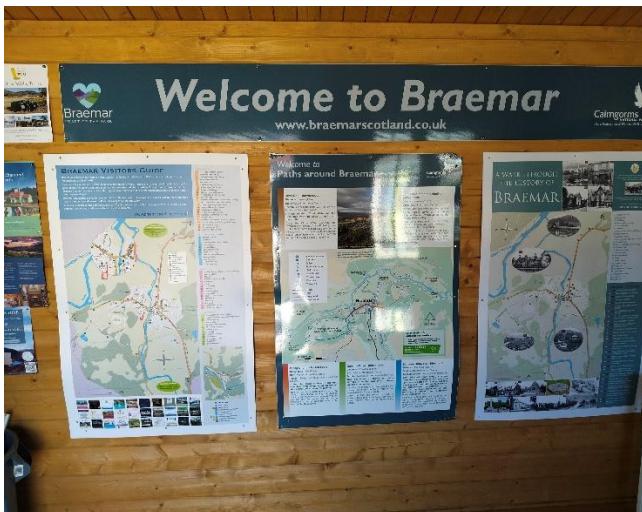


Figure 62 A series of interactions between the built and natural environment within the centre of the settlement.



Figure 63 A series of interactions between the built and natural environment within the centre of the settlement.



Strengths

- Rich cultural and royal heritage centred on the Highland Games
- Iconic built heritage including Braemar Castle.
- Multiple well-maintained public spaces and green areas.
- Essential community services including post office.
- Good regional road connectivity to major cities.
- Strong tourism appeals due to events, landscape, and history.
- Clean, accessible public toilets located in the village centre.
- Free and accessible public parking at key village hubs.

Weaknesses

- Public toilets lack consistent baby changing facilities.
- Narrow pavements and lack of marked pedestrian crossings
- No dedicated cycling infrastructure in the village.
- Congestion possible due to single narrow road through centre
- Recent business changes not reflected in desktop data or not visible online.
- Issues with housing availability for permanent residents.

Opportunities

- Enhance cycle facilities and improve pedestrian crossings.
- Promote year-round tourism through events and exhibitions.
- Expand accessible infrastructure at car parks and public toilets.
- Develop flood resilience strategies to protect key assets.
- Support local housing initiatives to retain young families.
- Improve public realm through continued investment in amenity spaces.

Threats

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

Figure 64 Strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats analysis for Breamar.



Carrbridge

Drochaid Chàrr

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. Surrounded by woodland and easily accessible from the national trunk road, Carrbridge offers a scenic setting and gateway into the National Park.



Figure 65 The historic Packhorse bridge located within the heart of the settlement.



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.

Figure 66 shows the layout of Carrbridge, highlighting the distribution of key services and land uses.

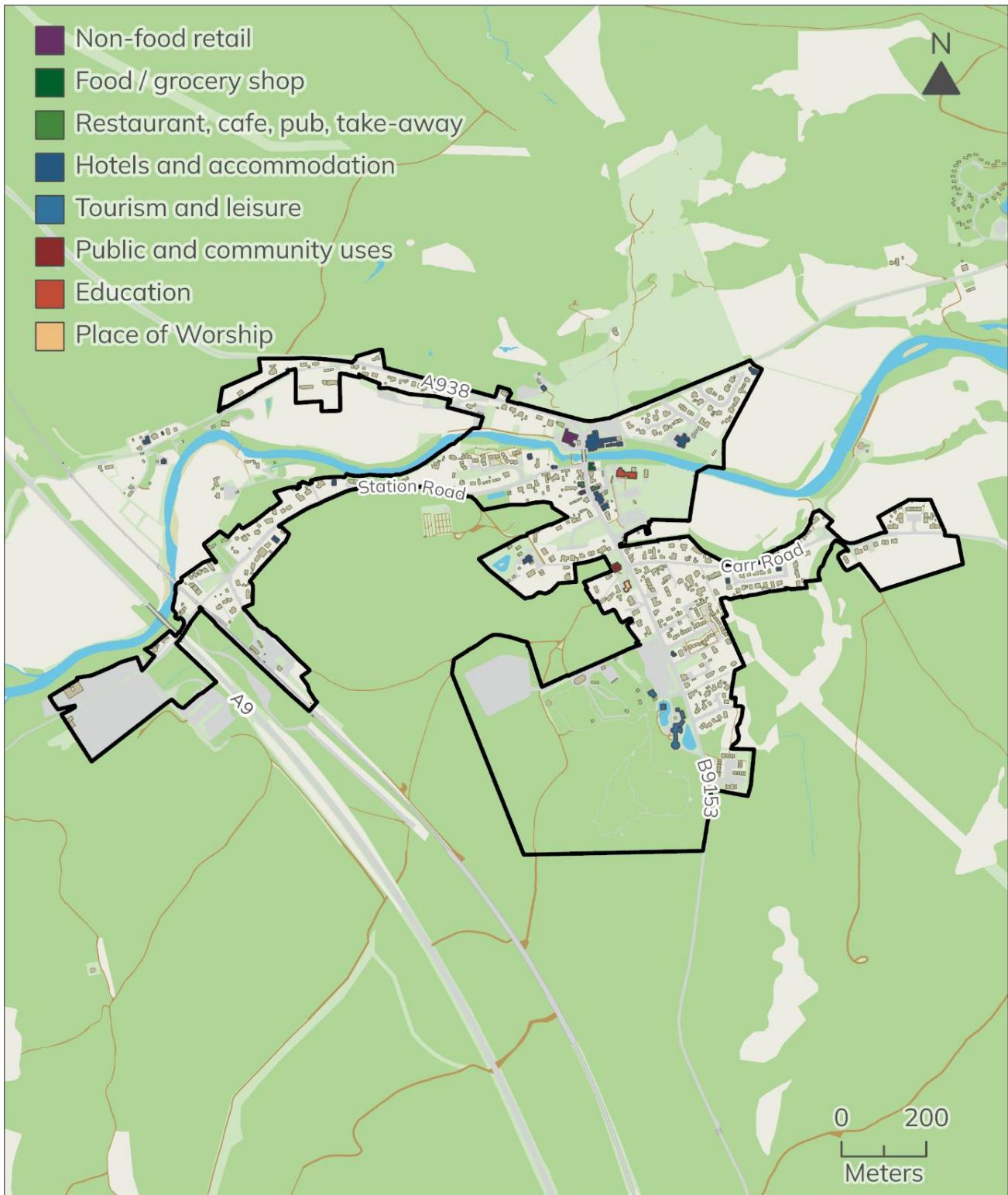


Figure 66 The business composition of Carrbridge.



Public toilets

Public toilets are located to the rear of the bus stops within the main car park of the village, at the time of visiting the toilets were in a good clean, working condition.



Figure 67 Public toilets located at the entrance of the free carpark.



Figure 68 The public toilets location to the rear of the bus stop.

Assessment of village centre characteristics

Physical environment

Carrbridge's physical environment is shaped by its woodland setting and the central presence of the historic bridge, which is a key visual and cultural focal point. The village layout follows a linear form along the B9153, with a mix of traditional and newer buildings dispersed around the central area and access roads. Open green areas and informal woodland paths provide access to nearby natural attractions such as the Landmark adventure park but concentrated commercial or third space is limited. Traffic pressures near the bridge and key junctions can cause congestion during busy times.



Figure 69 Core path located alongside the riverside walkway.



Figure 70 The Landmark Forest Adventure Park.

Sense of place

Carrbridge maintains a keen sense of place, rooted in its heritage architecture, surrounding forest. The 18th-century stone bridge is both a visual landmark and a symbol of the village's historical importance. With a small offering of commercial buildings forming what could be marked as the village centre. However, levels of second-home ownership and holiday lets may be contributing to demographic shifts that could undermine community cohesion. Without targeted housing or infrastructure support, Carrbridge could face long-term challenges to its population stability.



Figure 71 A Capercaillie carving atop a stump



Figure 72 A mixture of historic as well as modern buildings located along the main street.

Public spaces / realm

Public space in Carrbridge includes informal gathering points near the bridge and village centre, as well as paths and access routes into nearby woodland. These offer valuable amenities but are not always clearly marked or fully accessible. In the middle of the village there is a sizable village green which is adjoined to a small playground located near the car park. With transportation links being accessible from said car park.



Figure 73 The playpark located at the foot of the free carpark.



Figure 74 The riverside walk.



Cycle facilities and ease of movement.

