



Cairngorms
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh



Cover image © David Lintern

Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan

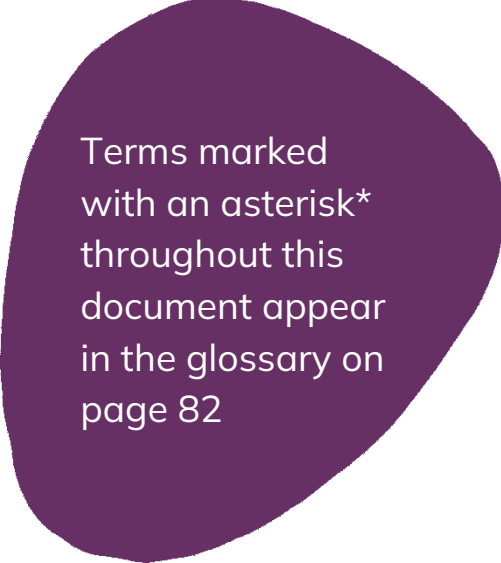
Draft for public consultation –
14 October 2026 to 13 January 2027



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Terms marked
with an asterisk*
throughout this
document appear
in the glossary on
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Consultation

The public consultation lasts for 13 weeks from 14 October 2026 to 13 January 2027. Following the consultation the Cairngorms National Park Authority Board will consider alterations to the Plan before submitting the Plan to Scottish Ministers for final approval.

We would welcome responses to the following questions:

Mission one: nature and climate resilience

- a) To what extent do you agree or disagree with mission one?
- b) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the targets for mission one?
- c) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions for mission one?

Mission two: communities

- a) To what extent do you agree or disagree with mission two?
- b) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the targets for mission two?
- c) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions for mission two?

Mission three: National Park for all

- a) To what extent do you agree or disagree with mission three?
- b) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the targets for mission three?
- c) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the actions for mission three?

Overall

Is there anything missing that should be included in the National Park Partnership Plan 2027-32?

How to respond

You can respond to the consultation through our website cairngorms.co.uk/partnershipplan or by email at enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk

Alternatively, you can respond by post to:

Park Authority office
14 The Square
Grantown-on-Spey
PH26 3HG

To request a hard copy of the draft Plan, or to receive the draft Plan in an alternative format, please call [+44 \(0\) 1479 873 535](tel:+441479873535) or email enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk.



Draft Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2027-32

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To have your say, see the questions on page 3 of this document, call +44 (0) 1479 873 535, email enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk or go to cairngorms.co.uk/partnershipplan

Introduction

The purpose

There has been great progress in delivering the National Park aims over the last 22 years. Each successive National Park Partnership Plan has underpinned the coordinated delivery of actions by public bodies, land managers, businesses and communities.

However, the wildfire in Glenmore and Abernethy is a stark reminder that progress can be lost. The climate is changing in the Cairngorms and how we adapt to increased flooding, water scarcity and wildfire, and the impact of these on communities and nature, is at the heart of this Partnership Plan.

This Partnership Plan addresses the fundamental, underlying issues that prevent the National Park from reaching its full potential. It sets out the case for the changes that will have the biggest positive effect on achieving the long-term vision of the National Park – ensuring it is a place where nature and people thrive together.

The Partnership Plan itself has been reinforced as the statutory management plan for the area through the enactment of the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026. This sets out that all public bodies, as well as Scottish Ministers, have a duty to facilitate the implementation of National Park Partnership Plans.

The basis for delivering the National Park Partnership Plan is, of course, voluntary. The desire to work in partnership with organisations, land managers, businesses and communities to deliver this Plan is at the heart of the Park Authority's approach. From farming and community development to visitor management and river restoration, there are great examples that show what can be achieved when we work together to tackle big issues in the Cairngorms.

However, it is also worth stating that many of the issues outlined in the 1992 report by the Cairngorms Working Party – *Common Sense and Sustainability – A Partnership in the Cairngorms* – are still with us today. There has been significant progress but, 35 years after that document was published, it is clear that this has not been quick enough and that the impacts of climate change and biodiversity* loss are accelerating.

The issues around climate adaptation*, biodiversity* loss and community resilience are too acute to be tackled at the speed of the slowest partner. So, a new approach is needed in this Partnership Plan. The National Park Authority was given a series of powers to deliver the Partnership Plan and until now it has, in the main, done this through partnership, persuasion and incentives. That will continue to be the basis for much of the work that we do. However, there are also powers around land acquisition, compulsory purchase, management agreements*, and path orders that the Park Authority will look to use if it is not possible to achieve the stated public policy outcomes of the Partnership Plan through current mechanisms.

This Partnership Plan sets out the proposed changes at a strategic level with spatial mapping and targeted actions. It outlines the tools that we have to achieve these and it will be incumbent upon the Park Authority and partners to report annually on our collective progress.

This is an ambitious Partnership Plan, and the Park Authority will look forward to working with all our partners in the years ahead to deliver together for the Cairngorms National Park.

The National Park aims

The Cairngorms is the UK's largest national park at 4,528 square kilometres (6% of Scotland's land mass) and is home to one-quarter of the UK's rare and endangered species. Around 18,000 people live in the National Park across the areas of Aberdeenshire, Angus, Highland, Moray, Perth and Kinross, with over two and a half million visitors enjoying this special place every year.

The National Park has four distinct aims as set out by Parliament:

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

These aims are to be pursued collectively. However, if there is conflict between the first aim and any of the others, greater weight is given to the first aim (as set out in Section 9.6 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000). This helps ensure conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage underpin the economic, social and recreation value of the Cairngorms National Park.

The Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026 also sets out that the four aims include:

- Restoring and regenerating biodiversity* in the area.
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- Supporting access to and within the area.
- Encouraging recreation in the area.
- Encouraging sustainable and regenerative agriculture*.
- Promoting sustainable tourism and visitor management.
- Promoting sustainable economic growth and development activity which:
 - Improves the health and wellbeing of individuals who visit, live and work in the area.
 - Supports the prosperity of communities in the area, including in relation to the provision of housing for people to live and work in the area.

The Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026 also sets out that Scottish Ministers, a national park authority, a local authority and any other public body or office-holder must, in exercising functions so far as affecting a National Park (and only in relation to functions exercisable in or as regards Scotland which do not relate to reserved matters), have regard to the four National Park aims.



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What is the National Park Partnership Plan?

The National Park Partnership Plan sets out how all those with responsibility for the National Park will co-ordinate their work to tackle the most important issues. In particular, this Plan:

- Sets out the vision and overarching strategy for managing the National Park.
- Guides the work of all public bodies and other partners to deliver the aims of the National Park.
- Provides the strategic context for the Local Development Plan*.
- Is the Strategic Regional Land Use Framework* and Regional Spatial Strategy* for the National Park.
- Is the Climate Adaptation Plan.
- Is the Economic and Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the National Park.

This Plan also embeds the legacy of The National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Cairngorms 2030 programme to ensure that the work that has been done in the last five years is built upon over the next Plan period.

We are aware that individuals reading the Partnership Plan will have different interests and priorities; however, we would recommend considering the Plan as a whole to see how the four aims of the National Park will be delivered collectively.

Duty to facilitate implementation of the National Park Plans

The Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026 changed the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 so that ‘Scottish Ministers, a National Park authority, a local authority and any other public body or office-holder must, in exercising functions so far as affecting a National Park, facilitate the implementation of the National Park Plan’.

This significantly strengthens the statutory role of the National Park Partnership Plan, and it is our shared responsibility to implement the Plan.

Tools available to the Park Authority to deliver the Plan

The Park Authority has a range of tools that it can use to deliver its aims and the National Park Partnership Plan. This is set out in the primary legislation and forms the basis of the work of the Park Authority. The tools include:

- **Issuing grants and loans**

An authority may, with the consent of the Scottish Ministers, give financial assistance by way of grant or loan to any person in respect of expenditure incurred or to be incurred by that person in doing anything which, in the authority's opinion, is conducive to the attainment of the purpose set out in section 9(1).

- **Using planning functions**

A designation order may make provision for a National Park Authority: (a) to be the planning authority for the National Park for the purposes of the planning Acts; (b) to be treated as the planning authority for the National Park, but only for such purposes of Part II (development plans) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (c.8) as are specified in the order; or (c) to have, in relation to the National Park, such functions in relation to planning as the order may specify.

- **Acquiring land**

For the purposes of its functions, an authority may: (a) acquire by agreement; (b) if authorised by the Scottish Ministers, purchase compulsorily, any land situated within the National Park.

- **Making management agreements**

A National Park Authority may enter into an agreement (a "management agreement") with any person having [a right] in land to do, or secure the doing of, whatever the parties to the agreement consider necessary to achieve, in relation to the National Park, the National Park aims.

- **Passing byelaws**

A National Park Authority may make byelaws for the National Park for the purposes of: (a) protecting the natural and cultural heritage of the National Park; (b) preventing damage to the land or anything in, on or under it; (c) securing the public's enjoyment of, and safety in, the National Park.

- **Using management rules**

Sections 112 to 118 (management rules) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (c.45) have effect as if references to a local authority and to the authority's area included references to a National Park Authority and the National Park.

- **Other powers**

An authority may: (a) enter into contracts; (b) carry on any business or undertaking; (c) form or promote (whether alone or with others) companies; (d) form partnerships with other persons; (e) accept gifts or contributions; (f) invest sums not immediately required in relation to the exercise of its functions.

- **Establishing nature reserves**

Sections 21 and 22 (establishment of nature reserves and application of enactments to local authority reserves) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (c.97) have effect as if references to a local authority and the authority's area included references to a National Park Authority and the National Park.

Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the Park Authority also has the power to:

- **Make byelaws (s12)**

The Park Authority may, in relation to land in respect of which access rights are exercisable, make byelaws providing for: (i) the preservation of public order and safety; (ii) the prevention of damage; (iii) the prevention of nuisance or danger; (iv) the conservation or enhancement of natural or cultural heritage.

- **Acquire land (s16)**

Where it appears to the Park Authority to be necessary or expedient for the purpose of enabling or facilitating the exercise of access rights in respect of any land to which this section applies that the land be acquired by them, the authority may— (a) acquire it by agreement (whether by purchase, feu, lease or excambion); or (b) with the consent of Ministers, acquire it compulsorily.

- **Maintain core paths and provide directions to them (s19)**

The Park Authority may do anything which they consider appropriate for the purposes of: (a) maintaining a core path; (b) keeping a core path free from obstruction or encroachment; (c) providing the public with directions to, or with an indication of the extent of, a core path.

- **Make path agreements (s21)**

The Park Authority may enter an agreement (a “path agreement”) with a person having the necessary power for the delineation and maintenance or, as the case may be, for the delineation, creation and maintenance of a path within land in respect of which access rights are exercisable.

- **Issue path orders (s22)**

Where, in the circumstances set out, it appears to the Park Authority that, having regard to the rights and interests of the owner of land in respect of which access rights are exercisable and persons likely to exercise these rights, it is expedient to delineate a path within that land, the authority may, by order (a “path order”), do so.

There is also a range of other powers held by other public authorities such as SEPA, NatureScot and local authorities etc that can be used to deliver the Plan if required.

Public incentives

There is a huge number of public incentives that can help to deliver the National Park Partnership Plan. These include national schemes such as the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme, agri-environment payments, the Water Environment Fund, the Community Led Local Development Fund, Peatland Action, the Nature Restoration Fund, the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund and the Active Travel Infrastructure Fund.

There is also a variety of Cairngorms National Park specific schemes usually administered by the Park Authority, such as the Climate Adaptation Fund, or by the Cairngorms Trust, such as the Community Led Vision Fund. Finally, there is a range of potential support from third parties, such as The National Lottery Heritage Fund or philanthropic trusts and foundations.

In delivering public incentives within the National Park consideration should be given for ‘cross-compliance’ related to that funding, where recipients who have been found in breach of relevant regulations may be liable for withdrawal and recovery of financial support, and where applicants may be deemed ineligible for future support.

The wider policy landscape

There have been significant changes in the policy landscape since the last Partnership Plan was published in 2022. The National Park Partnership Plan weaves all the different policy goals into a coherent approach within the National Park.

National policy framework

As a whole, this Partnership Plan is guided by Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The following are the key national policy documents that underpin the approach taken in this Plan grouped under each of the proposed missions to which the national policies are most relevant.

Mission one: nature and climate resilience

- Climate Change Plan
- Environment Strategy
- Flood Resilience Strategy and Implementation Plan
- Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy
- Land Use Strategy for Scotland
- National Water Scarcity Plan
- River Basin Management Plan 4
- Scotland's Forestry Strategy
- Scotland's National Adaptation Plan
- Scotland's Landscape Charter
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy
- Vision for Agriculture
- Wild Salmon Strategy
- Wildfires: Strategic Action Plan

Mission two: communities

- Community Planning Partnership Plans
- Community Wealth Building Act 2026
- Good Food Nation Plans
- National Planning Framework 4
- National Strategy for Economic Transformation
- Regional Economic Strategies
- Scotland Food and Drink Strategy
- Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation
- Scotland's National Tourism Strategy – Outlook 2030

Mission three: National Park for all

- Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Strategy 2025-30
- National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28
- National Walking Strategy
- Scotland's public health strategy, 'Together We Can'
- Scottish Languages Act

The Cairngorms National Park also has a significant role to play in delivering the policy ambitions of Scottish Government. The National Park is a place for innovation, trialling new ways of thinking and showing ambition to meet the key challenges of our time.

Public service reform

The Scottish Government has set out its proposed approach to public service reform in the programme for government. This will impact on all public bodies and there are specific proposals for the national environmental bodies, public land, health boards and local authorities. As the reforms are developed the National Park Partnership Plan will take account of the changes as the final NPPP is developed next year.

National Park Partnership Plan

2022 – 2027 in numbers



7,394ha
peatland
restored



159
affordable
houses built
2020-2026



15
up to date
community
action plans



8,518ha
native
woodland
created



£2.54m
awarded
through Nature
Restoration
Fund



41
completed or
ongoing
Climate
Adaptation
Fund projects



8,931
interactions
with school
pupils and
junior rangers



£1.2m
awarded to
100 Community
Led Local
Development
Fund projects



92km
rivers
restored



124
volunteer
rangers
recruited



86
access
cases
resolved



over 100
Businesses
supported each
year through
GrowBiz

Our long-term vision

An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together.

This long-term vision is underpinned by a set of principles about how we want to deliver the National Park Partnership Plan. These are:

- Nature based solutions should be at the core of our shared approach.
- Delivery should be focussed on achieving multiple benefits across the Partnership Plan.
- Community involvement and wealth building should be at the heart of decision making.
- All views and opinions should be respected in developing the best solutions for the National Park.

An ever-changing landscape

The Cairngorms National Park landscape is special. It is where we live, work and play, and contributes to our sense of place and identity. It also brings multiple benefits to nature, the economy, and our health and well-being. It is everchanging: a landscape in transition, shaped by both natural processes and changing community needs. The National Park's landscape was dominated by grazing, sporting estates and to a lesser extent forestry over the past century but the area is becoming much more diverse in the way that land is managed. Activities such as tourism and conservation sit alongside those other practices, reflecting a shift toward managing the land for multiple benefits.

