

Context

Landscape is the shape and diversity to our surroundings, the product of thousands of years of interaction between man and nature, encompassing the physical and cultural environment. Landscape is important, because it links culture with nature, and the past with the present.

At 4,528 square kilometres, and comprising **6% of Scotland's land area**, the Park is amongst the largest protected landscape in the UK.

Summary of the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park

General qualities include:

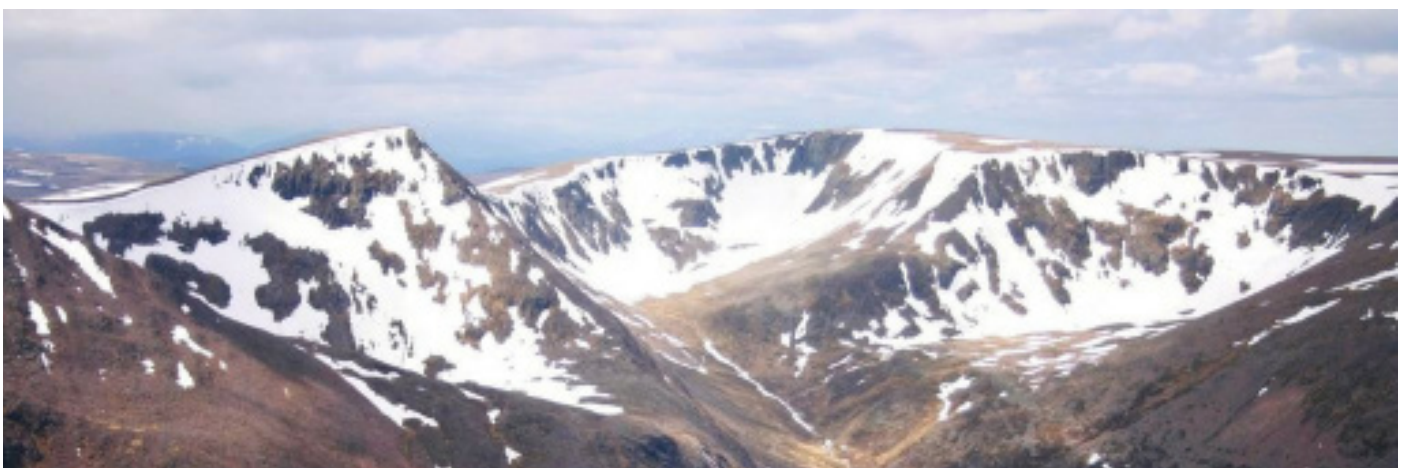
- Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath.
- Vastness of space, scale and height.
- Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes.
- A landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland.
- 'The harmony of complicated curves'.
- Landscapes both cultural and natural.

More defined qualities:



The Mountains and Plateaux

- The unifying presence of the central mountains.
- An imposing massif of strong dramatic character (image below: Braeriach)
- The unique plateaux of vast scale, distinctive landforms and exposed, boulder strewn high ground.
- The surrounding hills.
- The drama of deep corries.
- Exceptional glacial landforms and snowscapes.





Trees, Woods and Forests

- Dark and venerable pine forest (image below mid-ground tree cover).
- Light and airy birch woods (image below: foreground trees).
- Parkland and policy woodlands.
- Long association with forestry.



Moorlands

- Extensive moorland, linking the farmland, woodland and the high tops.
- A patchwork of muirburn.



Image : Karen Archer



Wildlife and Nature

- Dominance of natural landforms.
- Extensive tracts of natural vegetation.
- Association with iconic animals.
- Wild land.
- Wildness.



Image : Jane Hope



Glens and Straths

- Steep glens and high passes.
- Broad, farmed straths.
- Renowned rivers.
- Beautiful lochs.



Image : James Shooter @Scotland TBP





Visual and Sensory Qualities

- Layers of receding ridge lines.
- Grand panoramas and framed views.
- A landscape of many colours
- Dark skies.
- Attractive and contrasting textures.
- The dominance of natural sounds.



Image :David Newland



Culture and History

- Distinctive planned towns (Grantown; right)
- Vernacular stone buildings.
- Dramatic, historical routes
- The wistfulness of abandoned settlements.
- Focal cultural landmarks of castles, distilleries and bridges.
- The Royal connection.



