Topic: Town centres and retail

Engagement version – August 2025

Requirements addressed in this section

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

Section	Requirement
Section 15(5)(a)	the principal physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characteristics of the district.
Section 15(5)(b)	the principal purposes for which the land is used.
Section 15(5)(cd)	The health needs of the population of the district and the likely effects of development and use of land on those health needs.
Section 16B(2)	In preparing the Evidence Report the planning authority are to seek the views of and have regard to any views expressed by key agencies and others.

Links to evidence

- Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/contents

- National Park (Scotland) Act 2000
  https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2000/10/contents

- Town Centre Action Plan: Scottish Government response
  https://www.gov.scot/publications/town-centre-action-plan-scottish-government-response/

- Town centre action plan review: joint Scottish Government and COSLA response
  https://www.gov.scot/publications/town-centre-action-plan-review-joint-scottish-government-cosla-response/

- National Planning Framework 4
  https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/

- Local Development Planning Guidance
  https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2023/05/local-development-planning-guidance/documents/local-development-planning-guidance/local-development-planning-guidance/govscot%3Adocument/local-development-planning-guidance.pdf

- Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022
  https://partnershipplan.cairngorms.co.uk/

- Cairngorms National Park Authority Wellbeing Economy Action Plan
  https://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/22112024/241122Paper2Annex1WellbeingEconomyActionPlan.pdf

- A Healthier Future – Scotland's Diet & Healthy Weight Delivery Plan
  https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2018/07/healthier-future-scotlands-diet-healthy-weight-delivery-plan/documents/00537708-pdf/00537708-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00537708.pdf

- Diet and Weight: Out of Home Action Plan
  https://www.gov.scot/publications/diet-and-healthy-weight-out-of-home-action-plan/

- Scotland's Creative Learning Plan
  https://www.creativescotland.com/about/major-projects/creative-learning-and-young-people/scotlands-creative-learning-plan

- A Culture Strategy for Scotland
  https://www.gov.scot/publications/culture-strategy-scotland/

- A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Action Plan
  https://www.gov.scot/publications/culture-strategy-scotland-action-plan/pages/1/

- Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2022
  https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-2022/pages/overview/

- Agricultural payments: Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
  https://www.gov.scot/policies/agriculture-payments/scottish-rural-development-programme-srdp/#:~:text=The%20Scottish%20Rural%20Development%20Programme,help%20achieve%20sustainable%20economic%20growth

- Agricultural Reform route map
  https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/agricultural-reform-programme/arp-route-map/

- Understanding Scottish Places
  https://www.usp.scot/

- A toolkit for successful town centres
  https://towntoolkit.scot/

- The out of the home environment
  https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/nutrition-research/the-out-of-home-environment

- Out of home – Scotland 2021
  https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/FSS_-_NSP_-_Kantar_OOH_2021_slide_deck_-_PDF_copy_-_FINAL_-_29th_November_2022.pdf

- Monitoring out of home food and drink purchases in Scotland and Great Britain (2022 and 2023)
  https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/Monitoring_out_of_home_food_and_drink_purchases_in_Scotland_and_Great_Britain_%282022_and_2023%29.pdf

- Overview of the Total Food and Drink Landscape in Scotland 2021
  https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/overview-of-the-total-food-and-drink-landscape-in-scotland-2021

- Advie and Cromdale Community Action Plan
  https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/2013CromdaleAdvieActionPlan.pdf

- Aviemore, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Aviemore-Rothiemurchus-Glenmore-Community-Action-Plan-2024.pdf

- Ballater and Crathie Community Action Plan 2023
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Ballater-Crathie-CAP-2023-Final.pdf

- Blair Athol Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Blair-Atholl-Struan-Community-Action-Plan-2023-final.pdf

- Boat of Garten Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Boat-of-Garten-Community-Action-Plan-2025.pdf

- Braemar Community Action Plan (2017)
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/2017-BraemarAction-Plan.pdf

- Carrbridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Carrbridge-Community-Action-Plan-2022.pdf

- Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/DalwhinnieCAP2023Report.pdf

- Dulnain Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Dulnain-Bridge-Community-Action-Plan-2024-1-2.pdf

- Mount Blair Community Action Plan
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/1013_18-Mountblair-and-Glenshee-Action-Plan.pdf

- Grantown on Spey Community Action Plan
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/160803-GrantownIconicPlan.pdf

- Kincraig Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Kincraig-and-locality-Community-Action-Plan-2024.pdf

- Kingussie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
  https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Kingussie-Community-Action-Plan-2025.pdf

- Laggan Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
  https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Laggan-Community-Action-Plan-2022.pdf

- Nethy Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
  https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Nethy-Bridge-Community-Action-Plan-2023.pdf

- Newtonmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
  https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Newtonmore-Community-Action-Plan-2022.pdf

- Strathdon Community Action Plan 2016
  https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/2016-Strathdon-Action-Plan.pdf

- Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks 2023
  https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/Cairngorms-National-Park-Town-Centre-Health-Check-Report-2023.pdf

- Cairngorms National Park Village Health Checks 2025
  https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/Cairngorms-National-Park-Village-Centre-Health-Checks-2025.pdf

Summary of evidence

Policy context

National Planning Framework 4

National Planning Framework 4 Policy 27 specifically addresses town centres and promotes a town centre first approach to development. It aims to encourage development in town centres by applying the Town Centre First Principle.

National Planning Framework 4 Policy 27 states that local development plans should:
- Support sustainable futures for city, town and local centres, in particular opportunities to enhance city and town centres. They should, where relevant, also support proposals for improving the sustainability of existing commercial centres where appropriate.
- Identify a network of centres that reflect the principles of 20-minute neighbourhoods and the town centre vision.
- Be informed by evidence on where clustering of non-retail uses may be adversely impacting on the wellbeing of communities. They should also consider, and if appropriate, identify any areas where drive-through facilities may be acceptable where they would not negatively impact on the principles of local living or sustainable travel.
- Provide a proportion of their local housing land requirements in city and town centres and be proactive in identifying opportunities to support residential development

Work undertaken through the town centre health checks can inform future policy and planning decisions supporting the Town Centre First approach. Policy 27 (a) states:
- 'Development proposals that enhance and improve the vitality and viability of city, town and local centres, including proposals that increase the mix of uses, will be supported'.

The findings of the Town Centre Health Check 2023[1] and Village Centre Health Check 2025[2], referenced in this report, can help support the implementation of this policy.

In line with National Planning Policy Framework 4, development proposals within town centres that enhance and improve the vitality and viability of town centres, including

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[1] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/Cairngorms-National-Park-Town-Centre-Health-Check-Report-2023.pdf
[2] See https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/Cairngorms-National-Park-Village-Centre-Health-Checks-2025.pdf

proposals that increase the mix of uses, will be supported. Development proposals should be consistent with the town centre first approach. Proposals for uses which will generate significant footfall, including commercial, leisure, offices, community, sport and cultural facilities, public buildings such as libraries, education and healthcare facilities, and public spaces will be supported in existing town centres. They will not be supported outwith those centres unless a town centre first assessment demonstrates that:

- All centre and edge of centre options have been sequentially assessed and discounted as unsuitable or unavailable.
- The scale of development cannot reasonably be altered or reduced in scale to allow it to be accommodated in a centre.
- The impacts on existing centres have been thoroughly assessed and there will be no significant adverse effect on the vitality and viability of the centres.