Carrbridge benefits from several scenic walking and cycling routes, but infrastructure to support active travel is incomplete. The existing network does not consistently provide signage, secure cycle storage, or designated lanes, which may limit its effectiveness for both residents and visitors. Pavement provisions are provided throughout the village centre however in some areas the pavement does not cover both side of the road, this is to be expected however though it can render certain areas inaccessible.



Figure 75 Defibrillator located near a rural core path.

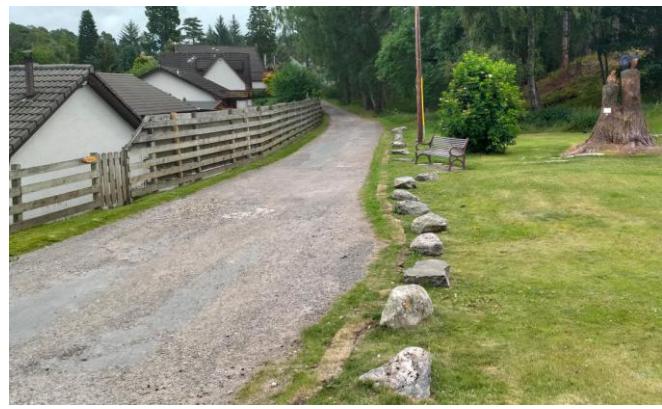


Figure 76 Pathways located within the 'centre of the village.'

Traffic and parking

The village's proximity to the A9 and its popularity as a stopover location contribute to increased vehicle traffic, particularly during peak tourism periods. The road network through the village, especially near the historic bridge, can become congested. Parking is informally spread across the village but designated and clearly marked areas are limited. There is a risk that unmanaged or overflow parking could negatively affect the character of the village centre or lead to safety concerns for pedestrians.



Figure 77 Car parking located at the Landmark Forest Adventure Park.



Figure 78 Free carpark located within the middle of the village.

Public transport

Carrbridge has a railway station on the Highland Main Line, providing it with a strong connection to Inverness and further afield.

The village is also served by bus routes that connect it to Aviemore and other regional destinations, but service frequency is limited, particularly during evenings and weekends. This reduces the practicality of public transport for both residents and tourists without access to a private car. 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.



Figure 79 Bus terminal located within the free carpark.



Figure 80 Bus terminal located within the free carpark, with public toilet facilities located to the rear.

Environmental observations

Carrbridge's natural setting is one of its key strengths, offering access to forests, rivers, and wildlife. However, perceptions about increased footfall and high visitor pressure have raised concerns about erosion, habitat disturbance, and degradation of popular paths and nature sites. Sustainable tourism management and active stewardship will be important in maintaining these assets. As with other riverside and forest-edge settlements in the Cairngorms National Park, future resilience may also depend on monitoring and adapting to climate change-related impacts such as storm damage or flooding.



Strengths

- Historic and visually iconic stone bridge.
- Scenic woodland setting and access to natural trails.
- Proximity to the A9 and key visitor attractions.
- Distinct identity rooted in heritage and landscape.
- Walkable layout with central green space and playground
- Well-used walking and cycling routes.
- Existing public transport links , including the railway station, to nearby towns and further afield.

Weaknesses

- Limited commercial and community space in the village centre.
- Gaps in active travel infrastructure and cycle facilities.
- Pavement coverage is inconsistent in parts of the village.
- Congestion and parking pressure near the historic bridge.
- Bus services are infrequent, particularly evenings and weekends.

Opportunities

- Improve signage, pedestrian access, and cycle infrastructure.
- Strengthen tourism management to protect natural assets.
- Designate and enhance village centre public spaces.
- Clarify and improve toilet and parking provision.
- Increase housing supply to retain young residents.
- Upgrade bus infrastructure and service frequency.

Threats

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

Figure 81 Strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats analysis for Carrbridge.



Cromdale

Cromdhail

Cromdale is a linear village 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.

Public toilets

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.



Figure 82 The Public toilets located to the left of the free carpark.

Vacant land / buildings

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.



Figure 83 The vacant Haugh Hotel located opposite to the free carpark.



Figure 84 The vacant Haugh Hotel located opposite to the free carpark.

Whilst the village of Cromdale does not provide any local amenity services there is an outdoor centre within the village as well as a small accommodation offering as visualised in Figure 85.

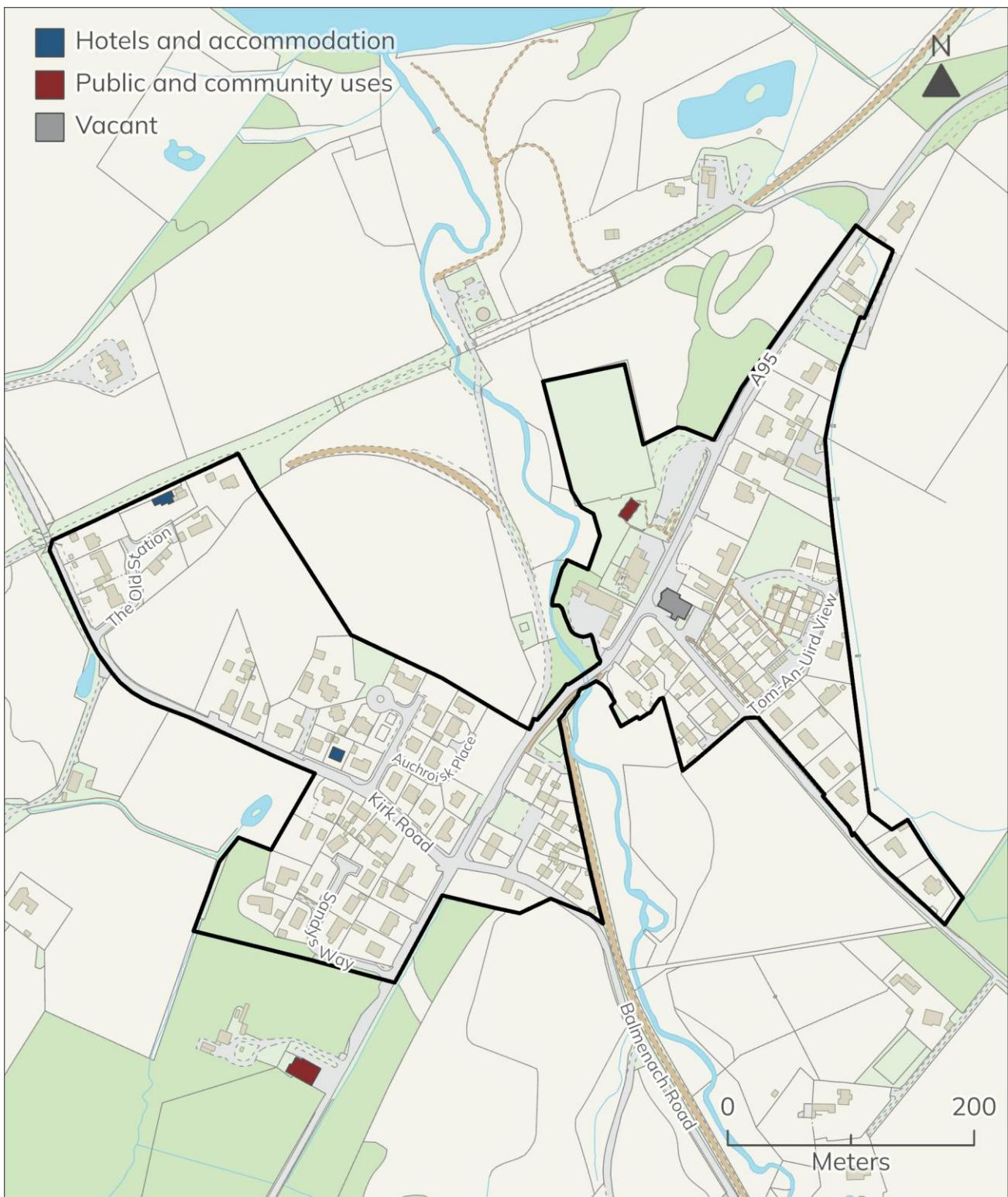


Figure 85 A map to show the business composition of Cromdale. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.



Assessment of village centre characteristics

Physical environment

Cromdale's built environment is defined by its long, roadside layout. The western side of the Cromdale Burn features several key buildings, including the vacant Haugh Hotel and Adventure Speyside, which along with the adjacent recreation space and pavilion hint at a potential village core. However, this area lacks cohesion and is physically dominated by the A95 road.