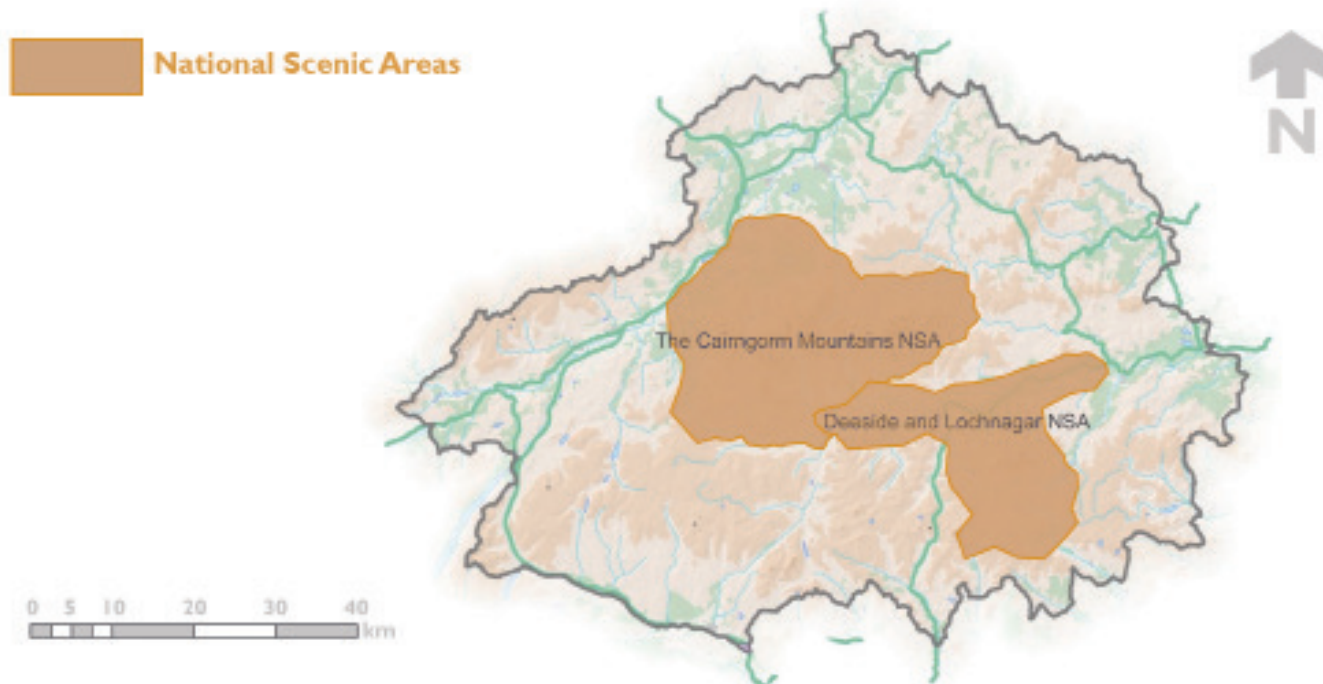
Recreation

- A landscape of opportunities.
- Spirituality.



National Scenic Areas

Two National Scenic Areas (NSAs), the Cairngorm Mountains NSA and Deeside and Lochnagar NSA, are located entirely within the Park boundary, covering an area of around 1,072 square kilometres, which equates to just under 25% of the land area of the Park.



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Wildness and Wild Land Areas

Wildness is a quality experienced by people when visiting places of a certain character.

Wildness is objectively considered through four physical attributes being present namely;

- perceived naturalness of the land cover;
- ruggedness of the terrain;
- remoteness from public roads, ferries or railway stations and the visible lack of buildings, roads, pylons,
- and other modern artefacts.



NatureScot Relative Wildness Mapping



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Wild Land Areas, which represent the most extensive areas of high wildness in Scotland. Around 2,100 km², or 46%, of the Park has been identified as a Wild Land Area.