Policy 27 also states that development in town centres for residential development will be supported where the development utilises a derelict or vacant site in some instances. The data collected from town centre health checks will also help inform future planning policy in the next Local Development Plan regarding the use of vacant sites in the town centre.

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

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

National Planning Framework 4 Policy 28 states that local development plans should consider where there may be a need for further retail provision, this may be:

- Where a retail study identifies deficiencies in retail provision in terms of quality and quantity in an area, or:
- when allocating sites for housing or the creation of new communities, in terms of the need for neighbourhood shopping, and supporting local living. Local Development Plans should identify areas where proposals for healthy food and drink outlets can be supported.

National Planning Framework 4 Policy 28 further states that local development plans should identify areas where proposals for healthy food and drink outlets can be supported.

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

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

In rural areas development proposals for shops ancillary to other uses such as farm shops, craft shops and shops linked to petrol / service / charging stations will be supported where they serve local needs, do not have negative impacts on neighbouring settlements, provide a year-round service and likely impacts of traffic generation and access and parking arrangements are acceptable.

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

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

National Planning Framework 4 states that local development plans should identify the characteristics of rural areas within the plan area, including the existing pattern of development, pressures, environmental assets, community priorities and economic needs of each area. The spatial strategy should set out an appropriate approach to development in rural areas which reflects the identified characteristics. The Policy outcomes are:

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

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

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

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

National Planning Framework 4 states that local development plans should recognise and support opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative sector, culture, heritage and the arts. This is a cross cutting matter, with the National Park's town and village centres playing an important role in supporting the cultural and creative sectors.

Centres have an important role to play in supporting the aims of Policy 12 (Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods) since they typically provide the most convenient and accessible location for people to access services and facilities.

There is also some overlap with this topic paper and the topic paper for Health and safety[3], which is addressing National Planning Framework 4, Policy 23. In particular the work relating to the food environment, including hot food takeaways, alcohol and tobacco retail, food security and community growing spaces.

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

Town Centre Action Plan 2013

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

Since the publication of the Action Plan, Scotland's National Performance Framework was adopted, which contains a suite of the National Outcomes that are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, to reposition the focus on wellbeing, inclusive development, climate emergency responses and health and inequalities. Town centres have therefore been identified as key to delivering change, which can be achieved through the Town Centre First and Place Principle.

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[3] See https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/health-and-safety-survey

'Town centres have continued to have a fight for their future. Then came Covid-19, which altered the world as we knew it and amplified existing, and produced further, inequalities' (Scottish Government, 2021).

In 2021, Scottish Government reviewed the Town Centre Action Plan reaffirming the need to ensure town centres offer 'a sustainable, local economy and society with diverse and mixed uses attracting and meeting the needs and desires of their local communities' (A new Future for Scotland's Town Centres, P7). Town centres need to ensure they 'enhance a sense of community, place, identity and that advance equality by enabling all members of society to participate fully'. As part of the review, Scottish Government has recommended that there is a need for a revised and enhanced focus on measurement and data for town centres, which in response has promoted the Cairngorms National Park Authority to resume the Town Centre Health Checks. The Park Authority recognises the important contribution the smaller settlements have and as part of the evidence for this topic paper, sought to review all the intermediate settlements in the National Park as well.

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

Place Principle

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

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

Local Development Planning Guidance

This topic paper is primarily concerned with addressing evidence to support the National Planning Framework 4, Policy 27, 28, 29 and 31. In accordance with the guidance.
In relation to Policy 27: City, town, commercial and local centres, the paper will evidence:

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

The topic paper will take into account the Economic Strategy (the National Park Partnership Plan) for the National Park and the Town centre health checks report. The Park Authority has also carried out an audit of the smaller intermediate (village) settlements in the National Park and this information is included in this topic paper.

The local living topic paper will support this paper and appropriate links between the two papers have been included in this topic paper. The local living topic paper is available to view here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/local-living-and-20-minute-neighbourhoods?step=step1

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

Matter relating to housing including:

- Where there are gaps in supply of existing housing and flats (including student and older persons' accommodation or rental accommodation) relative to demand.
- Where there is capacity or opportunities to develop new housing and flats without compromising active use of ground floors and public spaces, or a mix of uses in the area.

This is addressed in the Housing topic paper which is available here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/housing?step=step1

The Park Authority continue to work with community planning partners through the production and updating of the community action plans. Actions relating to National Planning Policy Framework 4, Policies 27, 28, 29 and 31 in the Community Action Plans has been included in this topic paper.

The Place Standard tool has been used to engage with young people, children and hard to reach groups through the engagement for the Evidence Report and engagement reports based carried out utilising the Place Standard Tool support this topic paper and can be accessed here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/supporting-documents?step=step1

In relation to Policy 28: Retail, this paper will evidence:
- Where there may be a need for further retail provision.
- Information about the local food environment.

Data from the Town Centre Health Checks and Village Health Checks provide the data for retail provision in the National Park and a summary of the retail provision in each settlement and overall retail provision in the National Park has been included here.

The food environment in the Cairngorms National Park has been covered in the health and safety topic paper (which primarily addresses National Planning Policy Framework 4, Policy 23) which is available to view here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/health-and-safety-survey?step=step1

In relation to Policy 29: Rural development, this paper will evidence:
- The characteristics of rural areas within the plan area, including the existing pattern of development, pressures, environmental assets, community priorities and economic needs of each area.
- Identification of Remote Rural Areas.

No tailored classification of the rural areas in the National Park has been applied and the Urban Rural Classification 2022 framework has been referenced. In terms of identifying the rural population distribution and demographic profile this has been covered in the Housing topic paper which is available to view here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/housing?step=step1

The Evidence Report in its entirety will be supported by a suite of engagement papers that provide local knowledge in relation to patterns of development, pressures and environmental assets. The Report will also address the requirement for the use of relevant datasets as identified in the individual topic papers.

In relation to Policy 31: Culture and creativity, this paper will evidence:
- Opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative sector, culture, heritage and the arts.
- Cultural offering in a place – museums, galleries, theatres, cinemas, music venues, studios, recording spaces and space for art / craft activities.

The Evidence Report will also be informed by any relevant Creative Scotland plans and strategies, together with any local plans and strategies which address the area's culture and creativity. The community action plans have also been referenced in this report where they put forward actions / aspirations to add to the range of art or cultural venues in a place.

There are cross over links with the tourism and historic and cultural heritage topic papers, which cover a number of matters, including cultural tourist and visit attractions and cultural capital within the historic environment. These are available here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/tourism-in-the-national-park-survey
- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/historic-and-cultural-heritage-survey

Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022

The Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027 sets out a strategy for building a wellbeing economy in the National Park and is the Economic Strategy for the National Park. The Partnership Plan explains how the aims of the National Park will be delivered together under a long-term vision of 'An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together'. Two of the Partnership Plan's three long term outcomes are of particular importance to this topic paper:
- Outcome for People: A wellbeing economy that works for all the people of the Cairngorms.