The Community Hall to the south is a strong architectural presence and contributes positively to the village character. The green space surrounding the car park is maintained and includes floral planters (repurposed whisky barrels), a picnic bench, and open views to the River Spey. Despite these elements, the area feels underused. The small children's play area includes only four pieces of equipment in poor condition. Paint is peeling, and the site is not well kept. However, it does include a basketball hoop and a covered seating shelter suitable for older children.



Figure 86 Whisky barrel planters in a state of disrepair.

Sense of place

The village does not have a strong sense of centre, and the heavy presence of through traffic along the A95 contributes to a fragmented feel. The Haugh Hotel, if reactivated, could help anchor a more coherent village heart, especially in combination with adjacent



facilities and open space. The Community Hall adds civic character at the southern end, but the spaces between these assets lack connectivity. As a result, the village feels stretched and vehicle-dominated, with little visual reinforcement of community gathering space or heritage identity.



Figure 87 Cromdale village hall.



Figure 88 The A95 intersecting road.

Public spaces / realm

Public space around the playing field and pavilion is functional but lacks vibrancy. Though there are planters and benches, the area feels underused. The absence of dedicated public space or a formal square reduces opportunities for informal gathering or events. Green verges are minimal due to the narrow roadside layout, and access to the riverside path is steep and not fully accessible.



Figure 89 Public green and playing field.



Figure 90 Public play park.



Cycle facilities and ease of movement.

No formal cycle parking was observed in the village. The A95 has no dedicated cycling infrastructure, and the narrow pavements and busy road conditions would make cycling on the main route uncomfortable. Signage for pedestrians and drivers is present and clear, but there is no formal pedestrian crossing of the A95. The pavement changes sides without warning and is narrow and uneven in places. A separate pedestrian bridge over the Cromdale Burn is safe and well-maintained.



Figure 91 Access Road to the Caorunn distillery.



Figure 92 The walkway alongside the Bunn of Cromdale.

Traffic and parking

Traffic dominates the village environment due to the steady flow of vehicles, including heavy goods vehicles using the A95. Speeds observed appeared to exceed the 30 mph limit. While there is a well-signed public car park at the northern end of the village, additional parking is informal, including near the recycling point and along the roadside. Parked cars occasionally obstruct the bus stop, and overuse of roadside parking may detract from the visual appeal of the village's main road frontage.

Public transport

A bus stop with shelter is centrally located in the village, but it lacks essential information such as a bus stop sign, timetable, or route display. Cromdale is served by the No. 36a bus route, which runs between Aviemore and Dufftown via Grantown-on-Spey. The service runs four times per day on weekdays, every two hours from 10am. There are no weekend services. While the bus stop is accessible, the lack of information makes it difficult for visitors or new residents to understand the available public transport options.



Environmental observations

The riverside setting provides a scenic backdrop to the village, particularly near the pedestrian bridge. However, there are no verges along the A95, and access to the riverside path is steep and unsuitable for those with limited mobility. While the pedestrian bridge is in good condition, the overall pedestrian experience is hampered by road layout, lack of crossings, and limited public realm investment.



Strengths

- Distinctive stone architecture, including the Community Hall and Haugh Hotel.
- Scenic riverside setting with open views to the River Spey presence of Adventure Speyside and Balmenach Distillery supports tourism and the local economy.
- Pedestrian bridge is safe and well-maintained.
- Public green space includes benches, picnic areas, and floral planters.
- Centrally located bus stop with shelter.

Weaknesses

- Lack of a defined village centre or cohesive layout.
- Heavy A95 traffic fragments the village and dominates the environment.
- No operating public toilets despite signage.
- Poor condition of play park and underused public space.
- No formal cycle parking or cycling infrastructure.
- No marked pedestrian crossings and narrow, uneven pavements
- Bus stop lacks signage, timetable, and route information.

Opportunities

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

Threats

- Traffic speed and volume 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.

Figure 93 Strength's weaknesses opportunities and threats analysis for Cromdale.



Dulnain Bridge

Drochaid Thulnain

Dulnain Bridge is a small, dispersed village in Badenoch and Strathspey, located within the Cairngorms National Park. It lies along the A938 near its junction with the A95, a key private vehicle route used by surrounding communities such as Nethy Bridge, Grantown-on-Spey and Cromdale when travelling to Inverness.



Figure 94 A termination of view taken from the bridge.

Figure 95 The viewshed from the right of the bridge, overlooking the garage.

Figure 96 The viewshed to the left of the bridge.

The River Dulnain cuts through the village, physically dividing it and contributing to the formation of three distinct areas: either side of the bridge and the crofting community of Skye of Curr to the south, which residents describe as having its own strong, independent identity. With a population of fewer than 200, Dulnain Bridge plays a modest but active role as a rural community hub. Amenities include a community hall, village shop, garage, post office, play park, and various accommodation providers.



Figure 97 Playpark located on the village green.



Figure 98 The village post office.



Both of the village's churches have been sold and converted into private dwellings, reducing its stock of community facilities. The built environment features a mix of traditional granite buildings such as the Tigh-na-Sgaith hotel and more recent post-war and contemporary housing found toward the village entrances.



Figure 99 Former Dulnain Church of Scotland Hall.



Figure 100 Former Church land and buildings converted into function and residential spaces.

Business composition

Dulnain Bridge supports a small 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 variety 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.

The Figure 101 provides a breakdown of business types in Dulnain Bridge.

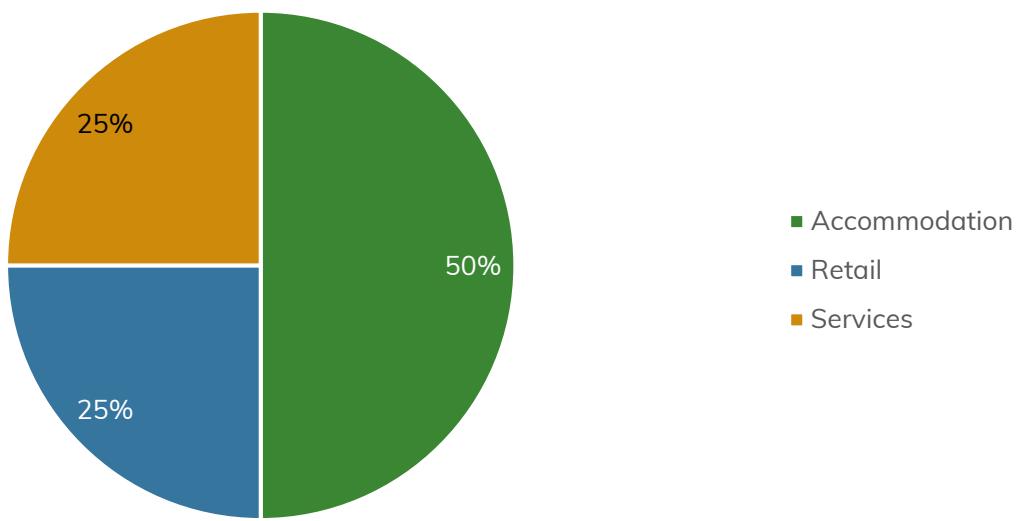


Figure 101 Business composition of Durnain Bridge.

Figure 102 shows how services are distributed and highlights the areas where economic activity is most concentrated.