Wild Land Areas Within or Overlapping the Park

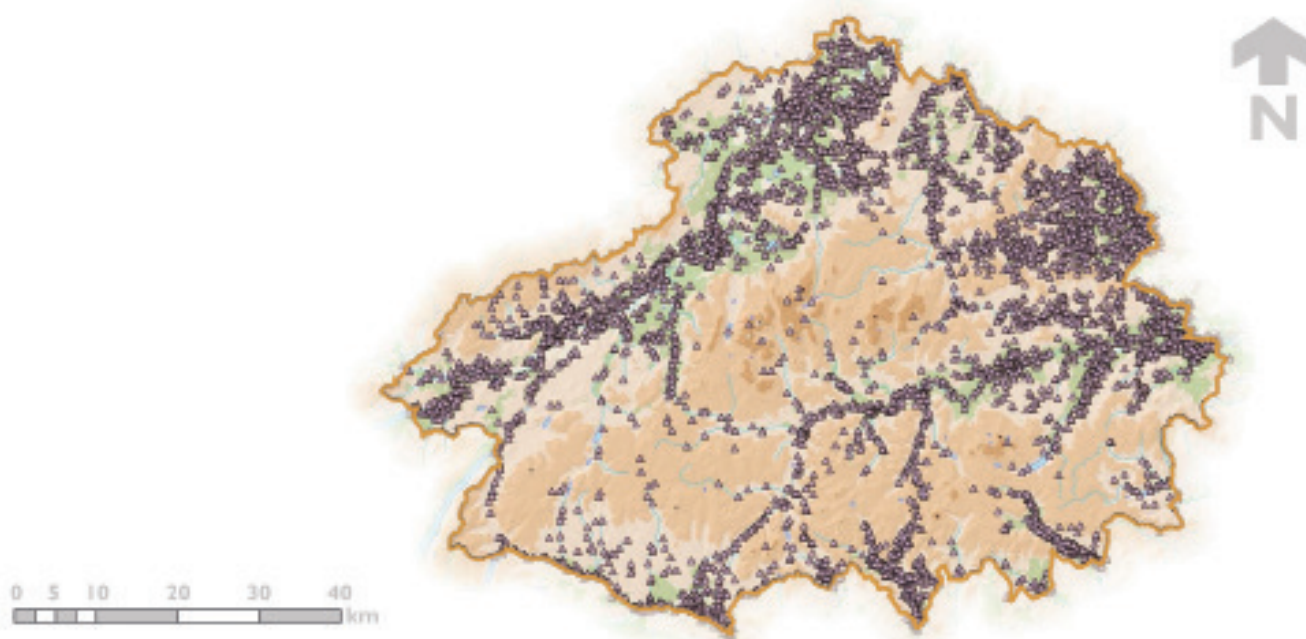


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Historic landscape

The landscape seen today is the result of a complex interplay of climate, geology, geomorphology, soil development, vegetation succession and herbivore impacts, along with human elements linked to settlement, transport, farming and forestry. The map below identifies where historical archaeological records, as held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and others, occur in the Park. These provide an indication of where human activity has occurred in the past.

Distribution of National Monuments Record Sites in the Park



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x110
Scheduled
Monuments



x11
Gardens and designed
landscapes



x753
Listed Buildings



x2
Inventory of Historic
Battlefields



x5
Planned Towns: Ballater, Blair Atholl,
Tomintoul, Grantown-on-Spey and Kingussie

Conservation Areas

Parts of the planned towns of Ballater, Grantown-on-Spey and Blair Atholl have been designated as Conservation Areas, which are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. The Park also has a further two Conservation Areas within its boundary at Braemar and Inverey.

Buildings at Risk

The Buildings at Risk Register (BARR) for Scotland highlights properties of architectural or historic merit throughout the country that are considered to be at risk or under threat. To be at risk, a building does not necessarily need to be in poor condition, it may simply be standing empty with no clear future use. Many buildings at risk are in this latter category. From the latest available data, 31 buildings were recorded as being at risk in the Park.



Linguistic Heritage

Located near the centre of Scotland, and owing to the restrictive nature of its mountainous terrain, the Cairngorms National Park occupies a position where many of the linguistic and cultural differences found in Scotland intersect. The language used in place names in the Park often has historical meaning that describes the landscape, place, wildlife or activities that could or are still found there.

Spoken Languages



Gaelic, which is recorded to be the language was spoken by a very small proportion of the population (around 2.2% in the 2011 Census, down from around 3.1% in 2001 Census) in the Park, it is a visible and inseparable part of the identity of the area, as it continues to dominate the names of places, both built and natural.



Scots, (Doric), is stronger in the east where the influence of the lowlands is greatest. The language has also seen a fall in use, with around 29.3% (5,400 people) of the National Park's population claiming to be able to speak it in the 2011 Census.



Further Information

Cairngorms Landscapes and Scenery:

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/discover-explore/landscapes-scenery/>

Cairngorms Landscape Toolkit:

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/planning-development/landscape-toolkit/>

Special Landscape Qualities

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/caring-future/cairngorms-landscapes/cairngorms-special-landscape-qualities/>