- Outcome for Place: A place that people want to live in, work in and visit that works for all.

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

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

- A8 – Farming, which aims to Work with farms in the Cairngorms National Park to reduce their carbon footprint, conserve soil carbon, encourage sustainable production and deliver increased biodiversity on in-bye land.
- B1 – Working-age population, which aims to encourage the proportion of young and working-age people in the Cairngorms National Park to increase relative to the total resident population, which remains stable.
- B3 – Real Living Wage, which aims to increase the number of Real Living Wage employers in the National Park.
- B4 – Skills and training, which aims to increase skills and training opportunities for people in the Cairngorms National Park to meet business needs and ensure opportunities created by the growth in green jobs can be filled by residents and under-represented groups. This ensure that there are training opportunities for people to enter into expanding areas of work such as deer management and peatland restoration, as well as providing support to retrain for future job opportunities in a low carbon economy.
- B5 – Community assets and land, which aims to increase the number of assets in community ownership or management, the number of social enterprises that generate a profit and the area of land where communities are involved in management decisions.
- B8 – Gaelic language and culture, which aims to encourage greater use of Gaelic in the Cairngorms National Park. There is a need to support the continued use of Gaelic and maintain it as an active language and culture within the communities of the National Park.
- C4 – Village and town centres, which aims to ensure villages and town centres in the Cairngorms National Park are thriving places where people live, shop and meet. The Partnership Plan (page 84) states that 'new businesses and activities will need to be supported to ensure these spaces continue to provide services and value to

communities. In general, commercial properties should remain so and should only be converted to residential as a last resort'.

- C10 – Cultural heritage, which aims to safeguard and promote the Cairngorms National Park's cultural heritage and provide opportunities for everyone to experience and learn about the National Park's outstanding historic environment, history and culture.

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

- A8 - Develop nature-friendly farming projects (woodland, waders, species-rich grassland) as part of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Also to develop and establish a Regional Land Use Framework and Partnership.
- B4 - Support skills and training programmes relevant to business needs and changes in land management within the National Park (see Nature objectives A2 to A6) and develop targeted skills initiatives to support social enterprises.
- B5 - Support communities to acquire and manage assets / land through enhanced funding and training support (see People objective B7 – Community-led planning and development).
- C4 - Review mechanisms available to the public sector to encourage regeneration of our town and village centres. Also to promote business and community-led collaborative projects to encourage local expenditure and supply chains. Finally, to develop a rural approach to the 20-minute neighbourhood concept in the National Park (this is covered by the local living topic paper[4]).
- C10 - Develop a Cairngorms cultural heritage network, building on the success of the Badenoch: The Storylands project, Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership and Cateran Ecomuseum. The National Park has also committed to providing grant funding for community heritage projects that contribute to a cultural heritage network.

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

In addition, Policy C2 specifically addresses the need to support the development of a low carbon circular economy. In terms of new business premises (which includes retail) there is support for high standards of sustainable design and efficient use of energy and materials in construction.

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[4] See: https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/local-living-and-20-minute-neighbourhoods?step=step1

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

Heritage Horizons – Cairngorms 2030

Across 20 long-term projects, Cairngorms 2030 will bring about transformational change in the Cairngorms through a partnership of over 70 organisations supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

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

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

Community arts and culture

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

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/our-work/community-arts-and-culture

Cairngorms future farming

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

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/our-work/cairngorms-future-farming

Wellbeing economy

The National Park Partnership Plan identifies that the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan will support the delivery of the economic strategy set out in the Partnership Plan. The concept of a wellbeing economy is a holistic one that reflects the entirety of work encompassed by the National Park Partnership Plan, but the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan is intended to provide a focus for partners work and collaboration. More information on the content of the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan is available in the Economic Development topic paper which is available here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/economic-development-survey?step=step1

Cairngorms National Park Authority Wellbeing Economy Action Plan

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

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

More information on the content of the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan is available in the Economic Development topic paper which is available here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/economic-development-survey

A Healthier Future – Scotland's Diet & Healthy Weight Delivery Plan

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

The Plan identifies five key outcomes:

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

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

Obesity Action Scotland reviewed the Diet & Healthy Weight Delivery Plan, five years on in 2023[5]. They reported that at the time of the Plans publication, 65% of adults in Scotland had overweight and obesity, and 27% of children were at risk of overweight and obesity, as recorded in the Scottish Health Survey. In 2023 this had risen to 67% for adults and 28% for children in the most recent data. Significantly, the 2021 Scottish Health Survey reported 30% of adults living with obesity, and 18% of children at risk of obesity - both figures were the highest ever recorded by the survey.

Diet and Weight: Out of Home Action Plan

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

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

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

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[5] Available here: https://www.obesityactionscotland.org/blogs/scotland-s-diet-healthy-weight-delivery-plan-5-years-on-what-has-it-achieved-and-what-is-the-current-direction-of-travel/

A Culture Strategy for Scotland

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

The vision for culture in Scotland states that culture must be valued first and foremost in and of itself. It is Scotland's strength, and it is abundant. Culture should be free to challenge and inspire, enjoy independence and enable self-expression. Nurturing culture and enabling it to flourish is an essential and powerful part of the fabric of Scotland's society. As such, Scottish Government recognises culture's unique contribution to society, and the valuable role of artists, designers, creative practitioners, producers and business and cultural organisations. The strategy sets out the vision that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, develop and enjoy culture which, in turn, helps individuals and communities to thrive in Scotland.

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

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

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

The Strategy goes on to detail the overarching ambitions set out by the strategy:
1. Strengthening culture.
2. Transforming through culture.
3. Empowering through culture.

A Culture Strategy for Scotland: Action Plan

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

Summary of Actions contained in the action plan are:

Chapter 1 - Resilience
- R1: Ensure effective ongoing engagement with the sector and maximise impact of
- existing public sector support.
- R2: Seek ways to review pressure on outgoings and activities.
- R3: Explore and develop alternative and additional income streams.
- R4: Collaboration for effectiveness and impact.
- R5: Advocacy effort within national and local government to ensure the value of
- culture is understood and maximised.

Chapter 2 – Strengthening Culture
- S1: Continue to make the culture and heritage sectors part of Scotland as a
- Leading Fair Work Nation by 2025.
- S2: Develop and implement a long-term strategic approach to making improvements
- to the data landscape for culture, working closely with expert partners.
- S3: Work in partnership to increase diversity in the sector, sharing new approaches
- and codes of practice that ensure skills development and board membership have
- diversity at their core, including helping recruitment diversity by introducing
- appropriate remuneration for board members of national culture and heritage public
- bodies.
- S4: Develop and implement a long-term strategic approach to skills development in
- the culture sector and creative industries.
- S5: Work to tackle modern-day racism by reinterpreting aspects of Scotland's hidden or
- contested heritage.
- S6: Publish our International Culture Strategy.
- S7: Champion the economic impact of culture, in particular within the context of

- community wealth building and creative placemaking.