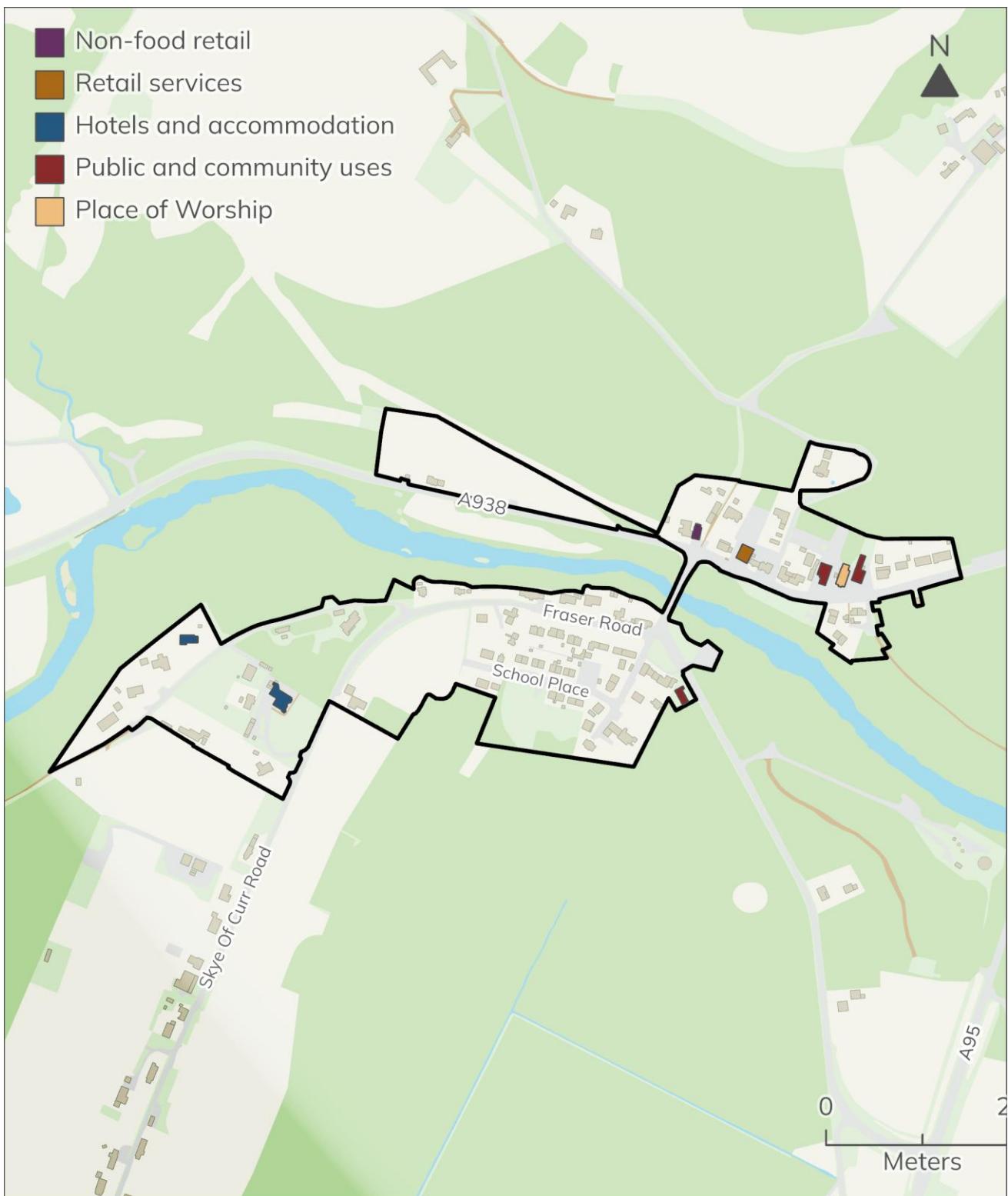


Figure 102 The business composition of Dulnain Bridge.



Public toilets

There are no dedicated public toilets in Dulnain Bridge. Previously available facilities in the community pavilion are now closed, leaving a gap in accessible public amenities.

Assessment of village centre characteristics

Physical environment

The village lacks a clearly defined centre, with homes and services spread across the A938 and surrounding rural lanes. The area near the post office, garage, and community hall forms a natural gathering point, enhanced by a green space, benches, planters, and a well-maintained war memorial. However, the Rifle Club building appeared disused, and the post office no longer offers grocery or wider retail services. The garage, by contrast, is well-used and active.

Dulnain Bridge is also surrounded by five community woodland paths that connect to nearby points of historical and ecological interest, including Muckrach Castle, the Roches Moutonnées (ice-shaped glacial rock forms), and Curr Wood, the site of Pictish stones and Stone Age burial finds. These routes provide valuable recreational opportunities and a strong sense of connection to the area's landscape history.

Sense of place

The River Dulnain and its partially closed bridge divide the village, reinforcing its fragmented layout. One footpath on the bridge has been blocked off due to safety concerns, and residents confirmed this issue has persisted for some time. The closure affects cohesion and ease of movement. Skye of Curr, located to the south, is viewed by locals as a separate crofting community, with its own distinctive mix of new and traditional housing, livestock, and allotments. As a result, Dulnain Bridge feels like three different areas rather than a unified settlement. A heritage display of historic farming equipment at the eastern entrance, developed by residents in 2000, contributes to visual interest and reflects the community's pride in its rural identity.



Figure 103 The display of the vintage agricultural machinery arranged at the village's northwestern entrance.



Figure 104 One of the historic bridges spanning the river Dulnain.

Public spaces / realm

There are several informal but attractive public spaces throughout the village. The green space next to the war memorial is well-maintained and features benches and flower planters. Further open areas near the recycling point and residential streets include small seating areas and green verges. However, the children's play park, though in good condition with a varied range of equipment, is not well signposted and can be difficult to locate for visitors or newer residents. The overall public realm lacks formal cohesion but reflects community care and pride in specific spots.



Figure 105 The well-kept war memorial



Figure 106 The local playpark and adjoining green.

Cycle facilities and ease of movement.

No formal cycle parking is available in the village, and there are no dedicated cycle lanes. This may limit appeal for cyclists during busy periods. Signage for vehicles and pedestrians is clear, but the closure of one footpath on the bridge presents a significant barrier to local movement, particularly for those on foot. At the time of the site visit, pedestrian activity was low, and walking infrastructure elsewhere appeared sufficient though minimal.



Traffic and parking

Vehicles were observed speeding along the A938, which could present safety concerns. Formal parking is available at the community hall and is unrestricted. Informal parking near the recycling point and along the roadside was also noted. However, cars parked on the A938, particularly near the garage, were seen obstructing the bus stop. If this continues, it could detract from the village's character and create further access issues for public transport users.



Figure 107 Examples of streetside parking located 1 alongside generously sized road and 2 outside of the Dulnain bridge garage. with the latter also serving as functional space for the garage.

Figure 108 formal parking located outside of the community centre.

Public transport

Bus shelters are located near the garage, post office, and community hall. These are in good condition and offer sheltered waiting areas but lack digital displays or clear timetable signage. Residents in Skye of Curr must walk into the village to access these services. Dulnain Bridge is served by two bus routes: the 37 (primarily for school transport) and the X37, which connects to Aviemore and Inverness. The service is minimal, with only one Saturday journey and none on Sundays, which poses challenges for residents without access to a car and limits connectivity with wider regional hubs.



Figure 109 A well-maintained bus shelter with accompanying information cards (all up to date).



Figure 110 A well-maintained bus shelter with accompanying information cards (all up to date).

Environmental observations

Dulnain Bridge is surrounded by scenic woodlands and river corridors, and benefits from proximity to important landscape features and heritage sites. However, the closure of a pedestrian route across the bridge and the village's linear, disconnected form may limit access and reduce overall walkability. The steep approach to the riverside path is not accessible to all users. Continued community investment in green space and historic interpretation is evident, but further improvement to connectivity and public realm integration would enhance the environmental offer and strengthen the village's cohesion.



Figure 111 Public information board located alongside the main road.



Figure 112 Access to the riverside pathways.



Figure 113 Green space located alongside the intersecting main road with a display of vintage agriculture equipment.



Figure 114 Green space alongside the main intersecting road with public seating.



Strengths

- Well maintained War Memorial and adjacent green / open space.
- Local garage and post office.

Weaknesses

- Lack of cycling parking.
- Limited retail offerings.
- Lack of distinct singular centre to the village, split between three areas, two either side of river, and Sky of Curr
- No public toilets.

Opportunities

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

Threats

- Infrequent public transport services.
- Post office may close if not used.
- Bridge in poor state of repair and hinders movement.
- Lack of dedicated cycle infrastructure could hinder move to active/ sustainable travel changes.
- On-street parking detracts from visual quality of street scape.

Figure 115 Strength's weaknesses opportunities and threats analysis for Dulnain bridge.



Kincraig

Ceann na Creige

The built environment of Kincraig 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.

Business composition

The business offering of Kincraig is limited with the village mainly being served by neighbouring Aviemore to the north and Kingussie to the south. With these two larger settlements containing most of the amenities needed the village's offering is limited to a restored café which operates out of the old post office building. A good use of existing infrastructure and with its vintage aesthetic can act as a point of interest when navigating the A9.

Figure 116 shows the business layout with services being spread across the village.