At the same time, large-scale ecological restoration is transforming the landscape and ecological character of the National Park. Efforts to expand native woodlands, restore peatlands, and reconnect natural river systems are gradually building more resilient environments. These changes are needed due to the growing threats and impacts of climate change, which is already altering snow cover, increasing wildfire risk, and threatening sensitive habitats.

Tourism has also become a major force in shaping the Cairngorms, bringing around two and a half million visitors each year. While this supports local economies, it can place pressure on fragile environments, leading to issues such as path erosion and the need for new infrastructure. Alongside this, developments such as housing, A9 dualling and, on the periphery, renewable energy are subtly reshaping the National Park's visual and physical character.

The framing of debate around landscape is often seen as a zero-sum game: if there is more woodland then there is less moorland. This misses the key point of what we are trying to do in the Cairngorms National Park. The Park Partnership Plan is about integrated design and management that delivers resilience for communities, businesses and people in the face of climate change. It's about increasing biodiversity* through more complex and restored systems, and a landscape that is protected for future generations to enjoy and work in.

Ultimately, the Cairngorms is a living landscape and it does not stand still. It has changed significantly over the past century and will continue to do so. These changes present us with both opportunities and constraints. The National Park Partnership Plan sets out what the long-term changes should be and how we can design and manage them to ensure that people and nature thrive together.

Landscape provides an important lens for the National Park. During this Plan period, we will:

- Develop a landscape toolkit to assist people to assess and understand landscape change.
- Monitor changes to special landscape qualities established through Cairngorms 2030.
- Continue community engagement to improve understanding of the importance and potential scope of landscape change, building on work completed through Cairngorms 2030.

Our plan for the future

This document is arranged in three missions:

- Mission one: nature and climate resilience
- Mission two: communities
- Mission three: National Park for all

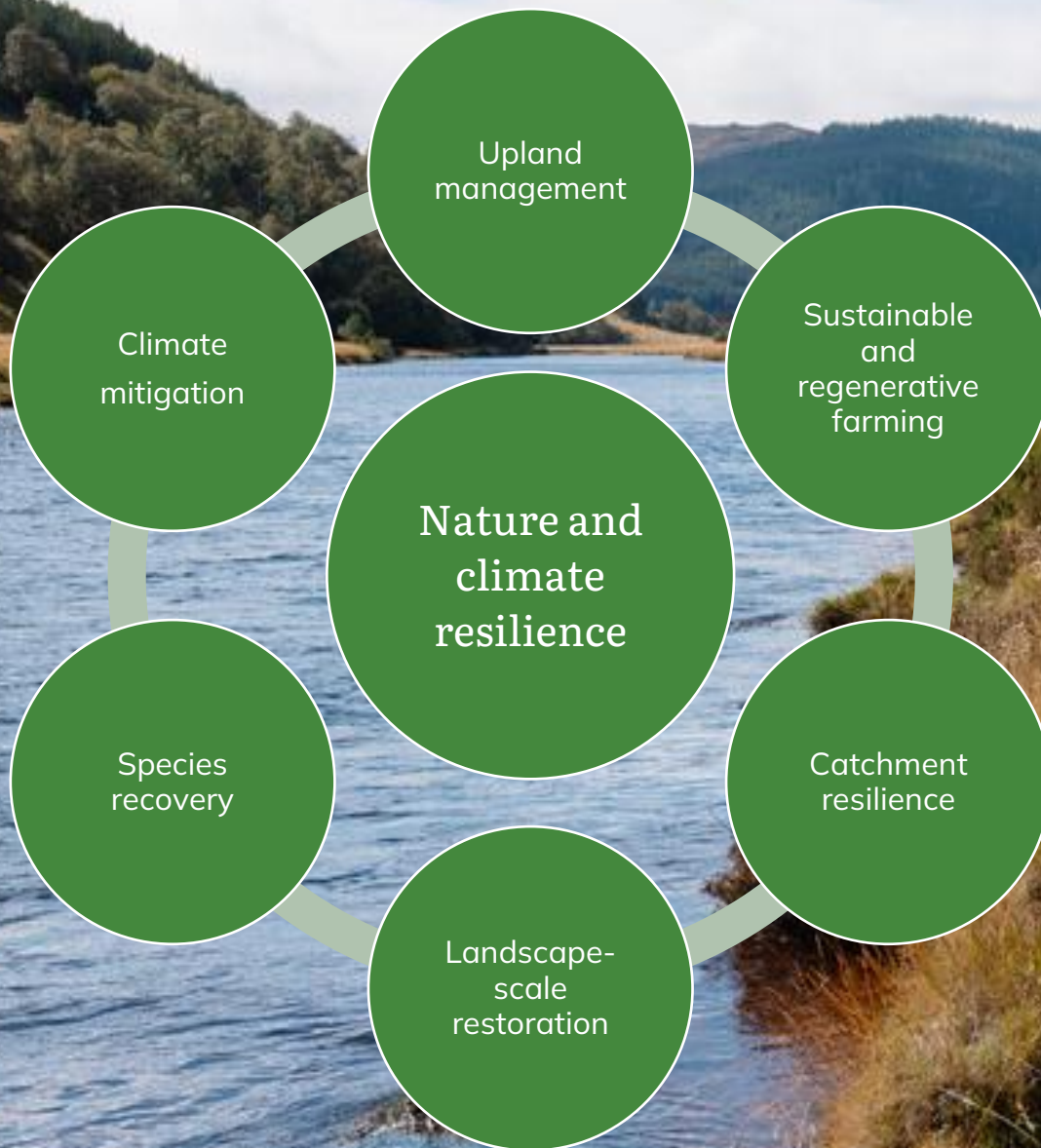
In each section we set out:

- The mission
- Relevant context
- Baseline data and indicators – This part sets out the baseline data and the proposed indicators to measure whether the resources allocated annually to deliver the Plan are having the desired long-term effect.
- Targets – This part sets out the targets against which Plan progress will be measured on an annual basis or when data will be collected during the Plan period.
- Actions to deliver in the period 2027-32



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Mission one: nature and climate resilience



Mission

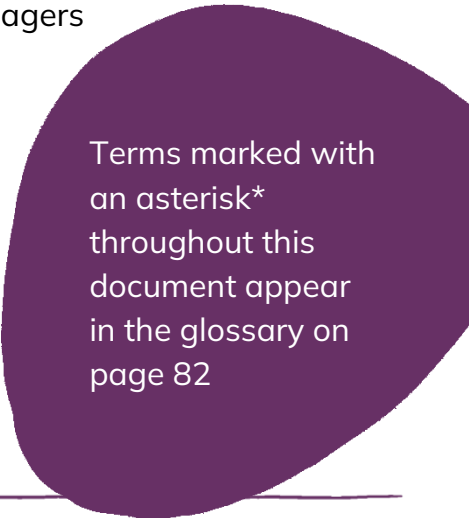
By supporting landscape-scale nature recovery, climate adaptation* and sustainable land management, ecosystems, land managers and communities will become more resilient. This will lead to biodiversity* recovery, improved ecosystem functionality*, sustainable rural employment and reduced climate impacts across the National Park.

Context

The Cairngorms National Park is an incredibly important place for nature in Scotland and the wider British Isles. The quality and extent of habitats is unrivalled and provides huge benefits to Scotland. However, we are not on track to achieve the 2030 goal to halt biodiversity loss and if we are to regenerate biodiversity by 2045 then we have to change gears now. In doing this work we need to ensure that the land is managed in a way that makes it climate resilient and nature positive, while providing an economic return.

All the models and trends show that the climate will continue to change significantly over the coming years with less snow, increased flooding, increased wildfire risk and water scarcity impacting on businesses, residents and nature. We need to ensure that resilience is at the heart of what we do. Land can and should deliver multiple benefits, but this will mean aligning policy, funding and culture to deliver change on the ground that also benefits the people that live and work in the area. A single purpose for land that does not deliver multiple benefits does not meet the National Park aims. This Plan addresses the foundational issues to deliver for nature and climate resilience. It will not use short-term sticking plasters that do not deliver the long-term changes that are needed.

At the heart of this is trying to give long-term certainty to land managers so that they can adapt their businesses and develop a robust economic model. The Park Authority will do this through long-term management agreements* and by supporting certain jobs that contribute to public benefit. This is a significant change from previous Plans. It will take time to negotiate these agreements and put in place the finance needed to make them work. There are, however, significant long-term savings to be made if we need less intervention in later years to try and fix underlying structural issues.



Terms marked with an asterisk* throughout this document appear in the glossary on page 82

1. Upland management

The Cairngorms are often imagined as wild and untouched, but much of the landscape has been heavily influenced by intensive grazing, sporting management, pollution caused by airborne deposition*, and historical land use.

Our aim is to bring natural processes back into balance while protecting livelihoods and heeding traditions.

Activity in this area falls into five main categories: (a.) peatland restoration; (b.) deer management; (c.) moorland management; (d.) fire management. and (e.) gamebirds.

1a. Peatland restoration

Large-scale restoration is underway across private, public and charitable land. Drainage ditches are being blocked and bare peat is being stabilised.

Restored peatlands in the Cairngorms contain significant amounts of carbon while also slowing water runoff, reducing flood risks in communities downstream such as Aviemore or Ballater, and reducing wildfire risk in their immediate area. They also provide significant benefits for nature recovery with good evidence showing that peatland restoration benefits downstream aquatic habitats and species like threatened salmon and freshwater pearl mussel, and increases the number of breeding waders, dragonflies and damselflies.

Baseline data and indicators

- Hectares of degraded peat in the National Park.
- Hectares of peatland under restoration management since 2022.

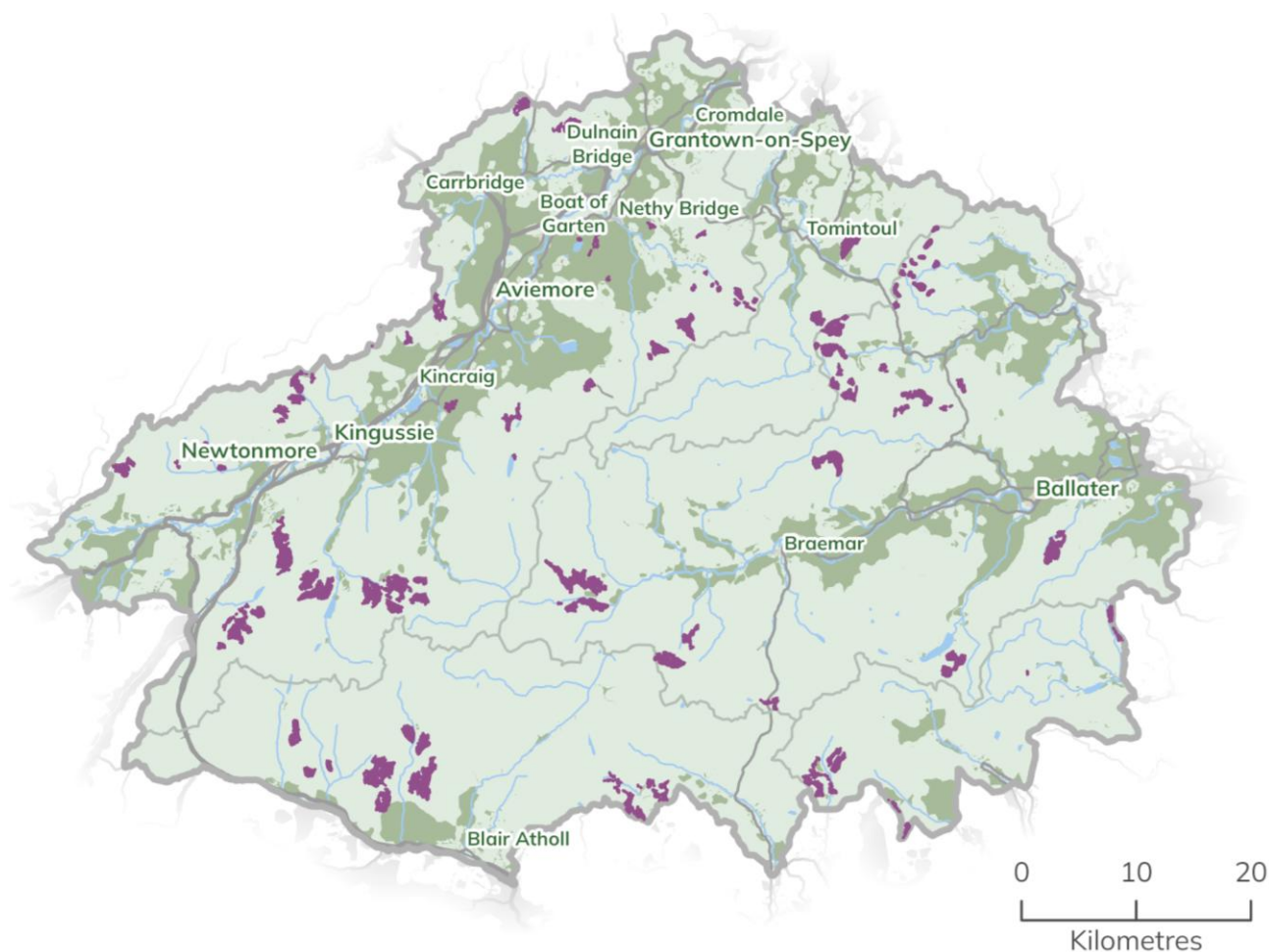
Targets

- A further 6,500 hectares of peatland is under restoration management by 2032 contributing towards an overall target of 38,000 hectares by 2045 (based on 2022 baseline).