Chapter 3 – Transforming through Culture
- T1: Collaborate to realise the transformational power of culture in achieving a broad
- range of policy outcomes by developing cross-Government policy compacts,
- embedding culture at the centre of policymaking.
- T2: Harness the transformational power of culture to deliver on climate change
- priorities.
- T3: Scope the creation of another Youth Arts Strategy
- T4: Foster greater collaboration between the Culture and Education Sectors.
- T5: Strengthen cross-Scottish Government joint working on culture and health and
- wellbeing policy development and delivery.

Chapter 4 – Empowering through Culture
- E1: Support libraries to deliver free of charge services in the heart of communities
- across Scotland.
- E2: Bring together local authorities, national and cultural organisations, via a Local
- and National Delivery Group, to identify, and commit to working together towards
- shared culture outcomes across Scotland, in line with the aims from the Ministerial
- meetings with Culture Conveners and the Culture Partners group.
- E3: Understand local authority support for culture, in the context of the impact of, and
- recovery from, the Covid pandemic, to identify more effective models of
- collaboration, and delivery utilising data and knowledge from successful
- programmes.
- E4: Amplify the important role community-based cultural assets such as libraries,
- museums and galleries can play in strengthening and empowering communities, in
- line with the themes of existing and upcoming strategies.
- E5: Continue the series of the joint meeting of the Culture Conveners and Scottish
- Government.
- E6: Develop a joint working agreement for Culture between the Convention Of
- Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Government.

Scotland's Creative Learning Plan

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

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

Among the aims of the Creative Learning Plan are:
* New policies and plans supporting creativity throughout Scotland.
* More creative teaching practices and support for creative initiatives within local authorities, schools and places of learning.
* More support for and understanding of the value of creativity and experiential learning by parents and carers.

Since its publication, Creative Scotland have refreshed the vision to ensure the Scottish education system enables everyone to recognise, develop and apply their creativity to ensure they thrive in an increasingly complex and fast-changing world, with three-year outcomes committing to:
* Creativity embedded in curriculum design.
* Learners' mental health and wellbeing is improved.
* Learners confidently applying creativity skills in all contexts.
* Learners directly influencing their own creative learning.
* Quality cultural experiences accessible to all learners.

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

Community action plans

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

Advie and Cromdale Community Action Plan 2013
The Plan sets out the medium priority to provide a village shop. Currently the village has no retail premises and residents would like to see the return of a village shop.

In relation to culture, there is a heigh priority to provide information on local visitor attractions, for example the Battle of Cromdale, Hillfort and Pipers Stone. There is also

medium priority to deliver a walking trail or whiskey trail from Cromdale to Balmenach with interpretation / information.

Aviemore, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
In 2024, Aviemore and Vicinity Community Council together with Aviemore Community Enterprise, Aviemore & Glenmore Community Trust, Aviemore Primary School Parent Council, the Aviemore Churches and B&S Community ConnXions, began work on the current plan.

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

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

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

Ballater & Crathie Community Action Plan 2023
The Plan was developed under the lead of the Ballater and Crathie Community Council working with Marr Area Partnership and Aberdeenshire Council.

Under focus area one - The Plan sets out a strategic goal to maximise the community's inherent attractions of art and culture, history and heritage, food and drink, action and adventure, and wildlife and nature to develop a rolling programme of events which is co-ordinated and utilises local venues. Survey suggestions included:
- Consideration of use of The Halls as a centre for Commercial Events Programme / Community Creative Play / Safe Space and Resilience Centre / Business and Community Group Admin Centre.

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

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

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

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

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

Blair Athol Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
In 2023, Blair Atholl & Struan Community Council, together with Blair Atholl & Struan Initiative, Blair Atholl Village Hall, Blair Atholl Primary School, Blair Atholl Country Life Museum, Atholl Estates and local businesses, began work on the current plan.

Under the theme of 'a socially connected community' the Plan set out a priority to provide investment for housing that could utilise vacant or derelict property in the village.

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

Boat of Garten Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
In 2025, Boat of Garten and Vicinity Community Council together with Boat of Garten Community Hall, Deshar Primary Parent Council and Boat of Garten Community Company, reviewed and updated the community action plan for the village.

Under the theme of 'an economically thriving community' the Plan set out the suggestions to:

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

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

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

Braemar Community Action Plan 2017
The document provides an update to the original plan published in 2013. The Plan identifies that more visitor accommodation is required; to encourage more tourists to extend their stay in the area. This in turn will benefit retail footfall.

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

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

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

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

Carrbridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

In 2022, Carrbridge Ahead, together with Carrbridge and Vicinity Community Council, Carrbridge Village Hall and Carrbridge Primary Parent Council began work on the current plan.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dalwhinnie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

In 2023, Dalwhinnie Community Council, together with Dalwhinnie Community Development Trust, Dalwhinnie Village Hall and Dalwhinnie businesses (The Apiary, Dalwhinnie Service Station, Balsporran Guest House, Dalwhinnie Hostel) began work on the current plan.

Under the theme of 'a socially connected community' the Plan set out a priority to improve the village's amenities / facilities. This included the need for provision of an ATM facility. There is also a suggestion that more shops are needed in the village.

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

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

Dulnain Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
In 2024, Dulnain Bridge Community Council together with Dulnain Bridge Community Development Trust, Dulnain Bridge Village Hall and Friends of Dulnain Bridge, began work on the current plan.

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

Mount Blair Community Action Plan 2013
The Mount Blair Community Development Trust (MBCDT) led the preparation of the current Plan with support from the Mount Blair Community Council (MBCC), representatives from local village halls, the Session House, the local tourist associations, and local councillors from Perth and Kinross Council.

The vision for Infrastructure, services and housing set out in the Plan is:
- To make it sustainable to live and work in the Glens we will develop good access to affordable housing, vital services, community facilities, and good communication and transport systems

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

Theme two focuses on the local heritage, culture and produce in terms of the sense of place. It sets out several priorities which include:
- Priority 1 – Develop local archive project which includes actions to explore other ways of making heritage a stronger feature of the area and something that is accessible to visitors.

- Priority 2 – Arts and Crafts Workspace/Studio Space which includes working with local arts and crafts people and other businesses to explore the need for small workspace and studio facilities in the area. Also to Identify suitable places for this type of development which could be a significant tourist attraction – suggestions include the old Blackwater Inn or the old Church in Kirkmichael.

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

Grantown-on-Spey Community Action Plan 2016
This Action Plan sets out proposals to rejuvenate Grantown-on-Spey to make the most of the town's social, economic and physical assets. The town centre, tourism and the community are the three central themes of this Action Plan. The theme aligned with this topic paper is:
- Town centre – a plan to protect and enhance the built heritage, and to provide an attractive offering for those who work, live and visit Grantown-on-Spey.

Some of the concerns raised about the town centre have since been addressed, including the redevelopment of the Strathspey Hotel, the creation of the conservation area masterplan and appraisal and some improvements to the YMCA building.

Grantown-on-Spey's community has consistently highlighted a number of issues regarding the town centre and its built environment. For the purposes of the Action Plan the town centre definition is primarily concerned with the High Street and The Square. Actions set out in the Plan to protect, enhance and promote the towns centre include:
- Develop Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and Townscape Heritage Programme applications including comprehensive capital works and a detailed engagement and learning programme.
- Address parking issues in High Street and The Square.