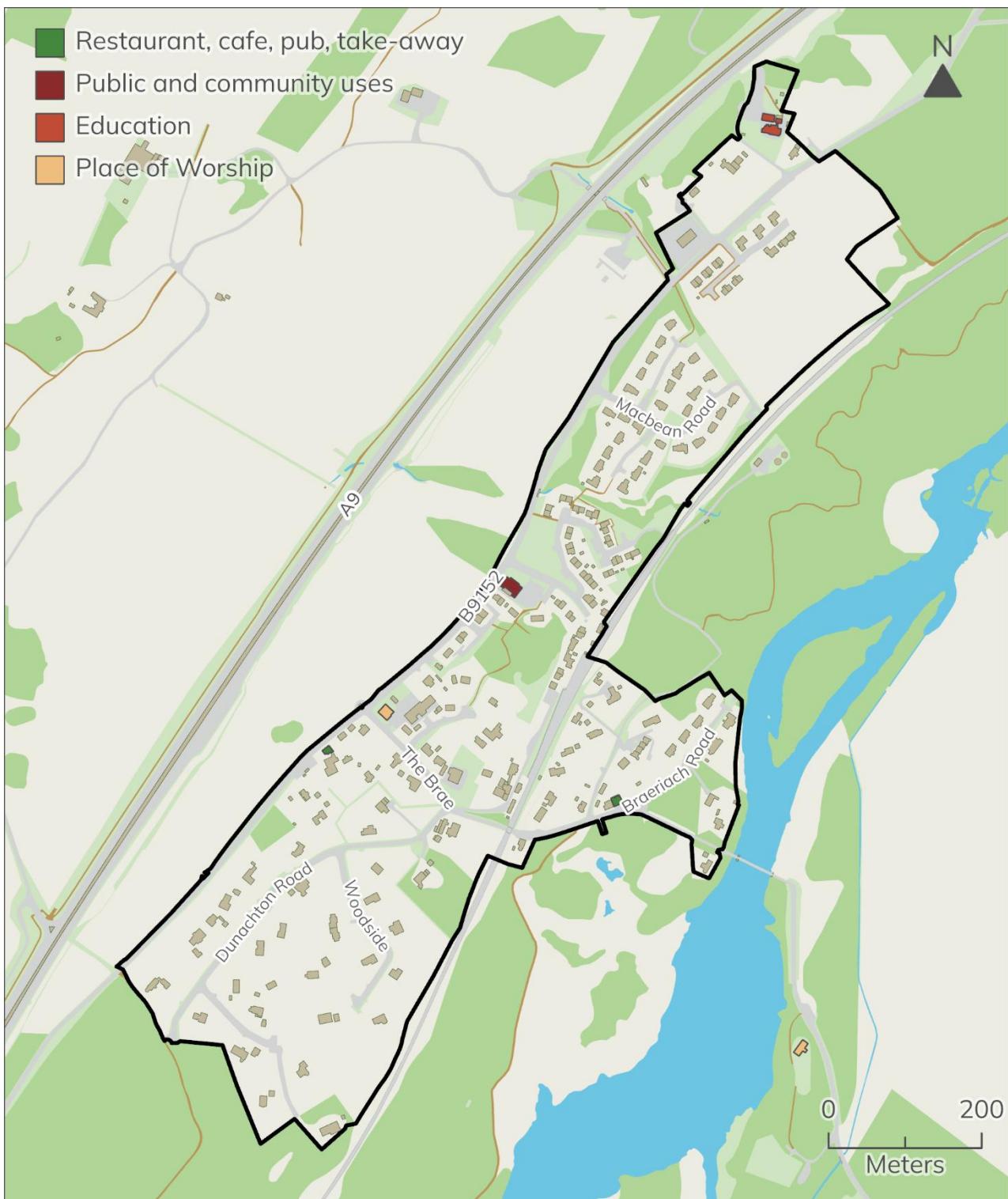


Figure 116 The business composition of Kincraig.



Public toilets

The village lacks dedicated public toilets with the closest being located approximately ten miles away in Kingussie, there are however toilet w/c facilities available within the community hall. However at the time of the survey being conducted the hall was closed and appears to open intermittently for events.

Assessment of village centre characteristics

Physical environment

The built environment of Kincraig 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, village hall 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.



Figure 117 Re-purposed former post office now a Café.



Figure 118 Cairngorms Christian centre.



Figure 119 Public greenspace located to the front of the community centre.

Sense of place

Kincraig's sense of place is strongly tied to its environmental setting and proximity to key recreational sites. While the village lacks a formal centre, its identity is supported by natural assets and heritage features. A contributor to local character is the nearby Highland Wildlife Park, located just south of the village. Although technically outside the village boundary, the wildlife park reinforces Kincraig's profile as a destination and brings economic and educational benefits. However, the dispersed layout, limited community infrastructure, and lack of a unifying civic space reduce the overall cohesion of the village centre. As with other rural settlements in the National Park, a growing emphasis on short-term holiday accommodation also raises concerns about long term residency and community sustainability.

Public spaces / realm

The public realm in Kincraig is limited. There is no central square or defined gathering space, and few formal benches or planters. The area around the community hall offers some parking and may function as an informal node. Green space and access to the River Spey are nearby but not integrated into the village layout. Recreational use of nearby trails and the loch are accessible through various trail heads as well as Loch Insh outdoor centre which does provide customer car parking or gravelled roadside laybys just outside of the village.



Figure 120 Loch Insh outdoor centre.



Figure 121 function hall of the Cairngorms Christian centre.

Cycle facilities and ease of movement

Cycle infrastructure within the village is minimal. While the village is located on a quiet road network and connects to active travel routes like the Speyside Way which provides a strong connection to both Aviemore as well as Newtonmore, there are no formal cycle lanes or designated parking for bicycles. There are no formal cycle lanes or designated parking for bicycles, there is however the provision of an unmanned bicycle repair hub outside of the old post office café. Pavement provision is also irregular, with some areas lacking footways altogether.



Figure 122 An example of unpaved / gravelled 'pavement' leading up to the bridge at the southern entrance to the village.



Figure 123 Active travel provisions (repair hub) located opposite to the post office café.

Traffic and parking

Traffic volume along the B9152 is low, and no major issues with congestion were observed. However, marked parking areas are largely absent outside of the community



hall, and informal parking may cause occasional disruption. During busy periods associated with tourism or events, parking capacity may become strained. This could be further exacerbated by the two way bridge that leads towards loch Insh.



Figure 124 Well-kept roadway that caps the village and continues onto Kingussie from Aviemore.



Figure 125 The road bridge spanning the River Spey.



Figure 126 Parking behind the converted post office cafe.

Public transport

Kincraig is served by bus routes connecting to Aviemore and Kingussie. The bus stops are in good condition, with shelters, timetables, and signage clearly displayed. However, the location of certain stops could serve as a barrier for access as users may not feel comfortable crossing the main intersecting road.



Figure 127 Bus stop located opposite to the village community hall kept in good condition however location raises accessibility issues.



Figure 128 Located in front of the village community hall well-kept bus stops with relevant information kept up to date.



Environmental observations

The village's riverside setting and proximity to Lochside and woodland areas offer significant natural appeal. While no active flooding issues were visible during the assessment, the village's location near the River Spey suggests that flood risk monitoring may be required in future planning. The village is located to the west of a special protection area and thus care must be taken when it comes to ensuring the resilience of local wildlife and ecosystems. Stewardship of nearby ecosystems is supported through adjacent conservation efforts such as those at the Highland Wildlife Park. However, within the core village, landscape integration and ecological infrastructure remain limited or underdeveloped.



Strengths

- Attractive riverside and woodland setting with strong natural appeal. Proximity to Highland Wildlife Park adds economic and educational value.
- Presence of heritage assets such as traditional stone buildings and war memorial.
- Low traffic volumes support a peaceful residential environment.
- Access to active travel routes including the Speyside Way.
- Basic public transport links to Aviemore and Kingussie with good signage.

Weaknesses

- No defined village centre or civic space.
- Lack of public toilets; limited access through community hall.
- Dispersed layout with minimal public realm infrastructure.
- Limited commercial offer and no clustered amenities.
- Poor pedestrian and cycle infrastructure; inconsistent pavements.
- Few benches, bins, or signposted gathering spaces.

Opportunities

- 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 (café, trails, Wildlife Park etc) to reinforce identity and attract visitors.

Threats

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

Figure 129 Strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats analysis for Kincraig.



Nethy Bridge

Drochaid Neithich

Nethy Bridge is a small village in the Badenoch and Strathspey region of the Highland Council area, situated five miles south of Grantown-on-Spey within the historical parish of Abernethy and Kincardine. Known affectionately as 'Nethy,' the village has attracted visitors since the Victorian era due to its peaceful, wooded setting beside the ancient Abernethy Forest. The River Nethy, a tributary of the River Spey, flows through the village and gives it its name. At the heart of the village stands an arched stone bridge, constructed in 1810 in classic Telford style. Damaged during the devastating Moray Flood of August 1829, the bridge was later repaired and remains a local landmark. The arrival of the railway in the 1860s prompted the village's renaming from Abernethy to Nethy Bridge, though the former name lives on in institutions such as the Abernethy Highland Games, Abernethy Forest, and Abernethy Primary School. Nethy Bridge's identity as 'The Forest Village' reflects its enduring connection to its surrounding natural environment and its forestry heritage.