Actions

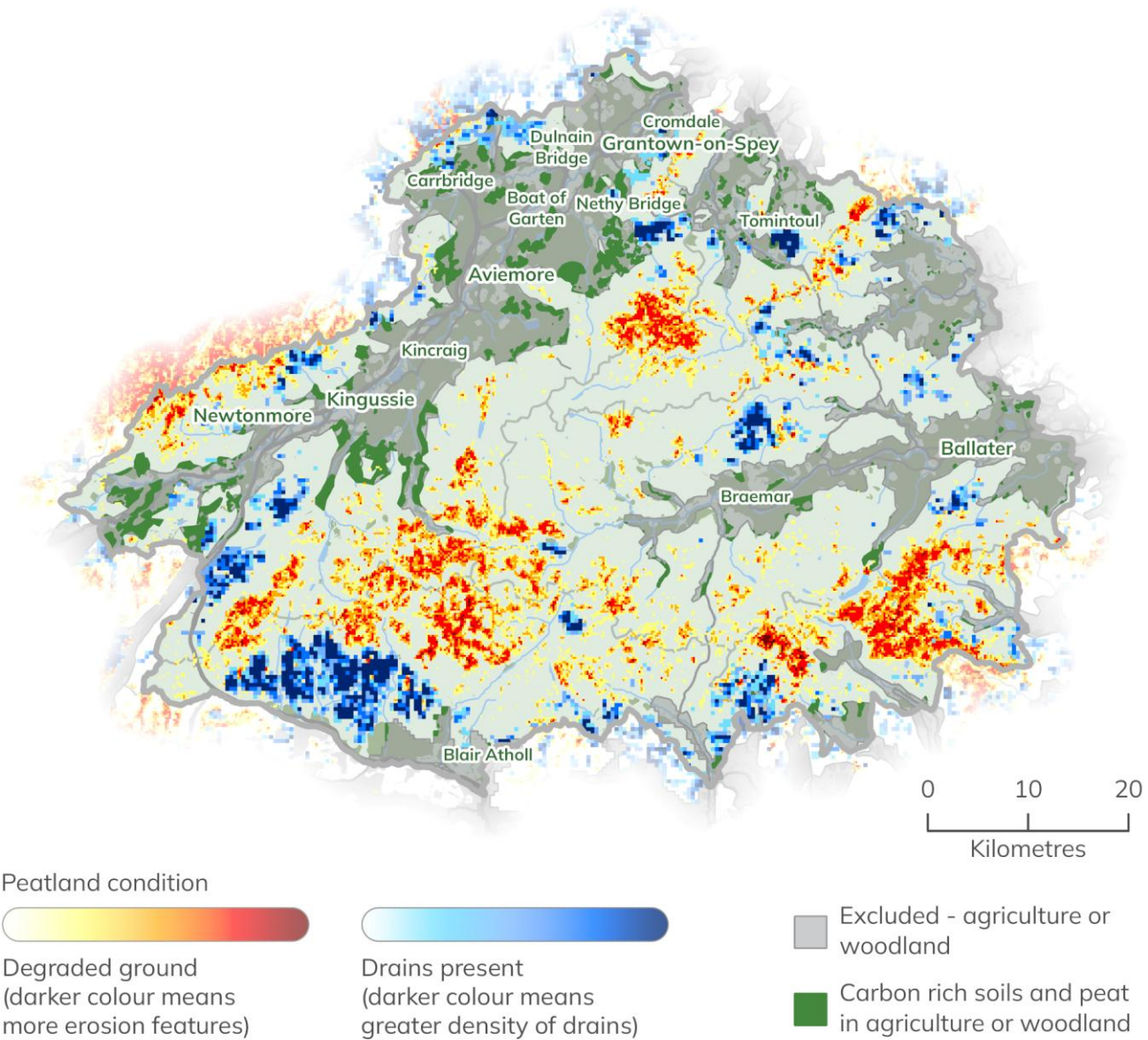
- Maximise the use of Peatland ACTION funding for peatland restoration, monitoring and skills development through the Park Authority's peatland programme.
- Target peatland restoration spatially, complementing landscape-scale ecosystem restoration and the delivery of multiple benefits
- Develop mechanisms to enable multi-year programmes supported by blended finance* (public, private, charitable).
- Build capacity in estates, communities and the private sector to support long-term planning and delivery.

Figure one: Completed peatland restoration sites in the Cairngorms National Park



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Ordnance Survey AC0000821810. Contains data © NatureScot, 2026.

Figure two: Peatland in the Cairngorms National Park



Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2026
Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

1b. Deer management

One of the most pressing challenges in the Cairngorms is ensuring that herbivore impacts and in particular red deer numbers in the south of the National Park are reduced to allow nature recovery.

Red deer managed at significantly lower numbers within the National Park could impact on sport stalking revenue. However, the need for stalkers will not be reduced as they will be needed to keep populations lower. The key issue is finding the balance between public regulation and incentive on the one hand and private funding on the other to maintain stalker jobs in the future to deliver continued deer management.

The Park Authority is exploring a stalker support scheme and long-term management agreements* for those estates that wish to reduce deer below five deer per square kilometre.

The Park Authority and NatureScot will work with Deer Management Groups* (DMG) to reduce deer densities to meet the 2030 target. If it appears by 2028 that this target will not be met by an individual DMG on a voluntary basis, NatureScot will take forward regulatory action to ensure compliance by 2030.

Baseline data and indicators

- Deer counts and densities.

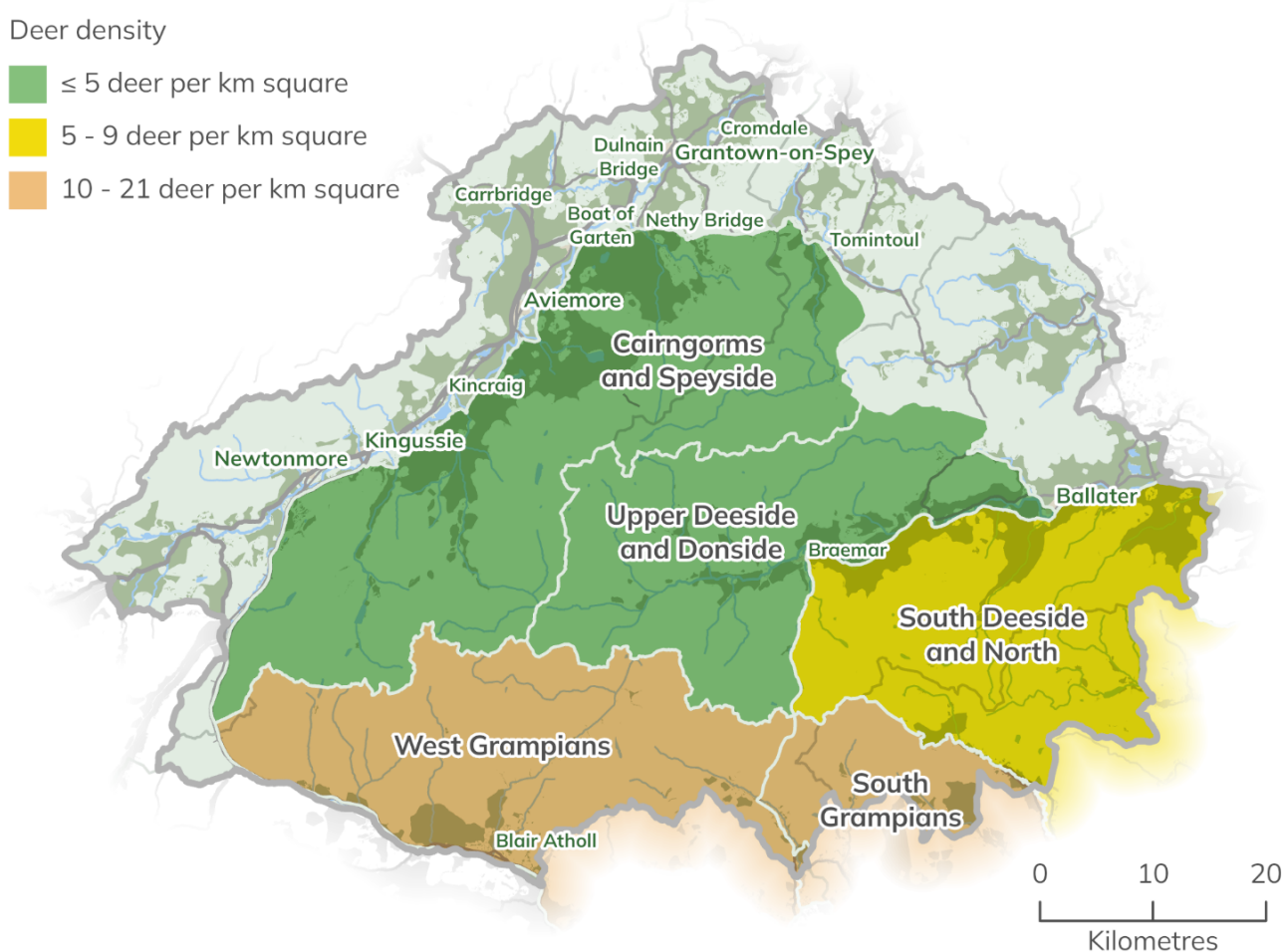
Targets

- Average open range red deer densities in each deer management group are a maximum of five to eight per square kilometre by 2030.
- No individual estate or beat to be over 10 deer per square kilometre by 2030 with the exception of periods of severe winter weather when deer are necessarily concentrated.
- Non-native sika and fallow deer will be contained within their current distribution in the National Park by 2030.

Actions

- Introduce a deer stalker support scheme for those estates below five deer per square kilometre by 2028, linked to long-term management agreements*.
- All Deer Management Groups* to do a helicopter count or drone count in winter 2029-30.
- Support reductions in deer densities in key ecosystem restoration areas where nature networks* exist and areas of the montane core*.
- Continue support for the development of a community deer larder network.

Figure three: Deer densities by deer / land management group



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1c. Moorland management

The way moorland has been, and in the majority of cases still is, managed for sheep grazing, stalking and grouse shooting defines how much of our upland landscapes look and the biodiversity* they contain.

There has been a reduction in the area primarily managed for red grouse in the last 20 years, especially the last 10 years, and an increase in re-wetting bogs, reducing herbivore densities and allowing scattered trees to recolonise.

In 2024, new legislation for muirburn* was introduced by the Wildlife Management & Muirburn (Scotland) Act. It is now an offence to carry out muirburn in Scotland without a licence. The aim of the licence is to help ensure that muirburn is carried out safely and appropriately as per the updated Muirburn Code. Licensable purposes include burning on peatland and non-peatland for the purposes of preventing, or reducing the risk of, wildfire. It is a condition of the licence that anyone carrying out muirburn must have regard for the Muirburn Code and where contravention is deemed to be unjustified, non-compliance could result in a loss of licence.

Moorland (heathland and peatland) is by far the most extensive and continuous habitat type in the Cairngorms, covering 58% of the National Park. It is therefore critical that it is managed in a way to provide multiple benefits and to ensure that the likelihood and impact of a fire getting out of control in this type of landscape is mitigated through a range of measures.

Structural habitat diversity underpins species diversity and enhances the resilience of moorlands to climate change impacts like flooding, droughts and wildfire. There is a need for a mosaic of habitats, breaking up extensive areas of moorland similar in structure, composition or character, and to consider different management techniques that might be applicable across the Cairngorms National Park.

Baseline data and indicators

- Incidents and types of non-compliance with the Muirburn Code.
- Number of estates demonstrating exemplary practice.
- Loss of muirburn licences and general licence restrictions.

Targets

- Downward trend in non-compliance with the Muirburn Code across the National Park.
- Increasing number of estates delivering exemplary practice in moorland management.

Actions

- Ensure compliance with the Muirburn Code and muirburn* licencing.
- Create exemplar practice advisory note on moorland management.
- Develop a wider moorland partnership to foster, demonstrate and create a community of exemplar practice.
- Map trees and shrub on moorland and moorland fringe.
- Maximise the use of natural and re-wetted landscapes alongside prescribed burning to minimise risk of wildfire.

See business and enterprise development on page 54 for further training / skills actions.
See species recovery on page 43 for further actions.

1d. Fire management

The Integrated Wildfire Management Plan provides a good framework for tackling the issue of wildfires in the National Park. It will be updated on an annual basis, as we learn from wildfires like Glenmore / Abernethy, to ensure that it is comprehensive and up to date. The focus over the coming years will be on the delivery of the Integrated Wildfire Management Plan and conducting a formal review by 2030.

Baseline data and indicators

- Number of wildfires in the National Park and extent of area burnt.
- Number of live fires and barbecues counted through ranger data.

Targets

- All estates over 1,000 hectares have fire management plans as part of their wider land management plans.
- All relevant communities have a fire evacuation plan.
- Downward trend in number of recreational live fires and barbecues.

Actions

- Implement the Integrated Wildfire Management Plan and formally review it by 2030.
- All estates and communities will have fire management plans in place and submit these to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and the Park Authority to encourage commonality by 2030.
- Fire management plans must demonstrate how fuel loads will be broken up to reduce the risk of fire spreading and to enable fires that do occur to be tackled.
- Identify areas of high risk and produce plan for strategic fire breaks across Cairngorms National Park by summer 2027.
- Support delivery of environmental recovery and monitoring plan for wildfire affected areas in Abernethy and Glenmore.
- Promote conservation grazing for fire suppression purposes.
- Develop, deliver and support regional wildfire groups across the National Park, enabling a local response encompassing a wide range of skills and equipment.
- Retain wildfire fighting skills, experience, equipment and capacity within the National Park.

1e. Gamebirds

Averaged across the three seasons from 2022 to 2025, almost 54,000 pheasants and over 24,000 red-legged partridges were released by 10 estates across the National Park. Good practice guidance on non-native gamebird releases is based on the principle of minimising negative effects and maximising positive ones, so that the overall balance is a net gain for biodiversity. We need to understand what this means in the context of the Cairngorms, and how gamebirds interact with the unique and nationally significant mosaic of habitats and species.

More research is needed to understand the balance of impacts, to help us continue to build a science-led evidence base in partnership with research organisations, practitioners and estates and to consider whether there is a need for action on non-native gamebird releases in the National Park.

Baseline data and indicators

- Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust Report 2025.

Targets

- Metrics of gamebird impacts specific to the Cairngorms agreed by 2028 and assessed by 2029.

Actions

- Work with Scottish Government to carry out research on gamebird impacts in the National Park.
- Depending on the evidence gathered, consider whether the Park Authority takes forward action on non-native gamebird releases by 2030.

2. Sustainable and regenerative farming

Sustainable and regenerative farming not only produces food, but it also restores and renews natural assets, particularly soils and ecosystem health, through principles-based, ecological improvement. In the Cairngorms National Park, sustainable and regenerative farming generates numerous benefits: better soil health, more biodiversity, improved carbon retention, effective water management, increased resilience to climate change, a reduction or removal of inputs, and the promotion of health and vitality in farming communities.

At the heart of this approach is soil. Farmers are moving away from intensive practices and toward grasslands and diverse plant mixes that build organic matter, retain water, and store carbon. This not only supports productivity but also protects waterways like the Rivers Spey, Dee or Esk.

Livestock still plays a central role, but grazing is managed more carefully, with rotation to allow vegetation to recover and to avoid overuse. This helps improve biodiversity* and aligns with wider efforts to restore peatlands and native woodlands.

Sustainable and regenerative farming also means integrating food production with nature recovery. Less productive land is allowed to re-wet, while chemical input use like fertilisers and imported feed is reduced to build more resilient, self-sustaining systems.

Overall, the Cairngorms are seeing a gradual transition towards farming that not only produces food but actively restores the landscape it depends on. This Park Plan includes measures to continue to support this transition.

Baseline data and indicators

- Agriculture census data.
- Farms using regenerative practices.
- Hectares of land in Scottish Government's Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) or follow on schemes.
- Carbon audit data.

Targets

- Reduction of chemical inputs like fertilisers and imported feed across the National Park.
- Increasing trend in number of farms adopting regenerative farming practices.

Actions

- Deliver nature-friendly farming projects as part of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, such as, species rich-grassland and waders (see species recovery on page 43).
- Work with the Scottish Government to make the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme more regionally relevant and increase uptake.
- Expand the Cairngorms 2030 future farming programme to support sustainable farming to improve farm business resilience and profitability.
- Map and stabilise flood banks with nature-based solutions* where appropriate.
- Support high-quality local food production and explore branding support for local food producers.
- Deliver landscape-scale activities including regenerative farming through development of farm clusters and long-term management agreements*.

See business and enterprise development on page 54 for further training / skills actions.

3. Catchment resilience

Catchment* resilience is a key issue for the Cairngorms National Park. The Cairngorms has the headwaters for five major river systems: the Spey, Dee, Don, North and South Esk, and Tay. Decisions taken in this area have a significant impact on communities and business both within and beyond the boundaries of the National Park and over large parts of Scotland.

As predicted by climate change models, we have seen increasing periods of drought impacting on farmers, businesses, communities and wildlife like salmon and freshwater pearl mussels. We have also seen changing snowpacks, an increase in large storms and rivers in the National Park struggling with the volume of water, leading to significant

flooding in Aviemore, Ballater and Brechin. Catchments in the National Park are increasingly unable to cope with the pressures of climate change and meet public needs. In most cases grey infrastructure does not provide long-term sustainable solutions without commensurate investment at a catchment* scale. These impacts and their associated costs are increasing every year.