The Plan also sets out actions to:
- Provide practical support for Rails to Grantown and Grantown East Railway Station developments.
- Develop plans for an events / concert venue.

Kincraig Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
In 2024, Kincraig and Vicinity Community Council together with Insh Community

Holdings, Kincraig Community Hall and Kincraig Church, began work on the current plan.

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

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

Kingussie Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
In 2024, Kingussie and Vicinity Community Council together with Kingussie Community Development Company, Caberfeidh Horizons, ARC-Kingussie, Kingussie Primary School Parent Council, Kingussie Churches and Kingussie Camanachd, began work on the current plan.

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

Under the theme of 'an economically thriving community' the Plan sets out the following suggestions linked to retail and the town centre:
- Support for the High Street – which includes reinvigorating the High Steet and utilising empty and underused buildings on the High Street.
- Improving opportunities for local employment / business – which includes creating local flexible space for co-working. There is a specific action to set up a cooperative in one of the unoccupied shops and use empty shops windows to display information and / or artwork.

Under the theme of 'a culturally vibrant community' there is the suggestion to develop Talla Nan Ros as a community space, which includes:
- Exploring the feasibility of converting the space into housing, multi-media centre, retail space etc.
- Look at finding an alternative space in Kingussie for a purpose-built new village hall.

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

Laggan Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
In 2022, Laggan Community Council, together with Laggan Forest Trust, Laggan Community Housing Ltd, Laggan Village Hall and Laggan Heritage, began work on the current plan.

Under the theme of 'a socially connected community' is the priority to provide sustainable community spaces, to deliver community needs. This includes making more use of the community facilities for example the Village Hall, Wolftrax café, Church for:
- Social & leisure activities / Sport and exercise opportunities for all.
- Food larder / Food exchange.

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

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

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

Nethy Bridge Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
In 2023, Nethy Bridge Community Council, together with Nethy Bridge Community Development Company, Nethy Bridge Community Centre, Abernethy Primary School Parent Council, Abernethy Highland Games, Explore Abernethy, Castle Roy Trust, Abernethy Old Kirk Association and some of the Nethy Bridge businesses (Dell of Abernethy, Nethybridge Hotel, Wide Sky Weddings), began work on the current plan.

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

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

Under the theme of' a culturally vibrant community' the Plan sets out the following suggestions:
- Repair wall at the Old Kirk and improve the quality of the car park at Castle Roy.
- Fix old village fountain.

Newtonmore Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030
In 2022, Newtonmore & Vicinity Community Council, together with Newtonmore Business Association, Newtonmore Village Hall, Newtonmore Primary Parent Council, Newtonmore Community Woodland & Development Trust, St Bride's Parish Church and Newtonmore Golf Club, began work on the current plan.

Under the theme of 'an economically thriving community' there is the priority to improve support and assistance for local businesses and people trying to get into work. This includes an action to support business start-ups and existing local businesses.

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

Under the theme of 'a culturally vibrant community' there is a priority addressing the Wildcat centre and trail which carries the following actions:
- To look at the long-term maintenance of the trail.
- Ensure the sustainability of the Centre.
- Improve the trail pathways and increase accessibility.

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

There is also a priority and action to improve the centenary gardens.

Strathdon Community Action Plan 2016
The Plan brings together a wide range of issues, actions and projects which the community of Strathdon has identified as important to its members.

As members of a very remote rural and therefore necessarily self-reliant community, residents recognise the need to both protect and expand on the assets and facilities available. From the community action planning consultation, it became clear that both privately owned and community assets, such as the village halls, hotels, pubs, café, school, ski centre, local shop, garage services and post office, are valued. It is appreciated that local and visitor support for these facilities is critical to their survival. Concern was expressed over the sustainability of local hotels and pubs. The three village halls in the area are important to the community as venues that provide spaces for a variety of activities. Threat of closure to any remaining facilities would very much impact on the community as a whole.

Under the theme covering assets and facilities, there is an action to explore the potential use of the Clubby Rooms by the community - as this is seen as a key location and heritage project. Under theme three: local attractions and tourism there is an action to develop and support projects which protect and / or enhance the heritage of the area.

Baseline matters

This section summarises a number of matters relating to the retail and town and local centres in the Cairngorms National Park, including:

- Network of centres
- Summary of the qualitative assessment of the town centres from the town centre health checks.
- Summary of the distribution of uses and vacancy rates in the town centres.
- Summary of the qualitative assessment of village centres
- Local centres – with include village centres and other localities with significant retail presence.
- Summary of retail capacity in the National Park.
- Non-retail use clusters.
- Creative and cultural offerings.

There are links between this policy area and climate change[6], historic and cultural heritage[7], local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods[8], housing[9], tourism[10], sustainable transport[11] and economic development[12].

Network of centres

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

The 2013 National Review of Town Centres examined the fundamental reasons for investing in and revitalizing towns, leading to the development of the Town Centre Action Plan. This Plan introduced the Town Centre First Principle and facilitated the establishment of Scotland's Town Partnership (STP). Several key tools emerged from

[6] See: https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/climate-change?step=step1

[7] See: https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/historic-and-cultural-heritage-survey

[8] See: https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/local-living-and-20-minute-neighbourhoods?step=step1

[9] See: https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/housing?step=step1

[10] See: https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/tourism-in-the-national-park-survey

[11] See: https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/sustainable-transport-survey

[12] See: https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/economic-development-survey

this initiative, including the Towns Toolkit, The Place Standard, Understanding Scottish Places (USP), and Town Centre Audits (or health checks).

Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP) is Scotland's national towns' collective; representing and promoting the diversity of our towns and places and supporting those organisations and groups that have an interest in or ownership of them. Acting as a central resource hub, the Scotland's Towns Partnership provides a resource to knowledge, best practices – supporting learning opportunities, fostering networks and events. Additionally, the Scotland's Towns Partnership website hosts the Understanding Scottish Places (USP) tool, offering insights into the unique characteristics of towns across Scotland.

The Cairngorms National Park is characterised by its rurality and is well served by a network of small retail and service centres, ranging from town centres to village centres, and small local centres supporting local residential areas outwith the town centre. This topic paper summarises the evidence collected on these:
- Town centres (see page 34)
- Village centres (see page 67)
- Other types of centre (see page 97)