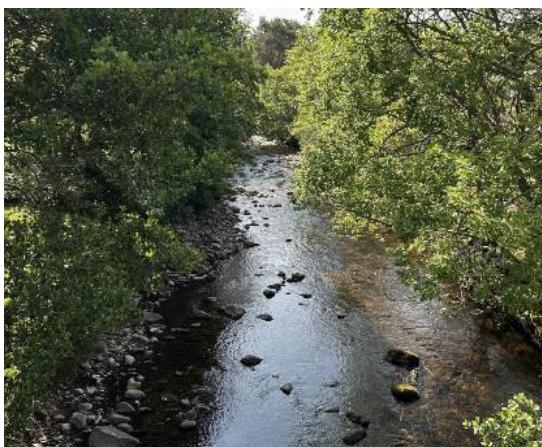


Figure 130 The River Nethy flows through the village.



Figure 131 Plaques located alongside the river, detailing the history of the bridge as well as information on Tomasa Telford the bridges architect.

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 post office are complemented by tourism-oriented enterprises, including guest houses and outdoor activity providers, in a well-rounded offering.

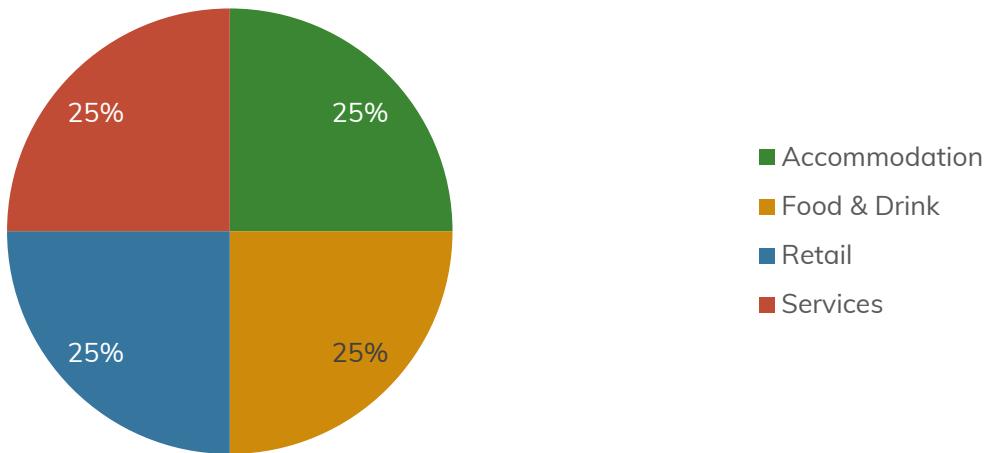


Figure 132 The business composition of Nethy Bridge.

Figure 133 illustrates the location of customer facing businesses within Nethy Bridge.

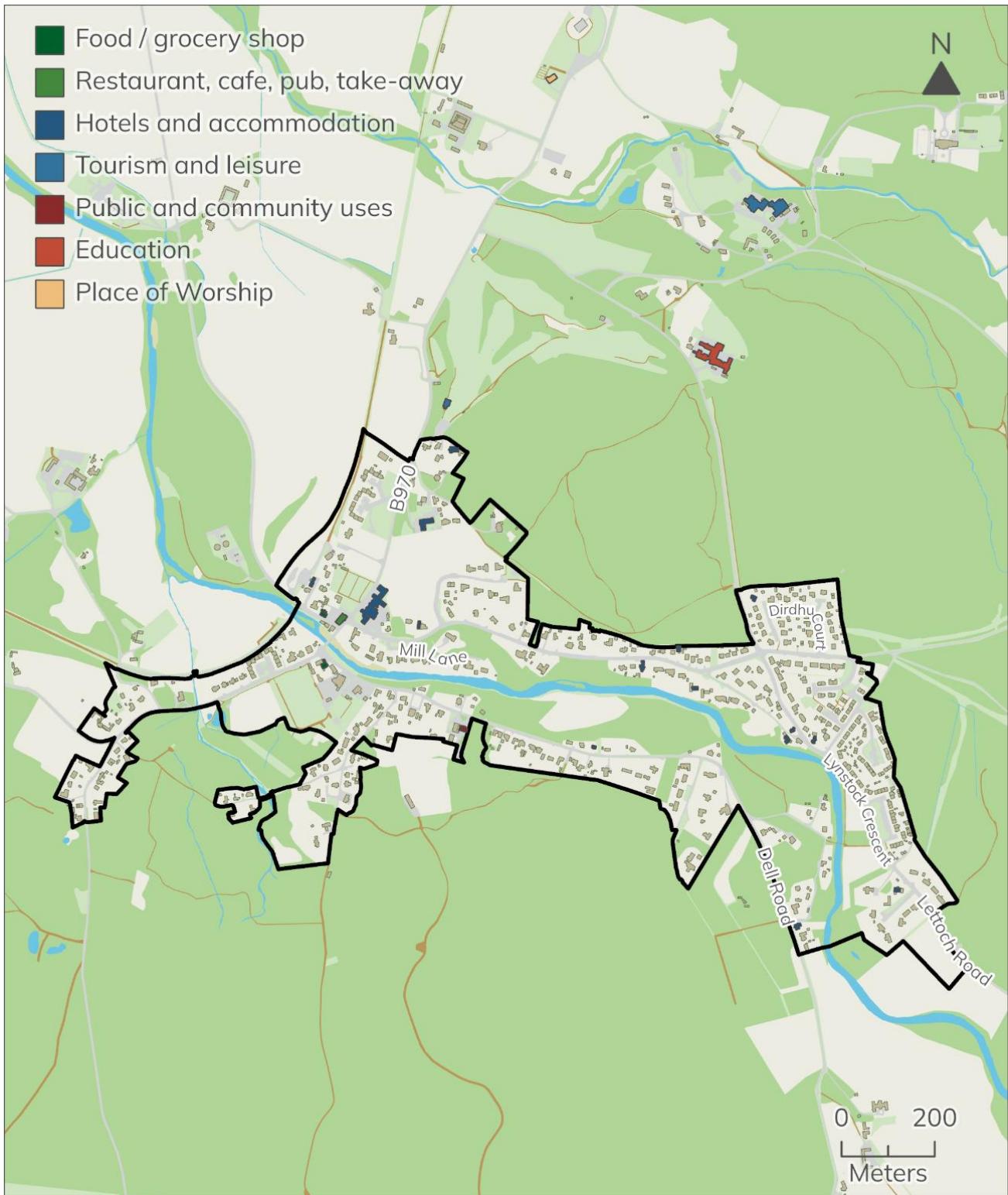


Figure 133 The business composition of Nethy Bridge.



Public toilets

Accessible public toilets are available at the visitor information centre in the heart of the village. These are open seasonally, from 9:30am to 5:00pm in summer and from 10:00am to 4:00pm in winter. The centre also provides visitor orientation, local trail maps, exhibits, historical information, children's activities, and audiovisual displays, making it a key asset for residents and tourists alike.



Figure 134 The village information centre.



Figure 135 Adjoining public toilets.

Assessment of village centre characteristics

Physical environment

Nethy Bridge's built environment is notable for its traditional Victorian-era architecture and carefully preserved historic buildings. The Nethy bridge Hotel, constructed in 1897 and extended in the 1920s, stands as a landmark structure in the village centre. Its adjacent gardens are well maintained and frequently used for outdoor events and weddings, contributing to the hotel's appeal and the village's character. Nearby, the Nethy House Café occupies another attractive Victorian building located just beside the listed Nethy Bridge, constructed circa 1815 – 1820 by Thomas Telford. The bridge's distinctive granite construction and educational signage enhance the area's heritage value, while nearby seating and a bus shelter add to its function as a community.



Figure 136 The Nethy bridge Hotel, as well as adjoining carparking.



Figure 137 One of the historic Brides spanning the River Nethy.

Approaching from the north, Castle Roy, and Abernethy Kirk aid in defining the community threshold. Castle Roy, a 13th-century scheduled monument, stands on a circular mound and has recently undergone repairs and stabilisation, making it a prominent local attraction. Alongside it, the category C listed Abernethy Kirk and burial ground, constructed in the late 18th century, further contribute to the historic setting.



Figure 138 Castle Roy.