There are also issues with the current approach to water management. It is important to acknowledge that the benefit of water management in the upper catchment tends to accrue to those who live or have businesses in the lower catchment. Conversely, the cost of water management is accrued by those in the upper catchment.

Existing water management mechanisms do not provide the longevity of commitment needed for land managers to change systems. Public investment and other levers influencing land use are often siloed and not targeted in a place-based manner which sometimes leads to overlapping layers of competing and contradictory objectives.

We need to change our approach to water management by better aligning and targeting public investment around agreed, geographically specific outcomes that can deliver multiple benefits. We need to re-naturalise and build catchment resilience with nature-based solutions*. These will be an efficient use of public sector resource and finance in the long term, as resources required to deal with the site-specific impacts of climate change will increase over time.

There are also opportunities to explore blended finance* models where water resource management is part of private business supply chain and risk management. Payments and long-term agreements with land managers are necessary to secure management for desired water management outcomes.

Baseline data and indicators

- Cairngorms Nature Index* value of overall health.
- Morphological health, or naturalness.
- Number of metres³ of extra water storage created.
- Kilometres of river restored to natural or near natural state.

Targets

- Downward trend in spring extreme low flows and winter extreme high flows, compared against modelled future predictions.

Actions

- Deliver Public Service Reform and catchment* resilience programme in the Dee and Esk catchments.
- Develop a long-term plan for the efficient and equitable management of water in the National Park.
- Carry out opportunity mapping, costing and delivery of natural flood management where appropriate in collaboration with land managers.
- Offer long-term management agreements* to secure land being managed for water retention.
- Support for river restoration projects to improve biodiversity, conserve the Atlantic salmon, slow the flow*, and realise wider benefits for communities.
- Remove all artificial barriers to fish passage where practicable.



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Figure four: Map of northeast Scotland highlighting headwaters of the Spey, Dee, Don, North and South Esk and Tay catchments in the National Park and communities affected downstream.



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4. Landscape-scale ecosystem restoration

Landscape-scale ecosystem restoration is about reconnecting a fragmented system, making it larger by connecting woodland, freshwater, restored peatlands and habitat mosaics in the uplands and helping it to function better as a whole.

4a. Nature networks

The focus of this area of work is to rebuild connectivity between habitats through nature networks*, to improve functionality and enable species to move, adapt, and recover. Native woodland and open habitats connecting catchments*, healthier river and wetland systems, restored peatlands and a mosaic of diversity in the uplands are beginning to form an interconnected ecological fabric across the National Park.

Baseline data and indicators

- Nature Networks maps.
- Hectares and connectivity of woodland in nature networks.
- Extent of trees and shrubs in montane core*.
- Hectares and connectivity of species rich grassland.
- Number and connectivity of new ponds.

Targets

- 1,000 hectares of woodland creation is in nature network corridors.
- Increased extent of willows, birch, juniper and shrubs in the montane core.
- Increased connectivity of woodland.
- Increased number and connectivity of ponds.
- Improved extent and connectivity of species rich grassland network.

Actions

- Prioritise funding and resources to deliver ecosystem restoration in the core montane area and in nature networks in the National Park.

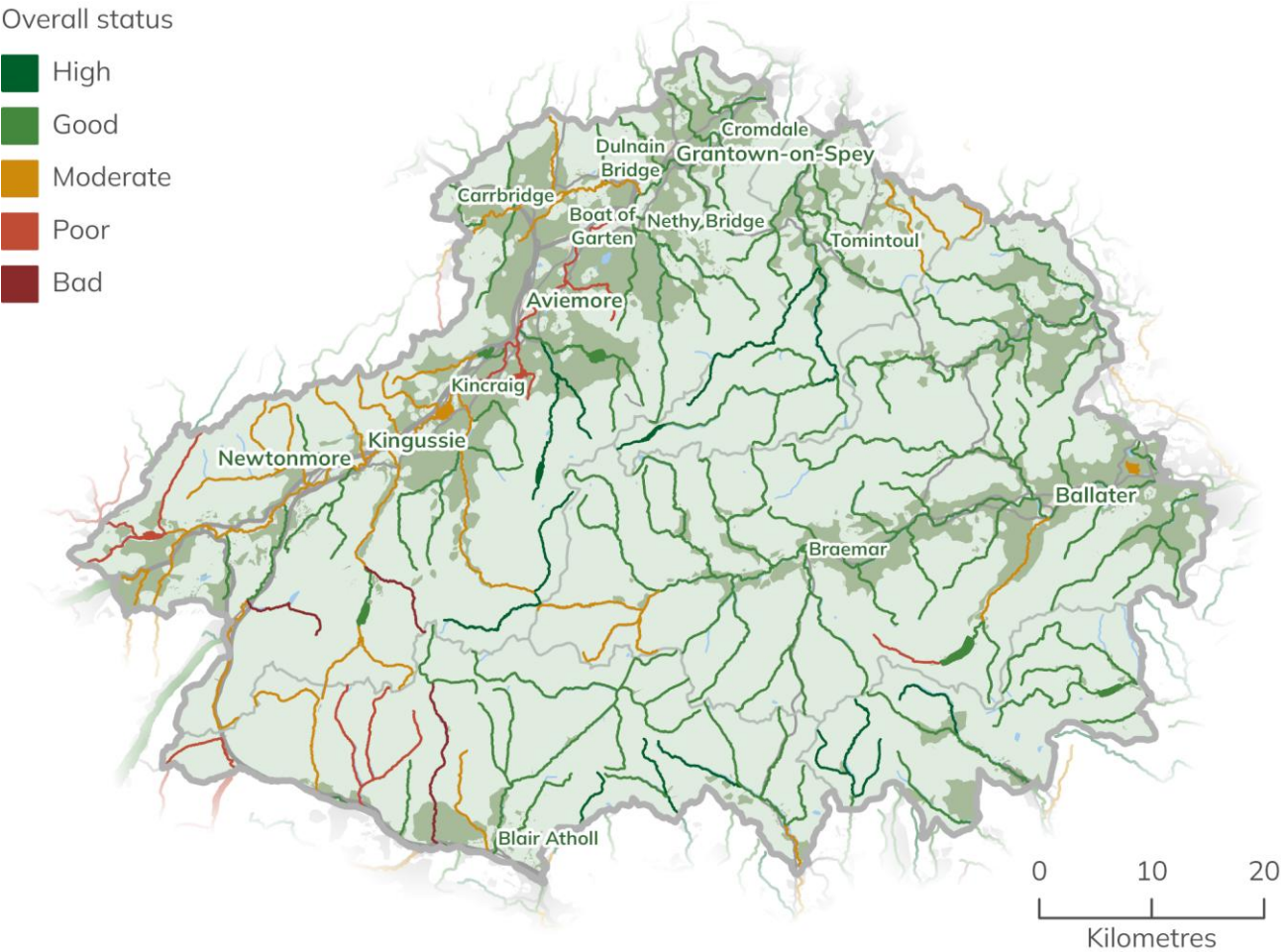
- Maximise the use of Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme and blended finance* to catalyse woodland creation in nature networks*.
- Create a network of species and structural diversity* in the managed uplands, breaking up big areas of homogeneity and creating a mosaic of habitats.
- Extend and scale up planting of upland / montane trees and shrubs.
- Create natural firebreaks through the delivery of a wetland and freshwater nature network.
- Spatially prioritise and target the Nature Restoration Fund and inward investment towards key ecosystem restoration areas like nature networks and the core montane area.

Figure five: Woodland connectivity corridors



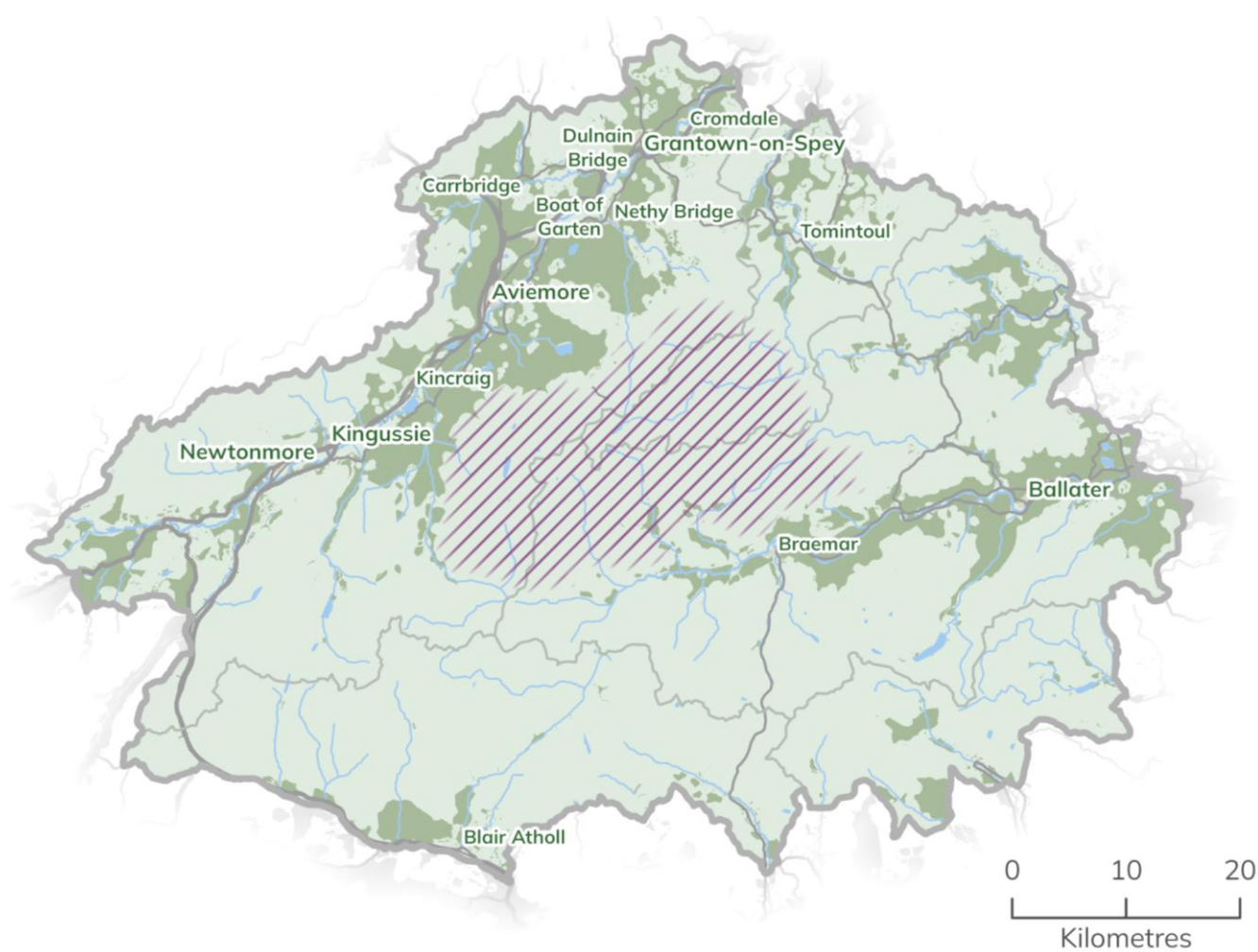
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Figure six: Overall water quality of freshwater waterbodies in the Cairngorms National Park



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Figure seven: Montane core



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4b. Ecosystem restoration

Ecosystem restoration underpins nature networks*. Degraded land is being re-wetted, native species are returning, and natural processes are being allowed to shape the landscape again, particularly in areas like Cairngorms Connect and Mar Lodge Estate.

Designations have provided an important framework for identifying, protecting and monitoring what was felt to be important species and habitats. However, we are at a time of changing approaches to conservation, re-aligning priorities and outcomes towards mitigating for and adapting to the effects of the twin crises (nature and climate emergency*). As we look to deliver what we need in the future as well as what we need to protect now, there are some instances where the way designations are set up, or commonly interpreted, is acting as a barrier to delivering these outcomes. A more mobile, adaptive framework would enable flexibility as part of natural processes whilst maintaining existing commitments at a landscape-scale.

More structural and species diversity in the montane core* and more woodland networks will deliver multiple benefits for nature, climate and people. They will also increase fuel load. Wildfire resilience planning will therefore play a critical part in achieving these objectives and protecting the networks. This will involve considering a range of mitigation measures, including strategic firebreaks in woodland corridors, both natural and man-made, and re-wetting (see fire management on page 27).

Baseline data and indicators

- Percentage of the National Park currently managed for ecosystem restoration.

Targets

- At least 50% of the National Park to be managed principally for ecosystem restoration by 2045.

Actions

- Create and support landscape-scale partnerships.
- Increase amount of land in Nature30* agreements.

- Offer long-term management agreements* to secure land being managed principally for ecosystem restoration.
- Redesign our approach to conservation designations* in the National Park by 2030 to help deliver ecosystem restoration and contribute to ecological networks in line with new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.
- Provide a report by 2028 on the data and evidence of community and wider socio-economic benefits generated by land managed principally for ecosystem restoration.
- All Land Management Plans required through the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 to show their contribution to the implementation of the National Park Partnership Plan.



Draft Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2027-32

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4c. Woodland expansion and management

The ancient woodlands of the National Park are some of the most important in the UK. Native woodland expansion is an important part of ecosystem restoration. The expansion of Caledonian pine forests and mixed broadleaved woodlands through reduced grazing and natural regeneration* is creating a more natural landscape of trees and open habitats, improving biodiversity, increasing shade, and stabilising soils. Woodland expansion in the Cairngorms is about delivering multiple benefits for nature and climate resilience, whilst also providing a long-term economic resource for the National Park. In the right place there are also carbon storage benefits although this is not the primary driver for woodland expansion in the National Park.

Increasing the amount of woodland through planting and natural regeneration will produce many benefits for biodiversity, the economy and climate resilience. It will also increase field layer vegetation in some areas for a significant period of time. Large areas of mature woodland and re-wetted areas will help create a more fire resilient landscape in the future. However, these habitats will take many years to develop and during the intervening period fuel loads will increase, as will the corresponding need for fire risk mitigation. The Integrated Wildfire Management Plan encourages land managers to consider how they might reduce the risk of wildfire and increase wildfire resilience in this changing landscape.

Management of existing woodlands is also crucial. The existing woodlands are dominated by areas of productive native woodlands, predominately Scots pine. These woodlands deliver multiple benefits for nature and climate resilience, whilst also providing a long-term economic resource including a source of quality timber. The sustainable management of these woodlands including deer management, restoration and management of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites, safeguarding and enhancing the integrity of existing ancient woodlands, changing species diversity, positive management of field layer and a move towards more continuous cover forestry* will improve climate and wildfire resilience.

Baseline data and indicators

- Cairngorms Nature Index* woodland condition value.
- Current woodland area.
- Current native woodland area.
- Natural regeneration* area.

Targets

- Upward trend in woodland condition.
- A minimum of 7,000 hectares created between 2027 and 2032 as a contribution towards the long-term target of 35,000 hectares between 2022 and 2045.
- Minimum of 80% of new woodland will be native woodland.
- Minimum of 2,500 hectares of natural regeneration by 2032 towards the long-term target of 10,000 hectares by 2045.
- Increase in area managed as continuous cover forestry*.

