



For decision

**Title: Local Development Plan – Development Plan Scheme
2025**

Prepared by: Dan Harris, Planning Manager

Purpose

This paper seeks approval of the Development Plan Scheme 2025, as set out in Annex 1.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- a) Approve the Development Plan Scheme 2025.

Strategic context

1. The Development Plan Scheme is an important part of the Local Development Plan (LDP) preparation process. It outlines the timetable for producing the next LDP and includes a participation statement which explains how and when stakeholders will be involved in its production.
2. The Park Authority is required to update its Development Plan Scheme every year. The initial Development Plan Scheme for the next LDP was approved by the Board on 23 June 2023, and the first annual update was approved on 22 November 2024. The Development Plan Scheme 2025, as set out in Annex 1, represents the second annual update to the initial Development Plan Scheme.

Scope of the Development Plan Scheme

3. The key components of the Development Plan Scheme are its timetable and participation statement.
4. The timetable outlines the key stages of the LDP preparation process, identifying the years and months in which each stage is expected to take place. In line with



relevant guidance, the timetable presents this information in the format of financial year quarters.

5. The participation statement outlines when consultation on the LDP is expected to take place, with whom and its likely form, and the steps to be undertaken to involve the public at large. The Park Authority sought the views of Community Councils / Associations and young people, via the Cairngorms Youth Action Team, on the content of the participation statement when the initial Development Plan Scheme was prepared in 2023. There are no changes to the content of the participation statement in the Development Plan Scheme 2025. However, the timescales for undertaking some of the consultation activities have been amended to reflect the updated timetable for preparing the LDP.

Updates to the LDP timetable

6. The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 state that if the timetable included in an updated Development Plan Scheme differs from the timetable in the previous version, the planning authority must identify the changes and the reasons for them.
7. The Development Plan Scheme 2025 contains amendments to the timetable in the previous Development Plan Scheme. The main reason for these changes is a greater volume of work, and therefore more time taken, to produce the Evidence Report than was previously anticipated. This additional work has been undertaken in response to initial feedback from key stakeholders and based on the recent experiences of other local planning authorities at the Evidence Report 'gatecheck' stage. The additional time taken to produce the Evidence Report has knock-on implications for the timing of subsequent stages of plan production.
8. The timescales for publishing the LDP have also been updated to take account of the timetable for preparation of the next National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP), as approved by the Board on 26 September 2025. The Partnership Plan sets the strategic context for the LDP, and it is therefore important that consultation on the LDP takes place after consultation on the Partnership Plan.



9. Scottish Ministers have indicated that they expect all planning authorities to have a new LDP in place by around May 2028. The updated timetable continues to meet this expectation.

Strategic policy consideration

10. The Park Authority has a statutory duty to adopt and publish the Development Plan Scheme. The Development Plan Scheme 2025 set out in Annex 1 was prepared in accordance with Scottish Government's Local Development Planning Guidance, which was published in May 2023.

Strategic risk management

11. While no risk is posed by the adoption of the Development Plan Scheme itself, there are risks to the LDP's timetable for preparation.
12. In particular, there remain uncertainties around the volume and nature of information required for the Evidence Report to be considered sufficient by the Scottish Government's Division for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) during the gatecheck process. At the time of writing this paper, DPEA had issued 19 formal gatecheck decisions on the Evidence Reports submitted by other planning authorities. Of these, only seven Evidence Reports (37%) were found to be sufficient and 12 (63%) were found to be insufficient and returned to the relevant planning authorities for further work.
13. Where an Evidence Report is returned, the planning authority is required to carry out a range of tasks to bring it to sufficiency. This may include the need to redraft sections of the report, gather additional evidence, commission additional studies and carry out further engagement, as well as the statutory democratic processes. The revised version of the Evidence Report must then be resubmitted to the DPEA for a further gatecheck. While the delay caused in the preparation of the LDP in such cases will be dependent on the specific circumstances, the delay caused in all cases will be several months.
14. It should also be noted that the timescales for the gatecheck of the Evidence Report and the later examination of the Proposed LDP are outside the direct control of the Park Authority.



15. Any significant delay to the timetable is likely to present a risk to the ability to meet Scottish Ministers' expectations of having a new LDP in place by around May 2028. An internal programme board has been established to co-ordinate the development of the NPPP and the LDP. This will monitor and manage the above risks insofar as it is possible. The Board will be kept up to date on the progress of the LDP's preparation and the Development Plan Scheme will continue to be updated annually.

Success measures

16. Adoption of the new LDP by the Park Authority Board and its subsequent delivery.

Next steps

17. Once the Development Plan Scheme 2025 is approved by the Board, copies of it will be:
- a) Published on the Park Authority's website.
 - b) Placed in each public library and local authority office in the National Park.
 - c) Emailed to each Community Council and Community Association in the National Park.
 - d) Emailed to Scottish Ministers.

Supporting information

18. Annex 1 – Proposed Development Plan Scheme 2025

Dan Harris

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danharris@cairngorms.co.uk