Town centres

In the context of the Cairngorms National Park Policy 27 is applicable to town centres in the absence of any cities. There are five towns in the National Park (Figure 1), identified in the Local Development Plan as Strategic settlements. These are:
- Aviemore
- Ballater
- Grantown-on-Spey
- Kingussie
- Newtonmore.
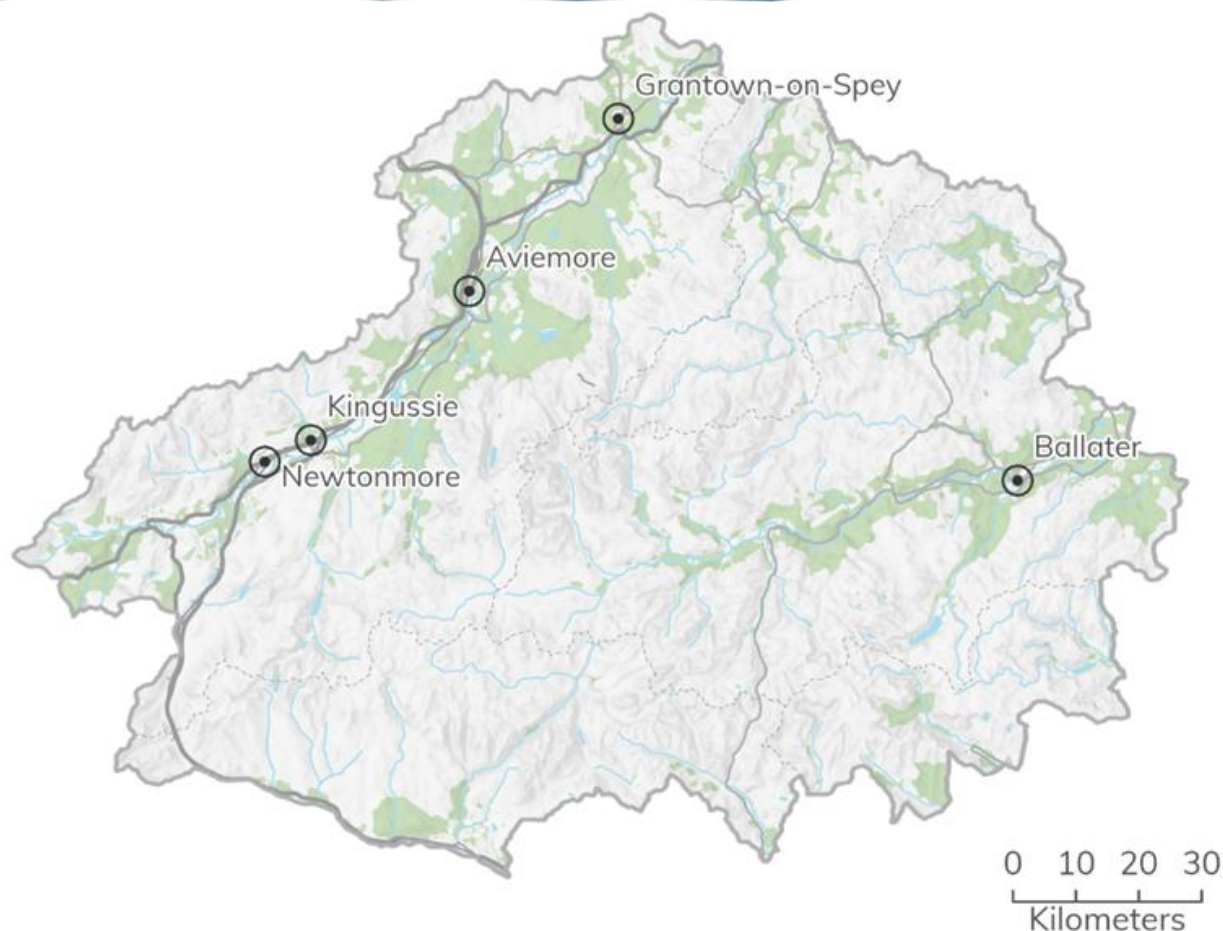
Figure 1 Network of town centres in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

The National Park Authority is committed to carrying out regular town centre health checks to monitor town centre performance, with the most recent carried out in 2023:

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/Cairngorms-National-Park-Town-Centre-Health-Check-Report-2023.pdf

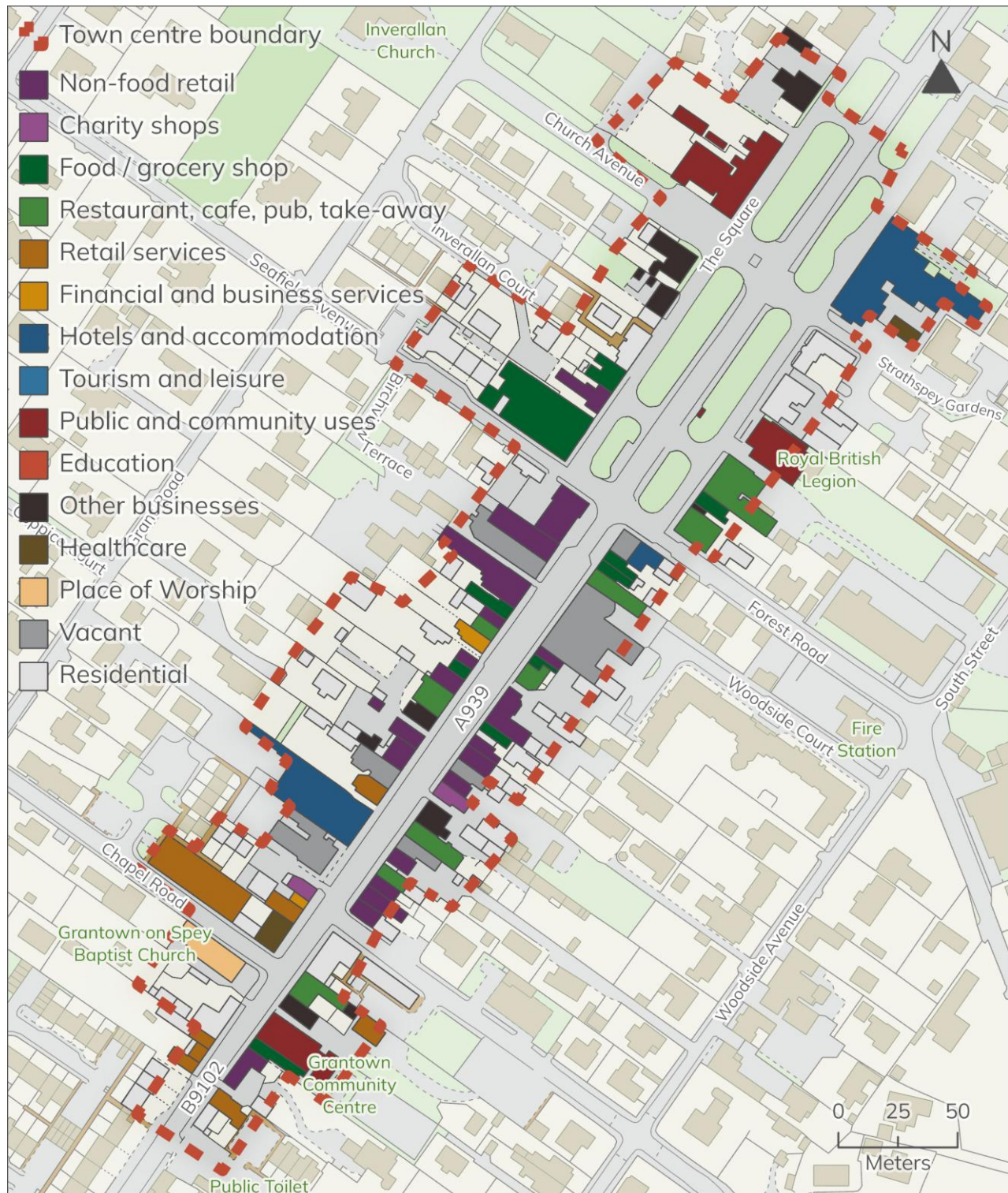The Park Authority plan to carry out the next Town Centre Health Checks in 2026 / 2027, and the refreshed report will inform the Proposed Plan.