Actions

- Maximise use of the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme to encourage a pipeline of new schemes.
- Promote and provide support for the use of continuous cover forestry where suitable.
- All new woodland creation schemes and Long-Term Forest Plans will include an assessment of wildfire risk and plans to mitigate.
- Produce forest wildfire risk map by 2028.
- Focus on deer management as part of forestry proposals to support continuous cover forestry, encourage natural regeneration and minimise fencing.
- Increase woodland grazing with cattle.
- Review Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy by 2030 and support implementation with training and advice.
- Map sitka spruce seeded outwith plantations and take action to reduce.

5. Species recovery

Species recovery is linked closely with ecosystem restoration but there is a need to give some of our most threatened and iconic species a helping hand whilst habitats recover.

Management for certain keystone or flagship species* also provides benefits for other species. If woodlands have healthy capercaillie and wood ant populations, they will also have cascading benefits for the entire ecosystem. Similarly, a healthy aspen network will support a suite of priority species. The converse also applies: recovering moorland raptor populations are an indicator of sustainably and less intensively managed uplands. There is also a need to ensure a balance between access management and species disturbance which is set out in the managing for visitors section.

Species recovery plans focus on species where action will have multiple benefits for other species.

The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan* will also include actions on other species to be delivered through partnership working, including Scottish wildcat, rare invertebrates and rare plants projects.

Baseline data and indicators

- Cairngorms Nature Index* condition for:
 - Capercaillie
 - Waders
 - Aspen
 - Beavers
 - Freshwater pearl mussels
 - Raptors
 - Wood ants
- Number of beaver mitigation incidents resolved.

Targets

Indicators showing a positive trend towards sustained population increase by 2045 for:

- Capercaillie
- Waders
- Aspen
- Beavers
- Freshwater pearl mussels
- Raptors
- Wood ants

Actions

Development of and / or continued implementation of species recovery plans, emergency plans and management plans for:

- Capercaillie
 - Key action: deliver emergency plan.
- Waders
 - Key action: trial techniques to manage the impacts of predation.
- Aspen
 - Key action: plant 10,000 trees in key locations.
- Beavers
 - Key action: deliver management and mitigation plan.
- Fresh water pearl mussels
 - Key action: translocation programme supported by conservation breeding facility.
- Raptors
 - Key action: eliminate raptor persecution.
- Wood ants
 - Key action: translocation programme to reinforce and expand populations.

6. Climate mitigation

The delivery of climate mitigation is an important by-product of the actions in all the sections of this Plan and will guide the Local Development Plan* and other work. The aim is to create a nature rich and climate resilient National Park. This will help to reduce our emissions and store more carbon, as part of Scotland's overall journey to decarbonise. It is important that we continue to play our part in reducing emissions and sequestering carbon as the negative impacts of higher temperatures on nature, people and systems will be considerable over the coming decades.

Baseline data and indicators

- Small World Consulting carbon audit model and baseline data.

Targets

- Continual reduction in emissions from the National Park.

Actions

- Greenhouse gas emission audit carried out on a bi-annual basis.



Policy positions: nature and climate resilience

Policy one

Polluter pays principle will underpin the National Park Partnership Plan, whereby those responsible for pollution should bear the costs of remediation.

Policy two

The management and use of land in the National Park should deliver multiple benefits in line with the Park's aims and the National Park Partnership Plan.

Policy three

Nature and climate funding from Scottish Government should be targeted on the delivery of the statutory National Park Partnership Plan.

Policy four

Private investment in ecosystem restoration should be transparent and the community benefits associated with it should be specific and aligned with best practice.

Policy five

No wholesale conversion of enclosed, in-bye agricultural land* to forestry. In-bye agricultural land is defined as any land which is or has been enclosed or delineated by fences, dykes, hedges etc (including apportioned land) and which has been used for cultivation, production of forage or closely controlled grazing by stock.

Policy six

Adhere as a minimum to the Muirburn Code and cease burning on deep peat except for purposes as agreed through muirburn* licence process, including for preventing, or reducing the risk of, wildfires where appropriate.

Policy seven

Reduce the impacts of red deer and other herbivores (roe deer, fallow deer, sheep, rabbits, brown and mountain hare) in areas focussed on the delivery of nature recovery objectives.

Policy eight

Maintain dark skies.

Policy nine

Conserve and enhance the special landscape qualities of the National Park.

Policy ten

Presumption against new constructed tracks in open moorland but, where agreed through the planning process, new tracks should be constructed to a high standard, and consideration should be given to how they might contribute to strategic firebreaks.

Policy eleven

Woodland creation and management should be primarily achieved through natural regeneration* with the minimum amount of fencing. No woodland creation schemes or Long-Term Forest Plans will be supported without an appropriate fire plan.

Policy twelve

All land holdings over 1,000 hectares must have a fire management plan.

Policy thirteen

Proposals for biodiversity* enhancement associated with new development will be supported where they contribute to nature networks*, catchment* resilience and ecosystem restoration in the montane core*.

Policy fourteen

Disturbance to sensitive species and habitats will be minimised through active management.

Policy fifteen

The Cairngorms National Park will contribute to the delivery of net zero for Scotland by 2045 and the regeneration and restoration of biodiversity by 2045.

Policy sixteen

The overall integrity of the designation system in the Cairngorms National Park will be maintained where it delivers for ecosystem restoration.

Policy seventeen

Species conservation will focus on multiple benefits and the context of wider, landscape-scale ecosystem restoration taking place.

Policy eighteen

All formal consultations including the Forestry Grant Scheme, planning and licences to include a consideration of slowing the flow* and catchment* resilience.



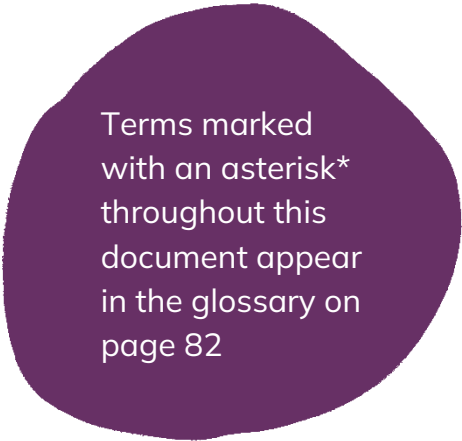
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Mission two: communities



Mission

By putting local residents at the heart of decision-making and supporting a local economy that works for everyone, people and businesses will become more resilient, leading to thriving communities across the National Park.



Terms marked with an asterisk* throughout this document appear in the glossary on page 82

Context

The 18,000 people who live and work in the National Park are crucial for its long-term success. There is a need to support community development organisations and businesses to help create the sort of places where people want to live and businesses want to locate in and grow. The delivery of affordable housing* is a key part of making the National Park work for residents and businesses. There has been significant progress over the past five years, with 159 affordable houses built in the National Park between April 2020 and March 2026 and a short-term let control area introduced in Badenoch and Strathspey. Finance for affordable housing is the crucial issue with increased construction costs meaning that many of the sites in rural areas of the National Park are difficult to develop without significant public intervention.

There are many outstanding community organisations across the National Park undertaking significant work for their communities. It is important that we continue to support these organisations to deliver the aspirations set out in Community Action Plans. It's also vital that communities have the right tools to deliver on the ground. Capacity-building is important to support communities and businesses to become more financially sustainable, reducing reliance on public funding in the medium to long term.

Community wealth building* will be at the heart of delivering the National Park Partnership Plan, in line with the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act 2026. Working together, public bodies are required to support an approach where more of the money spent by public bodies circulates locally and stimulates new opportunities. This includes opportunities for local businesses to access public procurement, for private business and social enterprise to start up and grow, and to support flows of investment into the local economy.

1. Affordable housing

Affordable housing* in the Cairngorms National Park is essential to sustaining our communities as well as the landscape. The National Park is a living, working area, but high house prices compared to wages is making it very difficult for young people and key workers to get on the housing ladder. This is a problem experienced in many areas across Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Providing affordable homes supports local services, businesses, and year-round populations, helping maintain vibrant rural communities. At the same time, new housing has to be carefully designed to respect the National Park's special environment, focusing on existing settlements and using low-impact, sustainable approaches.

The previous Park Plan period saw the introduction of the short-term let control area in Badenoch and Strathspey. The initial information on this policy is that it is having the desired effect of stopping houses being lost to the short-term let market. The increase in second home council tax will also have an impact on the second home market.

Baseline data and indicators

- Local Development Plan* evidence base.
- Current number of homes.
- Current number of short-term lets and trend.
- Current number second homes and trend.
- Housing completions per annum and percentage of affordable housing on allocated sites or over five dwellings.
- Biennial resident and worker survey data.

Targets

- No more than 15% of all housing stock in the National Park will be second homes, vacant or short-term let properties by 2040.
- By 2030, 75% of new housing is for social rental, mid-market rental or other affordable categories that provide affordability in perpetuity.

Actions

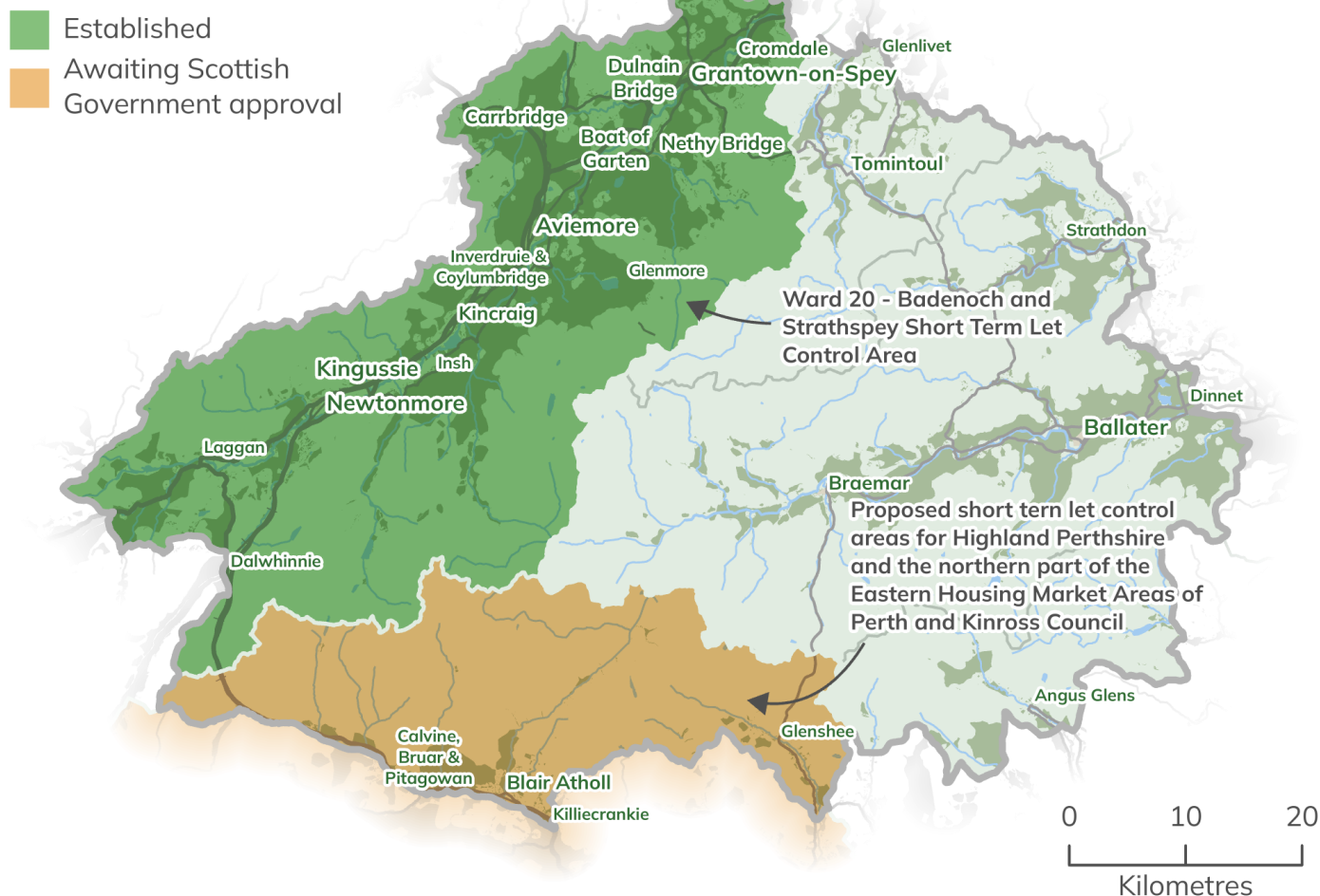
- Maintain short-term let control area for Badenoch and Strathspey, establish a short-term let control area for Highland Perthshire and consider the potential for a further control area in Deeside.
- Use the Local Development Plan* (LDP) to allocate deliverable land for a Local Housing Land Requirement* (LHLR) exceeding the National Planning Framework 4* (NPF4) 10-year minimum all tenure requirement of 850 units.
- Housing delivery pipeline on track to meet LHLR for first five years of LDP period. Ensure that at least 75% of new homes are built as affordable and / or mid-market rent homes through local authority Strategic Housing Investment Plans and affordable housing delivery programmes.
- Local authorities should ring-fence second home council tax additional charges (above the initial 100%) collected in the National Park for investment in affordable housing options in the area of the Local Authority within the National Park or establish equivalent funding streams of equivalent value to deliver affordable housing options needed to support their communities in the National Park. This should be in addition to funding from the Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme.



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Figure eight: Short-term let control areas, established and proposed, covering the Cairngorms National Park

Short term let control areas covering the Cairngorms National Park



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2. Business and enterprise development

The Cairngorms National Park is home to more than 1,000 businesses, most of which are small or micro-businesses employing fewer than 10 people. Additionally, social enterprises or community enterprises* are an established part of the economy.

These businesses span sectors such as:

- Tourism and hospitality
- Food and drink
- Agriculture and land management
- Retail
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Creative industries

Two sectors underpin the economy of the National Park in different ways.

Firstly, tourism is especially important to the local economy, directly or indirectly supporting a large share of long-term employment in the area and providing constant opportunities to start and grow new businesses. Since the National Park was established, the length of the tourism season has been extended into previously quieter months, allowing businesses to operate over more of the year and to provide more secure employment. Growing the value of those quieter months further will make tourism businesses more resilient as well as increase and improve employment opportunities for those directly and indirectly employed by the investment that visitors bring.

One type of tourism business has already been affected by the changing climate, in particular winters with less snow, is skiing. The National Park has three of Scotland's five main ski centres, each operating under different business models, but all with a need to diversify and invest in products for visitors that don't require snow if they are to continue to operate in the long term.

Secondly, land-based businesses are critically important to the delivery of the nature and climate section of this Partnership Plan and play a vital role in supporting the employment in and vibrancy of remoter rural communities. Much land management is

changing to support nature recovery and to adapt to climate change. This is changing the costs of managing the land and the sources of income that maintain jobs. There is a need to support sustainable business models.

Baseline data and indicators

- The gross value of tourism, employment in the sector and seasonal trends are estimated annually through Scottish Tourism Economic Impact Model (STEAM).
- Number of people employed in land-based roles.