Figure 139 Abernethy Kirk with adjoining burial ground.

The community hall, although altered, retains its original riverside façade and houses the visitor centre and facilities supporting the Highland Games. The village centre is tidy, well maintained, and rich with street furniture, including a Victorian drinking fountain, traditional signage, and ample benches. A small shop with post office and multiple signposted paths help make the centre navigable and functional.



Figure 140 The Nethy Bridge community hall.



Figure 141 The Premier shop during a restock.

Further from the core, housing becomes more mixed, with post-war and 21st-century developments alongside traditional stone buildings. These areas feel distinct from the centre, and during the visit, many properties appeared unoccupied, reflecting the high number of second homes and holiday lets. Despite this, the forested surroundings reinforce the 'forest village' identity and enhance the setting throughout.

Sense of place

The core of Nethy Bridge exudes the charm of a traditional Highland village, shaped by its stone-built architecture and green surroundings. The Nethy bridge Hotel and gardens create a particularly strong visual anchor, while the Abernethy Forest envelops the village, reinforcing its identity as a place shaped by nature. The strong connection between the built and natural environments contributes significantly to the sense of place and appeal to both residents and visitors.



Figure 142 Green space located throughout the village.



Figure 143 Green space located throughout the village.



Figure 144 The historic Nethy Bridge Hotel.

Public spaces / realm

A green space beside the visitor centre offers a tranquil, riverside setting with planters, benches, heritage interpretation panels, and a historic drinking fountain. This area is well cared for and functions as a pleasant stop for visitors. Nearby, the village benefits



from a variety of recreational facilities including a sports field, tennis courts, bowling green, and a play park all in good condition and well used. A quiet seating area near the sports ground and woodland provides a relaxing setting for locals. Several smaller playparks also serve outlying residential areas, although the facility at Braes of Balnagowan was noted to be in poor condition, with missing swings and limited equipment. The private gardens of the Nethy bridge Hotel are another standout feature, maintained to a very high standard.

Cycle facilities and ease of movement.

While public cycle infrastructure in the village is limited, there are dedicated pathways between the Corsar junction and the primary school and there are multi-use pathways along the River Nethy. Cycling links between Grantown-on-Spey and Boat of Garten are however poor. The Speyside way between Grantown-on-Spey has lots of gates, impeding bike travel. Some bike racks exist at the local shop and behind Nethy House Café, although these appear to be for patrons and are not sheltered. There are no dedicated cycling lanes on the main village roads, which may discourage cycling at busier times. Some key pedestrian routes, such as Dell Road, lack pavements, and there is no designated footpath across the Nethy Bridge, which may impact walkability. Nonetheless, the village remains accessible on foot and is well signed for both visitors and locals.

Traffic and parking

During the visit, the village centre was busy, particularly around the café, butcher, and local shop. Traffic occasionally caused mild congestion. Navigation around the village is aided by clear directional signage to nearby settlements such as Grantown-on-Spey and Inverness. Parking is informal but sufficient, though demand is clearly high near key businesses and public spaces during peak times.



Figure 145 The congestion surrounding the Premier shop during peak times.

Public transport

Sheltered bus stops are located near the sports field, bridge, and village centre, and were found to be in fair condition. Like many small Highland settlements, public transport in Nethy Bridge is extremely limited. The village is served by only two routes: the 37, primarily running for school transport to Grantown-on-Spey, and the X37, which connects to Inverness and Aviemore via other National Park villages. Services are minimal, with only one return bus on Saturdays and no Sunday service, highlighting access limitations for those without private transport.



Figure 146 Bus stops in a well-kept condition alongside up to date information displayed at both.



Figure 147 Bus stops in a well-kept condition alongside up to date information displayed at both.

Environmental observations and flooding

Nethy Bridge is set within a high quality natural environment, framed by ancient woodland, open green space, and river corridors that contribute strongly to its local character and appeal. However, the village lies within one of the identified Potentially Vulnerable Areas under the Cycle 2 flood risk management plans due to its riverside setting and proximity to key watercourses. While current levels of risk are moderate, future projections estimate that up to 200 people and 130 homes and businesses within the wider Potentially vulnerable area could be at risk from flooding as the impacts of climate change intensify. Strategic objectives and actions for managing this risk are outlined in the relevant flood risk management and local plans and summarised within the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Long term environmental resilience in Nethy Bridge will require proactive adaptation and engagement with evolving flood management strategies.



Strengths

- Well maintained sports facilities
- Great visitor centre.
- Good access to nature.
- Highly regarded primary school.
- Vibrant hotel.
- Golf course.
- Local shop.
- Speyside way connecting village with other settlements.

Weaknesses

- Lack of cycle parking
- Limited retail offerings
- Expensive housing- high proportion of second home / holiday lets

Opportunities

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

Threats

- Infrequent public transport services
- Lack of dedicated cycle infrastructure along roads could hinder active / sustainable travel changes
- On street parking detracts from quality of street scape.

Figure 148 Strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats analysis for Nethy Bridge



Tomintoul

Tom an t-Sabhail

Tomintoul is a well-preserved planned village situated along the A939 in the Cairngorms National Park. It features a defined central square that acts as the heart of the community. This open space includes a well-maintained lawn kept slightly longer to support flower growth surrounded by benches, trees, planters, and green wayfinding signage. Around the square, visitors and residents will find the village store, the community owned Discovery Centre, and a post office with an ATM. In addition, three hotels with restaurants and bars are also located around the square, contributing to the vibrancy and accessibility of local services. The surrounding architecture consists of high quality, consistently styled stone buildings that reflect Tomintoul's status as a planned village and help establish a strong, cohesive local identity.



Figure 149 The Tomintoul and Glenlivet discovery centre with adjoining discovery centre.



Figure 150 The village square and event space.

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 commercial centre. Community-owned facilities such as the Discovery Centre and public services including the post office and medical centre enhance the village's self-sufficiency. Overall, Tomintoul's business composition reflects a sustainable blend of essential services, tourism infrastructure, and community assets.

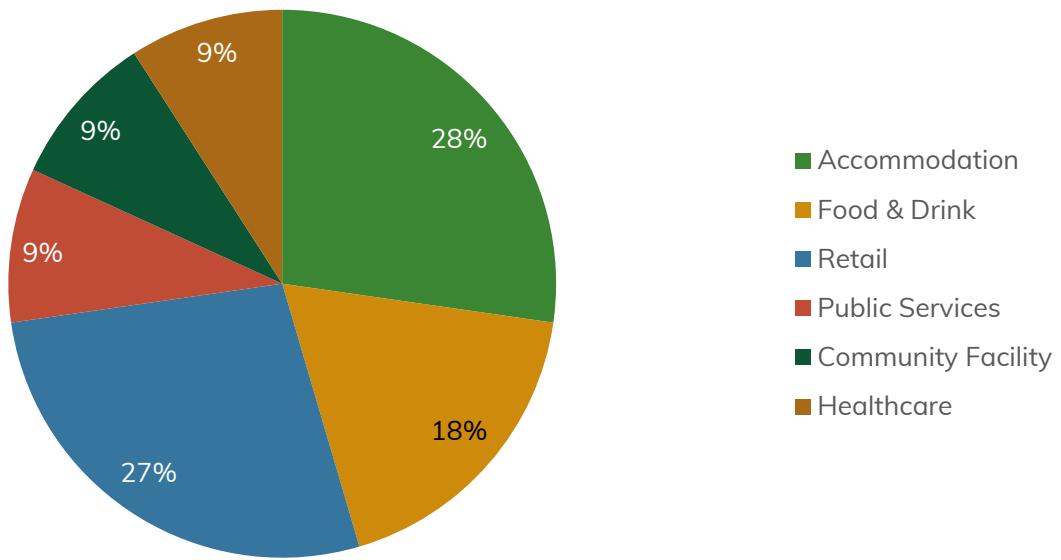


Figure 151 The business composition of Tomintoul.

Figure 152 displays the layout of Tomintoul, highlighting the distribution of key services and amenities.