This section also draws on the information provided by Understanding Scottish Places delivered through the Scotland's Town Partnership. Scotland's Towns Partnership is Scotland's national towns' collective; representing and promoting the diversity of Scotland's towns and places and supporting those organisations and groups that have an interest in or ownership of them.

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

Inventory of town centre businesses and other non-residential uses
The type and location of each business within the boundary of each defined town centre was recorded in the town centre health check to build an understanding of the business and retailer representation within each town's centre. In 2023, additional categories for places of worship and healthcare were added. Also, the category for restaurants, bars, cafes was extended to include take-aways. Business use was divided into 12 different categories[13]:
- Non-food retail.
- Charity shops.
- Food shops for example supermarket, butcher, deli, bakery etc.
- Restaurants, bars, cafes and take-away.
- Retail services, for example post office, hairdresser, photo shop, dry cleaning, garage
- Financial and business services, for example property services, accountant, solicitor, bank etc.
- Hotels and accommodation.
- Tourism and leisure.
- Community / public, for example local authority office, community centre.
- Other private businesses.

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

- Healthcare, this includes dentists, medical clinics and pharmacies.
- Places of worship.
- Vacant.

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

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

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

Assessment of town centre characteristics and activity
In addition to the quantitative data gathering of recording business types, qualitative information was gathered by the officers about different aspects of the physical environment, public realm and facilities and accessibility of each town centre. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis was undertaking for each town centre; however, this paper focuses on the opportunities and threats to the town centres[14].

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[14] To read the full report, see: https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/Cairngorms-National-Park-Town-Centre-Health-Check-Report-2023.pdf

Aviemore town centre

Figure 2 Aviemore town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

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

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

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/sustainable-transport-survey?step=step1

For the first time in 2023 the town centre health check looked at the number of premises within the town centre boundary that have a residential use. In Aviemore, only 5% of all the buildings within the town centre boundary are currently in residential use (Figure 3).
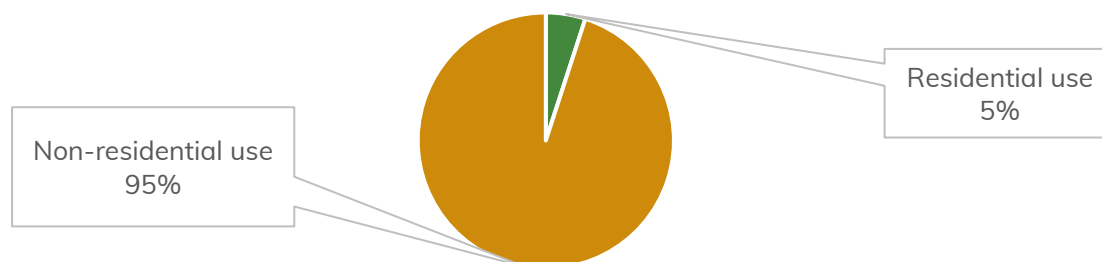
Figure 3 Proportion of premises within Aviemore town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non-residential use in August 2023.

The business composition chart (Figure 4) shows that the town centre has a range of business types, with non-food retail forming the highest proportion at 23% followed by restaurants, cafes, pubs and take-aways which account for 18%. Hotels and accommodation and healthcare uses account for only 1% each. Of all the town centre business premises, 45% (29 premises) of them represent chains and 55% (35 premises) independent retailers (slightly less than the 60% recorded in 2018).
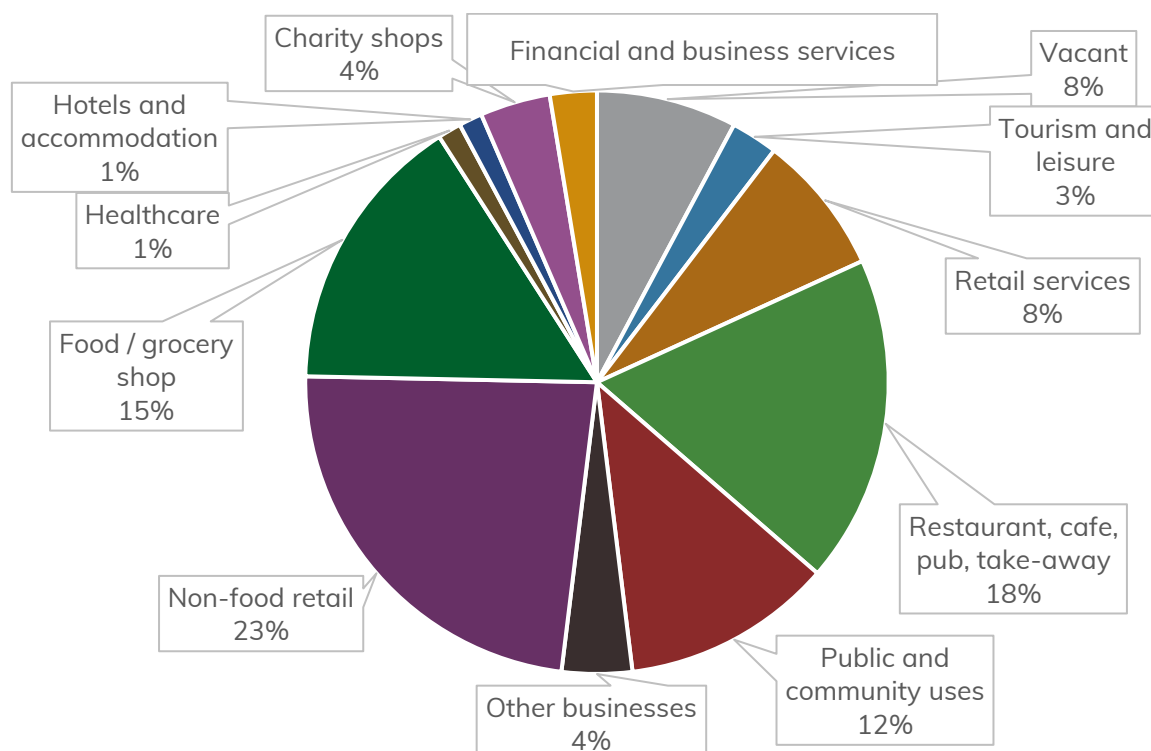
Figure 4 Composition of town centre premises with a non-residential use in Aviemore, August 2023.

Composition of town centre businesses
Composition of the town centre businesses has been recorded in the 2016 and 2018 town centre health checks and meaningful comparisons can be drawn between the

different years to identify trends and changes to the business vitality of the town centre. Therefore, the selected data on only business premises which reflect those collected in previous years have been compared (Figure 5 and Figure 6).