Targets

- Increase the annual value of tourism to the National Park by more than the Scottish average rate of increase.
- Increase the rate of value increase in tourism to the National Park in autumn, winter and spring by more than the summer season increase.
- Maintain or increase the number of people employed in land-based roles in the National Park.

Actions

Tourism

- Deliver a specific winter marketing campaign to target off-peak season visits.
- Develop an events strategy for National Park to support year-round events for communities and visitors by 2028.
- Renew the National Park's accreditation with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and deliver a revised Tourism Action Plan.
- Ensure any Visitor Levy schemes introduced that cover the National Park support investment in visitor infrastructure and services within the National Park to support delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Ski-centres

- Each ski centre should be supported to review their long-term business plan to take account of less reliable winters and any need to diversify activities or rationalise infrastructure.

Land-based

- Provide support for land-based businesses to transition business models, support their workforce to adapt skills, and develop training and opportunities for new entrants.
- Support skills and training to deliver continuous cover forestry*.
- Roll out of agriculture advice / best practice and training from the Cairngorms 2030 future farming project.
- Develop the use of branding for high-quality local food producers.

Opportunities for young people

- Develop the 'Your Future Here' programme to showcase the opportunities for young people to work in the National Park or develop careers here.

Entrepreneurship

- Establish a small business loan scheme to support small and micro enterprise start up or grow, complementing existing grant schemes.

Enterprise support

- Maintain and refine the support systems available to business in the National Park through public sector agencies and business collaboration, member organisations and social enterprise support networks.

3. Community development

Communities and the people living in them are central to the vibrancy and success of the National Park. People make a place, and the communities of the Cairngorms are no exception.

Over 18,000 people live in the National Park, spread across five local authority areas and over 20 distinct communities. From Atholl in the south to Grantown-on-Spey in the north, Laggan in the west to Ballater and Strathdon in the east, each of these

communities has its own distinct character and identity. What unites them is a pride in their local area and a commitment to deliver on the ground for their residents and visitors.

Every community within the National Park has a Community Action Plan or equivalent developed by local residents, which sets out their key priorities over the next five years. The Park Authority and its partners will continue to support the delivery and renewal of these plans, ensuring local priorities are achieved.

Baseline data and indicators

- Assets under community ownership or management.
- Biennial resident and worker survey.
- Communities with up-to-date Community Action Plans or Local Place Plans.
- Community Led Local Development Funding level.

Targets

- The numbers of assets in community ownership or management increases year on year.
- All communities have Community Action Plans or equivalent in place that are no more than five years old.
- Increased number and variety of grantees.

Actions

- Promote Scottish Land Commission Guidance and monitor compliance.
- Support communities to acquire and manage assets.
- A refreshed programme of support for community action planning and local place plans
- Develop and administer a new community-led development funding stream, applying best practice in community involvement and design of funds where possible.

- Review of current methodology for Community Action Plans to support communities to apply best practice in community participation and adapt to any wider public sector reforms of local governance.

4. Cultural heritage

The Cairngorms National Park is rich in historical and contemporary culture.

People have lived and worked in the area for thousands of years, and the National Park's heritage is cared for by and celebrated in communities across the Cairngorms, through events, interpretation, storytelling and music.

Partner organisations safeguard and promote the National Park's culture and heritage and provide opportunities for people to experience and learn about our outstanding historic environment, history and culture.

The Cairngorms also has a long and rich association with Gaelic, Scots and Doric, from our place names to traditional music, poetry and song. Public authorities have a statutory duty to support the continued use of Gaelic by maintaining it as an active language and culture and the Scottish Languages Act (2025) is likely to provide a similar framework for Scots and Doric.



Baseline data and indicators

- Cultural Heritage Fund grantee numbers and range of projects.
- Census data information on Gaelic, plus number of Gaelic learners, formally and informally.

Targets

- An increasing number of community-led cultural heritage projects delivered.
- Increased opportunities for individuals and communities to engage with Gaelic language and culture, linked to Gaelic Language Plan commitments, as well as Doric and Scots.

Actions

- Informal cultural heritage network meets regularly.
- Delivery of Cultural Heritage Fund, supporting community heritage projects that deliver on priorities identified by the cultural heritage network.
- All public bodies implement their Gaelic Language Plans and equivalents in full.
- Develop a suite of support tools for Gaelic, in collaboration with local businesses and community / cultural groups and look at options for Doric and Scots.

5. Transport connectivity

Transport connectivity is fundamental to creating a National Park that works for residents, businesses and visitors.

The dispersed nature of communities, long travel distances, transport poverty and limited public transport options can make it difficult for people to access employment, education, healthcare, recreation and services.

A more connected National Park will reduce reliance on private car travel, improve access for those who do not drive and support Scotland's climate ambitions.

Active travel* routes, public transport services, community transport and integrated travel hubs all have a role to play.

Improving connectivity is not solely about moving people. It is about increasing access to opportunity, reducing social isolation, supporting local businesses and enabling more people to enjoy the National Park without increasing pressure on sensitive locations.

Baseline data and indicators

- Number of locations with integrated transport information.
- Number of cycle hubs*, ebike charging facilities and bike hire facilities.
- Visitor and resident satisfaction with sustainable travel options.
- Number of community-led organised rides to school, known as bike buses.

Targets

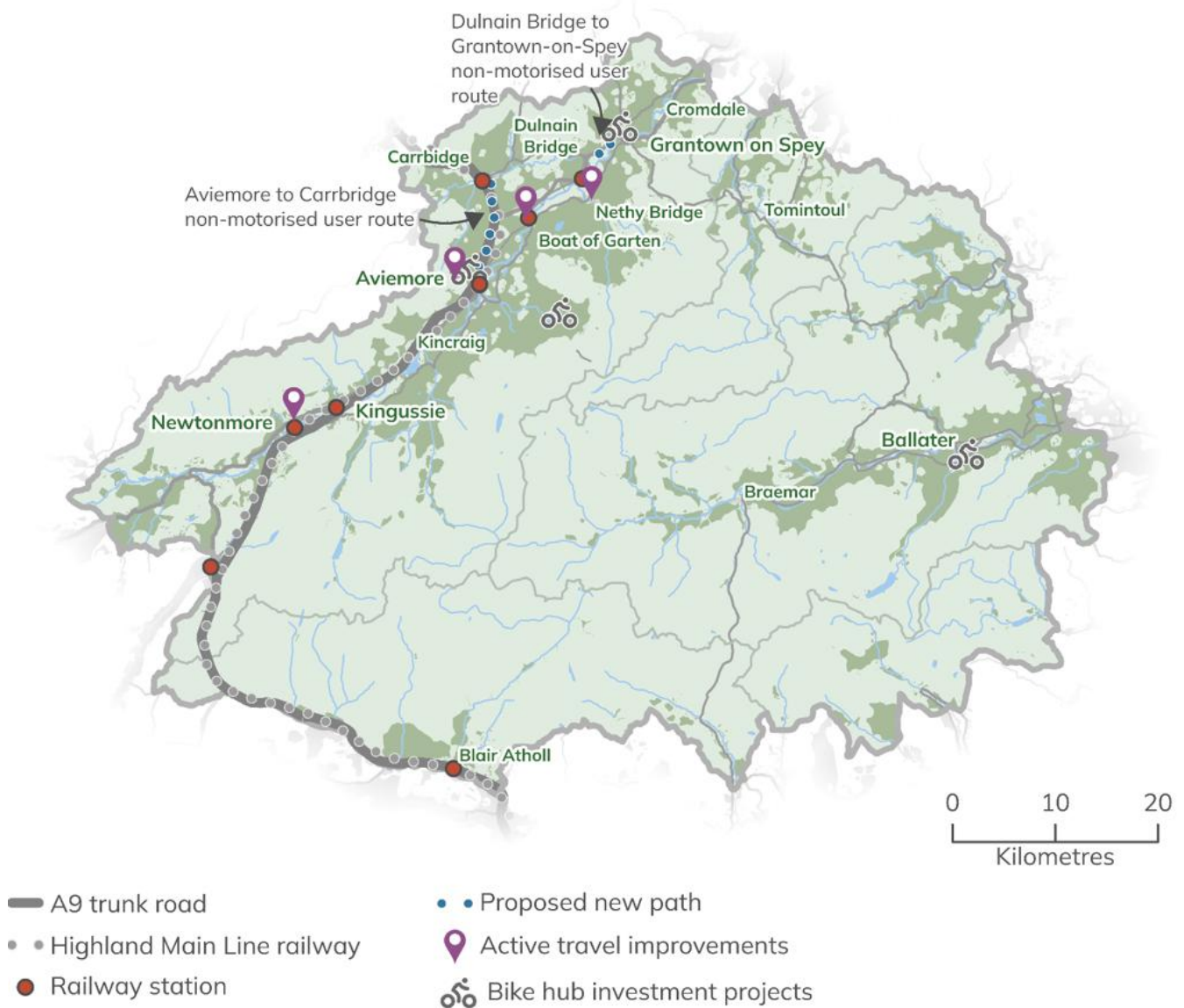
- Community cycle hubs at appropriate scales in all main communities in the National Park.
- The Aviemore Hi-Bikes scheme is fully operational, well maintained and supported by a long-term partnership agreement.

Actions

- Develop an Aviemore park and ride mobility hub.
- New off-road active travel* route from Aviemore to Carrbridge delivered and more coherent Kingussie to Aviemore route completed, as the A9 dualling work continues.
- Develop Grantown to Dulnain active travel* route.
- Completion of Cairngorms 2030 active communities' projects.
- Delivery of further active travel* improvements reflecting Active Travel Plan priorities.
- Complete cycle hubs strategy with new hubs at an appropriate scale in all main communities in National Park.
- Install and maintain HITRANS Hi-Bikes in Aviemore, with HITRANS and Transport Scotland confirming long-term partnership for operating and maintaining the scheme.

- Identify a long-term support model for Cairngorms 2030 behaviour change work on bikes to school and workplace active travel.
- Local authorities to review bus service provision opportunities when contracts are reviewed.

Figure nine: Key transport infrastructure and travel improvements



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Policy positions: communities

Policy one

Maintain the population of the National Park and maintain or grow the proportion of the working-age population.

Policy two

All grant and public contracts from the public sector expect those receiving to pay the Real Living Wage, encouraging fair employment and just labour markets.

Policy three

Maximise the proportion of new housing development that is affordable in perpetuity, using short-term let control areas where needed and licensing of short-term let properties.

Policy four

Provide a housing land supply and associated policies in the Local Development Plan* that meet the Local Housing Land Requirement* and support the level of affordable housing* need identified in the Housing Need and Demand Assessments*.

Policy five

Consolidate the role of the strategic settlements identified in the current and future Local Development Plans as the most sustainable places for future growth and the focus for the majority of housing land supply in line with infrastructure first principles, whilst enabling an appropriate level of growth in intermediate and rural settlements.

Policy six

Support sensitively designed improvements to the A9 and other trunk roads and the main railway line as an integral part of enhancing the connectivity of the Highlands.

Policy seven

Support improvements to the mobile communications network that improve access to next generation technology only where it does not have a significant visual impact on the National Park or is in the core wild land area of the National Park.

Policy eight

Increase renewable electricity and heat generation, especially biomass, hydro, solar and small-scale wind turbines primarily where those have a community benefit. Large-scale wind turbines are not compatible with the landscape character or special landscape qualities of the National Park. They are inappropriate within the National Park, or in areas outside the National Park where they adversely affect its landscape character or special landscape qualities and compromise its overall integrity and objectives for designation.

Policy nine

A high standard of sustainable design, energy and water efficiency and sustainably sourced materials will be required in new development.

Policy ten

Rehabilitation and renovation of redundant rural buildings will be supported.

Policy eleven

Archaeological sites and their settings will be protected.

Policy twelve

Promote Gaelic language and culture alongside Doric and Scots.

Policy thirteen

Support community and social enterprises* to develop sustainable financial models and reduce reliance on ongoing public sector funding.

Policy fourteen

Support innovation and entrepreneurship to help businesses and social enterprises start up and grow in the National Park including alternative business models, employee-owned businesses, targeted finance and retention of value in public sector spending. In general, existing commercial properties should remain so and conversion to alternative uses should only be considered where a commercial use is no longer viable.

Policy fifteen

Support bringing vacant and derelict land back into use in a way that provides financial, social or environmental benefit to the community.

Mission three: National Park for all



Mission

By increasing accessibility for all to the National Park and sustainably managing visitor pressure, people will benefit from nature and the outdoors, leading to better physical and mental health.

Context

The National Park welcomes over two and a half million visitors each year with over four million visitor days. Tourism is the main employer in the National Park supporting more than 6,000 full-time equivalent jobs. It is also the key economic driver of the National Park contributing £522 million in 2025 to the local economy. There is a need to ensure that local communities benefit from this, and that investment is made in the right places to ensure that visitors are supported to protect the environment of the National Park.

This mission focuses on ensuring that the National Park is genuinely a Park for all. By improving access, supporting public health, promoting equality and creating opportunities for volunteering and learning, we can ensure that more people benefit from the National Park while protecting the special qualities that make it unique.

1. Managing for visitors

Annual visitors to the National Park have increased from over one million to two and a half million people since the National Park was established. Whilst this has provided a welcome boost to the local economy, it has increased pressure on infrastructure, services and the environment during peak periods. The availability of housing for people working in the National Park is stretched and this is impacting on the potential of businesses to meet customer demands and provide high-quality services.

Visitors will remain an essential part of the economy of the National Park. Our ambition is to see the benefits of the visitor economy being realised more widely across the National Park and pressures eased, with more focus on the off-peak seasons.

Over the past few years, a winter marketing campaign has encouraged visitors to come to the Cairngorms in quieter periods. This has led to a significant increase in visitors between October and March each year, helping local businesses.

Baseline data and indicators

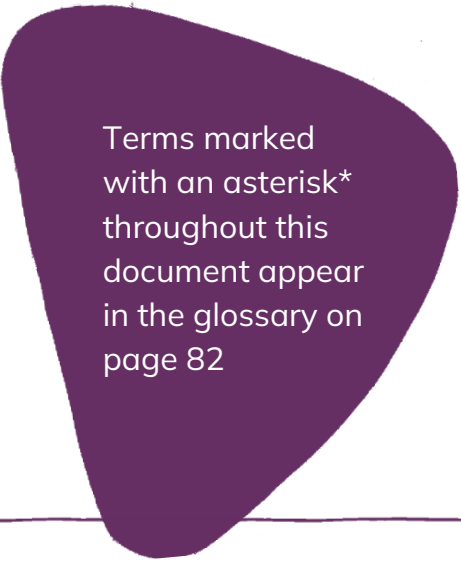
- Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) data
- Visitor survey
- Ranger patrol data

Targets

- Growth in visitor numbers is concentrated at off-peak times of year and in areas with capacity.
- Length of visitor stays increase.
- Visitor satisfaction levels remain high.
- Number of publicly available toilets within the National Park is maintained.
- Number of public toilet facilities for people with additional needs increases.
- Number of managed facilities for campervans and motorhomes increases.
- Number of rangers employed within the National Park is stable or increasing.

Actions

- Review Fire Management Byelaw by 2031.
- Review Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan in 2027 / 28.
- Review ranger services in the National Park to ensure alignment with Park Plan objectives.
- Map accessible facilities, so people can identify in advance of their journey available accessibility support.
- Promote the range of campervan and motorhome facilities to manage impacts from this growing market.