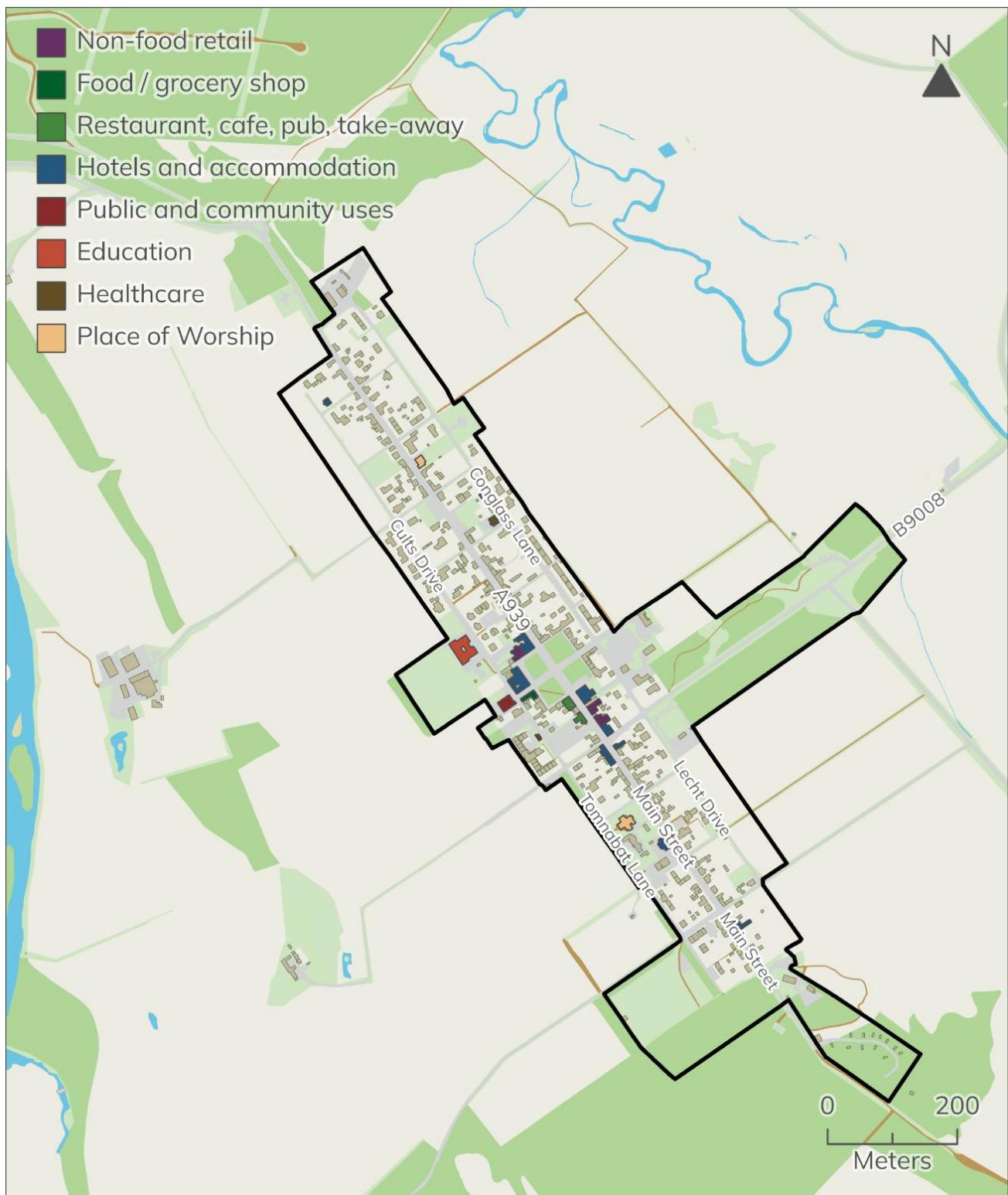


Figure 152 The business composition of Tomintoul.



Public toilets

Public toilets are located adjacent to the main public car park and are clearly signed. They offer level access and were clean and well maintained at the time of the visit. Both men's and women's facilities included baby changing units, enhancing accessibility for families.



Figure 153 Public toilets located behind the square to the left of the primary school.



Assessment of village centre characteristics

Physical environment

Tomintoul's central square forms the core of the village and is enhanced by the quality of the built environment and supporting infrastructure. The square is easily navigable and creates a sense of civic pride through thoughtful landscaping, trees, planters, and heritage-style street furniture. Key services such as the primary school (which also houses a public library), medical centre, and two churches are located within walking distance of the square, making the village accessible for residents. The overall feel of the built environment is consistent and attractive, with the architectural design contributing to the village's distinctive character and charm.



Figure 154 Richmond memorial hall as well as War monument both in a good state of repair.



Figure 155 The primary school as well as the adjoining exercise court.

Sense of place

The well-structured central layout, consistent stone architecture, and strong sense of care and maintenance help reinforce Tomintoul's identity as a vibrant, well-functioning village. The presence of a cohesive and attractive streetscape, along with community-focused amenities, supports an authentic sense of place. The square offers a welcoming and practical setting for both informal gatherings and organised events, and the signage and facilities demonstrate the village's readiness for visitors.



Figure 156 Event space Located on the square currently holding a ride out event.



Figure 157 Well maintained intersecting main street.

Public spaces / realm

The central square acts as a key gathering space, with mature trees, seating, bins, and colourful planters enhancing the area. A children's play area is located slightly further along the main street. It is fully enclosed with a gate, well-maintained, and supported by benches and seasonal planting. The play equipment is diverse and includes space for informal natural play. Overall, the village's public realm is accessible, safe, and aesthetically appealing.



Figure 158 A varied offering of eateries located on and surrounding the square.



Figure 159 The Tomintoul village store.

Cycle facilities and ease of movement.

There are two quiet lanes running parallel to and behind the main street, which provide safe and accessible routes for walking and cycling. These quieter back routes help make movement through the village safer, particularly for families or those less comfortable navigating along the main road. The pavements throughout the village are continuous and include tactile paving at crossings, though they are narrow and uneven in places. Wayfinding signage is present and effective.



Traffic and parking

Traffic levels within Tomintoul are low, which is notable given the presence of the A939 running through the village. While some variability in traffic speeds was observed, the overall environment remains calm. Free on-street parking is available along the main street, and added parking is provided in the main car park beside the public toilets and bus stop. Although traffic volumes are manageable, the addition of a formal pedestrian crossing would improve safety and function as a visual cue for drivers to reduce speed in the village centre.



Figure 160 Car park encompassing the bus terminus.



Figure 161 streetside parking alongside the intersecting road.

Public transport

Public transport provision is modest but present. A sheltered bus stop with a bench and timetable is in the main car park. The 368 bus provides weekday services between Tomintoul and Dufftown, with three morning and two evening journeys. Additionally, the 364 service runs to Grantown-on-Spey twice on Wednesdays only. While functional, the limited schedule may present barriers for those reliant on public transport for regular commuting or access to services beyond the village.

Environmental observations

No environmental hazards were observed during the visit. Although the main road lacks traditional verges, street trees and planting throughout the central square soften the streetscape and add greenery to the public realm. Maps in the car park and village square highlight marked walking trails, and signage near the car park also identifies the start of a nature trail. These assets promote outdoor activity and enhance Tomintoul's connection with its natural surroundings, encouraging exploration and supporting its wider identity as a gateway to the surrounding landscape.



Figure 162 Entrance to a core path that begins at the northern boundary to the village.



Strengths

- Defined central square providing a clear village focus.
- High-quality, consistent stone architecture reflecting planned village heritage.
- Accessible and well-maintained public toilets with family-friendly features
- Good pedestrian infrastructure and clear wayfinding
- Post office which can enhance local services
- Key services within walking distance

Weaknesses

- Pavements narrow and uneven in places.
- Limited public transport options and restricted timetable.
- No designated cycling infrastructure on main street.
- Weekend bus services not available, limiting regional access.

Opportunities

- 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.

Threats

- Low frequency of public transport 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.

Figure 163 Strength's weaknesses opportunities and threats analysis for Tomintoul.



Implications for Proposed Plan

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

Second home ownership and holiday lets

High levels of second home ownership and the growth of the holiday let sector within the Cairngorms National Park has been highlighted extensively throughout the course of the report, with the Highland Council implementing a short term let control area Badenoch and Strathspey in an effort to curtail rising house prices. 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. 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. A need that should be kept in mind for the next 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 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 transition to electric vehicles, 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 movement. These interventions align with the National Planning Framework's strategy for creating sustainable, healthier, and more inclusive places.



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'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.

Further evidence gathering

The work undertaken for this report will inform the Evidence Report for the next Local Development Plan. Further uses and complementary evidence gathering may include:

- Informing the preparation of community action plans and local place plans.
- Informing work to define 20-minute neighbourhoods.
- Provide baseline information on healthy eating options to respond to national Planning Framework 4 Policy 23.
- Inform development management decisions about future retail development in the town centres, when making decisions in accordance with to national Planning Framework 4 Policy 28.