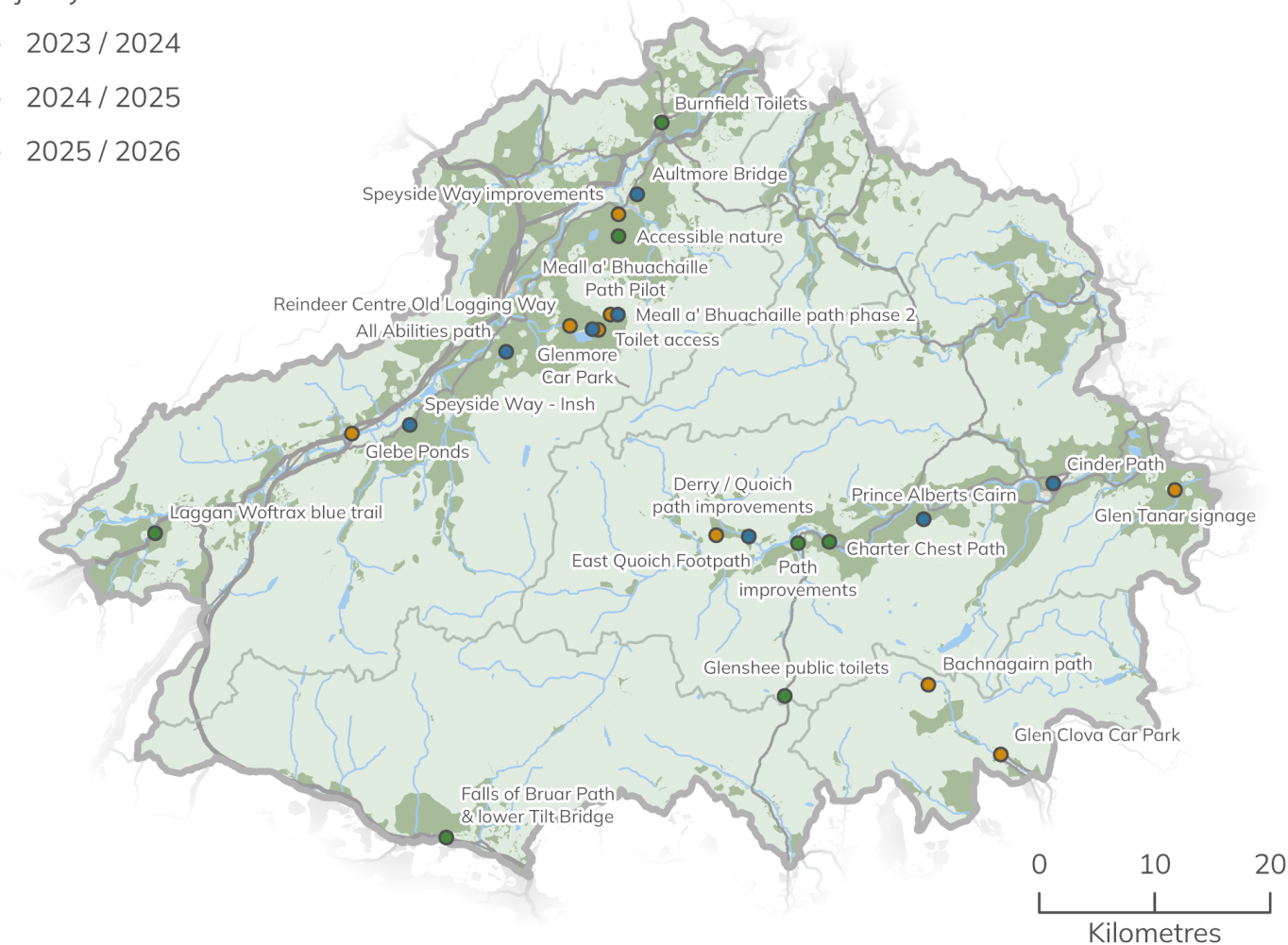


Terms marked with an asterisk* throughout this document appear in the glossary on page 82

Figure 1: Visitor infrastructure investment 2023 – 2026

Project year

- 2023 / 2024
- 2024 / 2025
- 2025 / 2026



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2. Outdoor access and recreation

Visitor survey data tells us that a majority of visitors to the National Park either come specifically to undertake outdoor activities or participate in outdoor activities during their visit even if this was not the main reason for visiting. Data also shows significant levels of use of the National Park by local communities.

A key priority of the Plan, therefore, is to ensure that we continue to offer an accessible and high-quality network of paths and trails in the National Park. This involves investment in paths and related infrastructure, including facilities that make paths more accessible to a wider range of users. We must also deliver on statutory duties to enable responsible public access and limit any impacts on sensitive habitats and species.

Baseline data and indicators

- Kilometres of core paths in good condition.
- Kilometres of core paths suitable for all ability access.

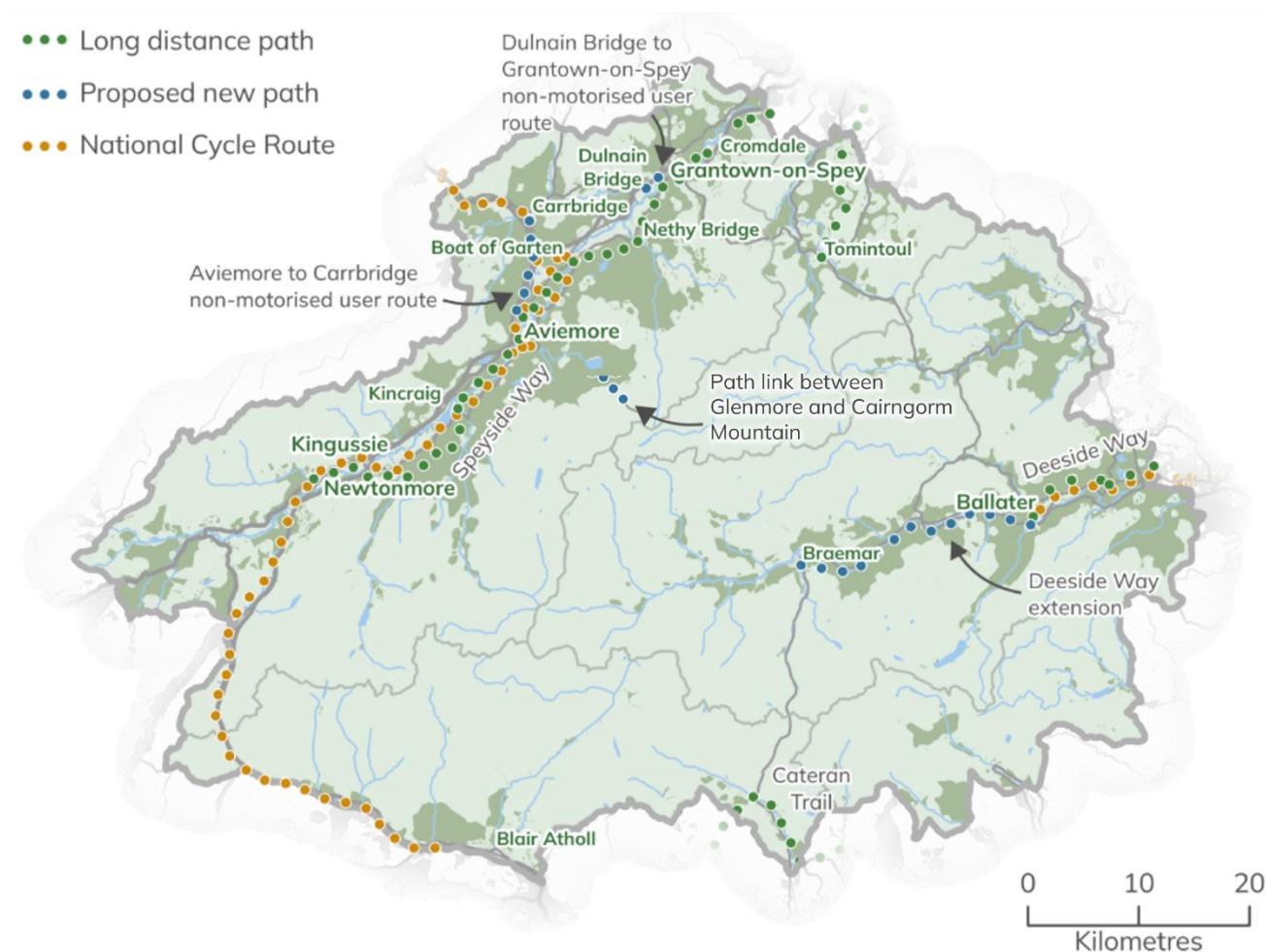
Targets

- Increase the number of kilometres of safe and inclusive off-road routes.
- The core path network is in good condition and accessible to the widest possible range of users.

Actions

- Review the Active Cairngorms Action Plan in 2028.
- Complete the extension of Deeside Way to Braemar by 2030.
- Enhance the accessibility and condition of the Speyside Way and improve options for cycling.
- Develop path link from Loch Morlich to Cairngorm Mountain.
- Disturbance of key species and recreational impacts are reduced through advice from rangers, signage, selective promotion of routes and targeted initiatives.
- Ensure young people in and around the Cairngorms are educated about the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) through ranger activity in schools.
- Consider where recreation routes may provide fire breaks where appropriate.

Figure 2: Long distance paths and active travel* routes



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3. Health and wellbeing

The National Park is a significant public health asset. Access to nature, outdoor recreation and social connection can improve both physical and mental wellbeing, reduce loneliness and support preventative healthcare.

Evidence demonstrates that time spent outdoors contributes to improved health outcomes, particularly for people experiencing poor mental health, long-term health conditions, dementia and social isolation. The Cairngorms can play an important role in

supporting preventative approaches that reduce pressure on health and social care services.

Green health programmes, outdoor activity, volunteering and nature-based interventions provide opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to improve their wellbeing. These benefits are particularly important in rural communities where access to services can be challenging.

The Park Authority and partners will continue to strengthen green health referral pathways, support community-based health initiatives and ensure that the National Park contributes positively to Scotland's public health ambitions.

Baseline data and indicators

- Key public health indicators.
- Number of green health referrals.
- Number of Outdoor Brain Health and Dementia Resource Centre referrals.

Targets

- Increase participation in nature-based health programmes.
- Increase the number of green health referrals each year.
- Extend health walks provision to all National Park communities.
- Increase the range of health walks available to suit varying abilities.
- Increase use of the Outdoor Brain Health and Dementia Resource Centre.

Actions

- Extend green health referral opportunities to Grampian and Tayside Health Board areas.
- Extend the health walks programme to every community in the National Park.
- Make greater use of green health directories to support self-led green health activities.
- Extend the number of dementia friendly walks.

4. Inclusion and accessibility

The Cairngorms National Park strives to be a Park for all, and a place where everyone is and feels safe, welcome and able to thrive.

Though the benefits of connecting to nature and the outdoors are well known, access to these benefits is not yet equal and many people are unfairly held back from participation and enjoying all that the Cairngorms National Park has to offer. There are lots of reasons for this, from a lack of representation to the affordability of things like clothing, kit, accommodation and transport, to experiences of discrimination. In a time when there are pressures on the cost of living for many people it is imperative that there is a focus on affordability within the National Park.

Work in this area is supported and guided by valued partnerships and expertise. The external Equality Advisory Panel brings together experts from across the public, private and the third sector to provide evidence-based feedback, guidance and advice, grounded wherever possible in lived experience.

Baseline data and indicators

- Information from visitor survey and residents survey.
- SPANS 2026 interim report.
- Number of targeted low cost / discounted tickets sold by visitor attractions to encourage affordable visits.
- Numbers of minority ethnic groups visiting the National Park who are hosted or supported by the Park Authority.

Targets

- Visitors to the National Park will more closely resemble the overall demography of Scotland.
- Increase the availability and uptake of lower cost tickets for visitor attractions and activities by lower income groups.
- Increase the number of minority ethnic groups visiting the National Park who are hosted or supported by Park Authority.

Actions

- Establish a fund to support under-represented communities, both inside and outside the National Park, to access the Park.
- Grow the role, remit and influence of the Cairngorms Youth Action Team.
- Conduct regular surveys of residents' and visitors' values and attitudes to key issues in the National Park.
- Through partnerships, including those with Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Black Professionals UK (BPUK) and Cairngorms Pride, identify barriers to access for under-represented groups and work to overcome those barriers.
- Work in partnership to deliver targeted and innovative engagement opportunities with key audiences focussing on depth of engagement for the benefit of the National Park.
- Develop low-cost itineraries to provide opportunities for more people to enjoy the Park.

5. Volunteering

Volunteering delivers tangible benefits to the management of the National Park and the delivery of local initiatives. It provides excellent training opportunities and experience for future employment as well as contributing to the physical and mental wellbeing of those participating in volunteering. We want to see an expansion of the opportunities available for volunteering in the National Park, ensuring they are open to people from all backgrounds.

Baseline data and indicators

- Number of volunteers.
- Number of volunteer rangers.

Targets

- At least 200 volunteer rangers to help look after the National Park by 2030.
- Increase the number of National Park volunteer days every year.

Actions

- Develop and expand the Volunteer Cairngorms programmes.
- Support communities in maintaining and improving their local environment including path network, litter collection, open spaces, species and habitat work.

6. Outdoor learning

Outdoor learning continues to be an important component in creating a lasting connection between people and nature in the National Park whatever their age, background or circumstances. We will work with other national parks, partners and communities to provide meaningful opportunities for people to experience and care for nature in the Cairngorms, and support communities in maintaining and improving their local environment.

There will be a particular focus on young people, helping them to understand and care for the special qualities of the National Park while gaining skills and experience to help them into employment particularly in the land-based sector.

Baseline data and indicators

- Number of education activities delivered.
- Number of Dùthchas Awards completed.
- Number of schools involved in outdoor learning programmes with ranger service.
- Number of junior rangers.

Targets

- Scottish Outdoor Access Code activities delivered in every school in the National Park.
- Junior Ranger programme delivered in every secondary school that includes a National Park catchment.

Actions

- Develop and expand the Dùthchas Award programme.
- Deliver Scottish Outdoor Access Code education to schools including direct delivery to pupils by rangers and Continuing Professional Development for teachers.

Policy positions: National Park for all

Policy one

Ensure high-quality facilities and infrastructure are in place at key visitor destinations in the National Park.

Policy two

Ensure Ranger Service provision is comprehensive across the National Park.

Policy three

Reduce fire risk by implementing the Fire Management Byelaw.

Policy four

Promote the health benefits of outdoor recreation and GP-led green health referrals.

Policy five

Ensure a high-quality functional network of active travel, core paths and long-distance routes.

Policy six

Ensure green health referral system is maintained within the National Park.

Policy seven

Promote responsible behaviour in the National Park.

Policy eight

Support the delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence and education through outdoor learning.

Policy nine

Promote and enhance volunteer opportunities.

Policy ten

Promote targeted opportunities to support people from under-represented groups to visit and enjoy the National Park.

Policy eleven

Ensure that the access infrastructure of the National Park is designed and maintained to be as accessible as possible to people with the widest range of abilities.



Complementary strategies

Capital investment

There is a need for sustained investment in the capital infrastructure of the National Park to aid the transition to a net zero economy and to ensure that the Park is able to manage effectively the two and a half million visitors that come each year. This section sets out the high-level strategic approach to capital investment over the next five years.

We have identified six guiding principles for capital investment in the National Park:

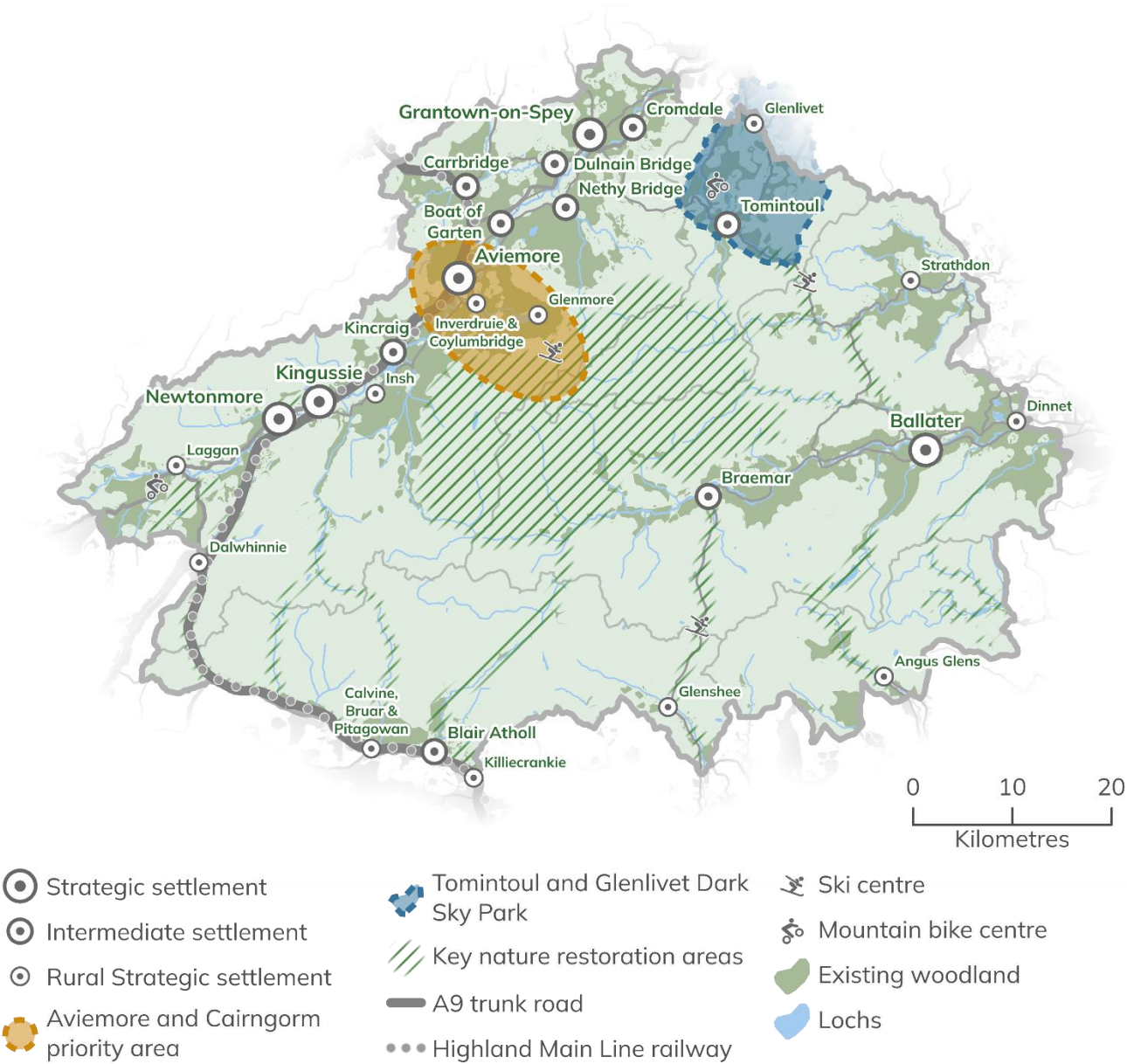
- **Green** – investment will contribute to delivering climate mitigation and adaptation and strengthening nature recovery in the National Park.
- **Cairngorms** – investment will focus on the needs of the National Park and will contribute to the long-term outcomes as set out in the Partnership Plan.
- **Employment** – investment will maximise local employment and support the development of a vibrant economy.
- **Long-term** – investment will be focused on long-term solutions to key issues including visitor management, transport and climate resilience.
- **Community wealth building*** – investment will ensure more resources are kept within the National Park for the benefit of businesses and communities within the area.
- **Equalities, diversity and inclusion** – investment will help to ensure that the Cairngorms is a National Park for all.

Regional Spatial Strategy

The National Park Partnership Plan is the Regional Spatial Strategy* for the Cairngorms National Park that is required by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. It sets out the long-term spatial strategy for development, in the context of the wider range of priorities identified to deliver the aims of the National Park in a collective and coordinated way. The diagram below summarises the strategic developments that will be required in the National Park to contribute to the long-term vision for the National Park, and the

delivery of the targets and actions of the National Park Partnership Plan in each of the missions: nature and climate resilience, communities, and a Park for all.

Figure 3: Strategic developments on the Cairngorms



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Because the Cairngorms National Park is a relatively remote rural place, with mostly small communities but high visitor numbers, comparatively few individual and discrete strategic developments are identified. However, there are a number of strategic development areas and priorities that are identified where multiple small but interconnected developments will support transformational change.

Regional Land Use Framework and Partnership

Balancing the many demands placed on Scotland's finite land area is an essential part of ensuring thriving communities are not negatively impacted by, and are benefitting from, efforts to restore biodiversity* and increase Scotland's resilience to climate change. The regional scale allows for a balance between sensitivity to the needs of local stakeholders and maintaining accountability to national targets. It is in this context that the Regional Land Use Frameworks* (RLUF) and Partnerships* (RLUPs) pilot project seeks to optimise the role Scotland's land plays in addressing the twin climate and nature crises*.

The RLUF seeks to identify natural capital* assets and enable a natural capital-led approach when identifying key priorities for land use within a region so that these align with national climate and environmental targets. The RLUP seeks to test approaches to democratic governance, ensuring regional outcomes are agreed by partnership members with input from regional stakeholders.

Established in 2021, a three-year pilot phase allowed the RLUPs to test out multiple approaches to achieving this. The National Park Authority used this time to trial using our National Park Partnership Plan as the Regional Land Use Framework. It described the priority land use objectives and outcomes for the National Park. The Park Authority Board and supporting stakeholder engagement and technical advisory forums, like the Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group, acted as our Regional Land Use Partnership.

The Scottish Government is now moving from the pilot phase to the formal initiatives and is considering extending the use of land use partnerships beyond the four pilot regions. We are using the learnings from our own pilot to inform our work to support and deliver land use change.

The role and potential for regional and local partnerships has been highlighted as a key theme of Scotland's 4th Land Use Strategy. Through this Strategy, the Scottish

Government presents a new vision for an integrated and resilient national landscape, based on a set of shared land use outcomes. It has committed to publishing a delivery plan by the end of March 2027.

Whilst the content of the delivery plan is still subject to decisions, it is anticipated that one area of work will centre on the relationships between communities, partners, government and agencies, and how we can all work to foster understanding, collaboration and flexibility throughout the land use system. This Park Plan sets out how the national strategy will be delivered in the Cairngorms National Park.

How we will deliver the Plan

Delivery of the Plan

The delivery of the Partnership Plan is the statutory responsibility of all public bodies. This can only be done in partnership with land managers, communities, businesses and the third sector. The Park Authority's responsibility is to coordinate the delivery of the Plan.

Every year, the Park Authority will produce a dashboard showing progress on the delivery of the targets and indicators of the National Park Partnership Plan. Evidence on progress will be sought from all relevant public bodies and private / charitable / community organisations where appropriate.

If a target is off track, this will be brought to the National Park Authority Board along with potential solutions for getting the target back on track. This will also involve other public bodies being asked to provide information as required.

This National Park Partnership Plan is data driven and we want the public facing part to show clearly where progress is being delivered and where there is a need for more focussed action to meet the targets.

Hierarchy of plans

The National Park Partnership Plan is the high-level management plan for the National Park and is the Economic Strategy, Sustainable Tourism Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy*, Climate Action Plan and the Regional Land Use Framework*. It is supported by a number of action plans that will help to deliver the objectives of the Plan and the National Park's aims. Public bodies will also prepare Gaelic Language Plans and Equality Outcomes Plans that will be significant in influencing activity within the National Park.



Proposed implementation groups

The purpose of the different groups is to ensure that partnerships are in place to deliver the Partnership Plan across the public, private and third sectors.

Mission 1: nature and climate resilience

It is proposed that there will be an overarching nature and climate resilience group of key stakeholders to coordinate delivery of the nature and climate resilience part of the National Park Partnership Plan.

This will be supported by the following wider forums:

- Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group
- Cairngorms Agricultural Advisory Group
- Cairngorms Nature Advisory Group

Mission 2: communities

It is proposed that two groups will coordinate delivery of the communities mission within the National Park Partnership Plan. The first is a business and tourism group and the second is a community group.

This will be supported by the following wider forums:

- Community Council Forums
- Cultural Heritage Network

Mission 3: National Park for all

Three groups of key stakeholders will coordinate and advise on the National Park for all mission section within the National Park Partnership Plan. These are:

- Cairngorms Equalities Advisory Panel
- Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum
- Cairngorms Managing for Visitors Group

Glossary of terms

Terms appearing in this glossary are marked with an asterisk* in the main body of text.

- **Active travel** – making journeys in more physically active ways, such as walking, using a wheelchair or mobility aid, cycling, or scooting.
- **Affordable housing** – housing of a good quality that is affordable to people on low and modest incomes, including social rented accommodation, mid-market rented accommodation, shared ownership, shared equity, discounted low-cost housing for sale (including plots for self-build), and low-cost housing without subsidy.
- **Airborne deposition** – the process by which airborne pollutants settle onto ground surfaces, vegetation, and water. The deposition of pollutants can significantly impact ecosystems and human health, leading to environmental degradation and biodiversity* loss.
- **Biodiversity** – the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable.
- **Blended finance** – financial support from a variety of sources, which may include public money, private investment, grant funding or charitable donations.
- **Cairngorms Nature Action Plan** – Cairngorms Nature is a partnership for people and organisations to come together with a common desire to safeguard and enhance the outstanding nature in the Cairngorms National Park. The Action Plan will be developed once the Partnership Plan is approved.
- **Cairngorms Nature Index** – a tool to help establish a baseline and framework for monitoring the health of the National Park's habitats, species and ecosystems.
- **Carbon sequestration** – a natural or artificial process by which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere and held in solid or liquid form.
- **Climate adaptation** – taking action to prepare for and respond to current and projected impacts of climate change, to reduce associated risks such as drought, flooding and wildfire.

- **Climate emergency** – the current situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.
- **Community / social enterprises** – a business or service with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders or owners.
- **Community wealth building** – supporting communities and residents to own, have a greater stake in, or benefit from wealth generated by their local economy.
- **Conservation designations** – this covers such designations as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest etc.
- **Continuous cover forestry** – a management method where a forest canopy is kept intact by selectively harvesting smaller groups of trees rather than clear felling large areas.
- **Cycle hub** – a centralised facility designed to support cyclists, offering a variety of services, such as repair tools, storage or other resources.
- **Deer management groups** – groups of estates or other landholdings that share access to a discrete population or herd of deer that is managed as a common resource.
- **Ecosystem functionality** – the capacity of natural processes and components to provide goods and services that satisfy human needs, either directly or indirectly.
- **Housing Need and Demand Assessment** – Housing Need and Demand Assessments are undertaken by local authorities every five years. They estimate the number of additional housing units required to meet existing and future housing need (social housing) and demand (market housing). They also capture information on the operation of the housing system to assist in the development of policies on new housing supply, management of existing stock, specialist housing provision, and the provision of housing-related services.
- **In-by land** – part of a farm which is used mainly for arable and grassland production, and which is not hill and rough grazing.
- **Just transition** – the concept that justice and equity should form an integral part of the transition towards a low-carbon world.
- **Keystone species** – an important species whose impact on an ecosystem or environment far outweighs its abundance.

- **Local Development Plan** – enables the right kind of development to happen in the right place to help deliver the aims of the Cairngorms National Park. All planning applications in the National Park are assessed against this Plan.
- **Local Housing Land Requirement** – the amount of land required for housing, as identified by the Local Development Plan*. The Local Housing Land Requirement is expected to exceed the 10-year minimum all-tenure housing land requirement for the area, as set out in National Planning Framework 4*.
- **Management agreement** – a long-term contractual agreement between the Park Authority and a landowner that outlines how a piece of land is used, managed or developed.
- **Montane core** – the mountains and surrounding uplands at the centre of the National Park where there are no public roads and no permanent human habitation.
- **Muirburn** – the practice of burning off old growth on moorland to encourage new growth.
- **National Planning Framework 4** – a long-term plan for Scotland, developed by Scottish Government, that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed to support sustainable and inclusive growth.
- **Natural capital** – the world's stock of natural resources, which includes geology, soils, air, water and all living organisms. Natural capital 'assets' such as habitats and ecosystems provide a wide range of benefits to human wellbeing, known as 'ecosystem services.'
- **Natural regeneration** – the process by which woodlands are restocked by trees that develop from seeds that fall and germinate in situ.
- **Nature30** – Nature30 offers an alternative to traditional Protected Areas by recognising areas that deliver positive, sustained, and long-term outcomes for biodiversity* as a result of the land management, regardless of the primary objective of this management.
- **Nature / biodiversity crisis** – the rapid loss of species and the rapid degradation of ecosystems across the planet. Scientists predict that on our current trajectory of habitat loss and global warming, between one third and one half of all species will face extinction by the end of this century. Their disappearance will upend ecosystems and destabilise human civilisations.

- **Nature-based solutions** – actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human wellbeing and biodiversity* benefits.
- **Nature network** – the system connecting more, bigger, better and joined up core areas, corridors and stepping stones of existing and future habitat needed to allow species and habitats to survive in fluctuating conditions.
- **Regenerative agriculture** – restoring and renewing natural assets, particularly soils and ecosystem health, through principles-based, ecological improvement.
- **Regional Land Use Framework / Partnership** – a framework to help national and local government, communities, landowners and stakeholders work together to find ways to optimise land use in a fair and inclusive way, meeting local and national objectives and supporting the journey to net zero.
- **Regional Spatial Strategy** – a long-term strategy for an area of land that identifies: the need for strategic development; the outcomes to which strategic development will contribute; priorities for the delivery of strategic development; and its proposed locations, shown in the form of a map or diagram.
- **River catchments** – the area of land, including the hills and mountains, woodlands and buildings which water drains from, before flowing into streams, rivers and lochs.
- **Slowing the flow** – reducing how quickly water runs through landscapes, helping to prevent floods and river pollution.
- **Structural diversity** – grasses, trees, shrubs, mosses and other vegetation of all different shapes, sizes and heights.
- **Sustainable agriculture** – land management that minimises environmental harm and avoids long-term depletion of natural resources.
- **Woodland Carbon Code** – a scheme administered by Scottish Forestry but available UK-wide. The code allows the owners of new woodland planting schemes to calculate the total carbon sequestration* their woodland will achieve over the lifetime of the trees.