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

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

The number and proportion of buildings recorded as public and community use has increased from 7% (in 2016 and 2018) to 12% in 2023, which in terms of numbers of premises was reported as four in 2016, five in 2018 and nine in 2023 representing a significant increase. However, a change to the recording method to include public toilets, and public transport related structures (not previously included) accounts for the significant increase rather than an increase in new public or community buildings in the town centre. The increase in premises / buildings from 2018 to 2023 was four.
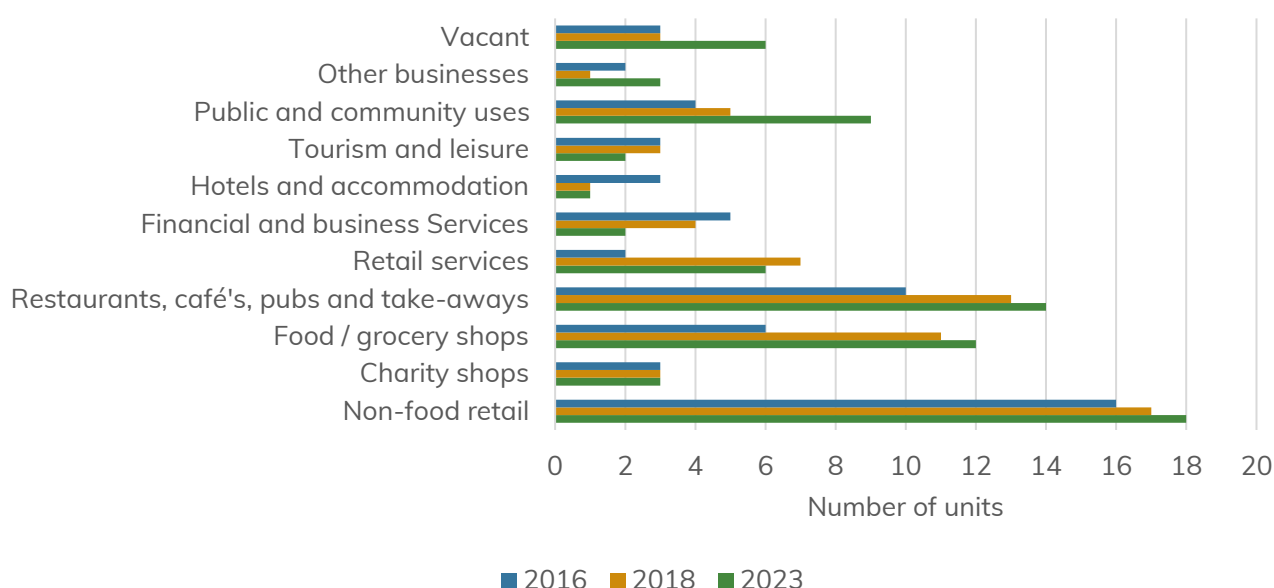
Figure 5 Number of business premises by type in Aviemore town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023.

There has been little change in the number of restaurants in Aviemore, with 18 recorded in 2023, equal to 2016 (with 19 in 2018). The number of charity shops (5) has remained constant in Aviemore since 2016 (Figure 5**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Two sectors that appear to be in decline in the town are the financial services and hotel and accommodation. Financial services have decreased proportionally from 9% in 2016 to 3% in 2023 (Figure 6) representing the loss of 3 financial services businesses during the period (Figure 6). Hotel and accommodation businesses have decreased from 5% proportionally in 2016 to 1% in 2023 representing the loss of 2 hotels and accommodation providers.
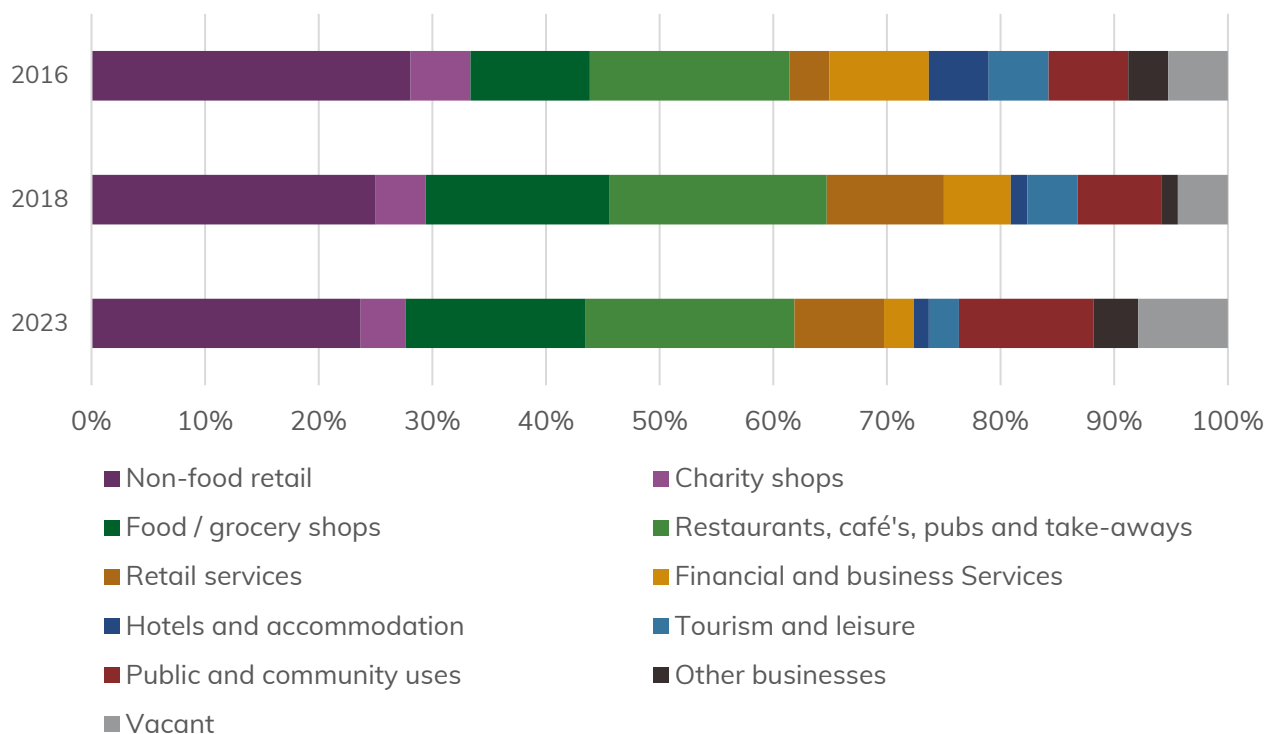
Figure 6 Composition of town centre businesses in Aviemore town centre, 2016, 2018 and 2023.

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

- Construction underway next to the service station to include Electric Vehicle charging.
- Planning application to develop Laurel Bank site is currently awaiting determination by Scottish Ministers.
- Work on-going to look at developing the Aviemore Highland Resort site.
- Capitalise on the environment and the town role as an outdoor capital.
- Promote cultural identity.

Threats to the town centre include the risks posed by Climate change leading to a reduction in the number of snow days impacting the winter economy and economic benefits that brings to the retail and vitality of the town centre. More information on climate change in the Cairngorms National Park can be found in the Climate change topic paper which is available here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/climate-change?step=step1

Other threats to the vitality of the town centre include the increasing vacancy rates and the increasing number of second homes in the wider area impacting local business's ability to attract and retain staff due to staff housing shortages or affordability. More information on the economy in the Cairngorms National Park can be found in the Economic development topic paper which is available here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/economic-development-survey?step=step1

Ballater town centre
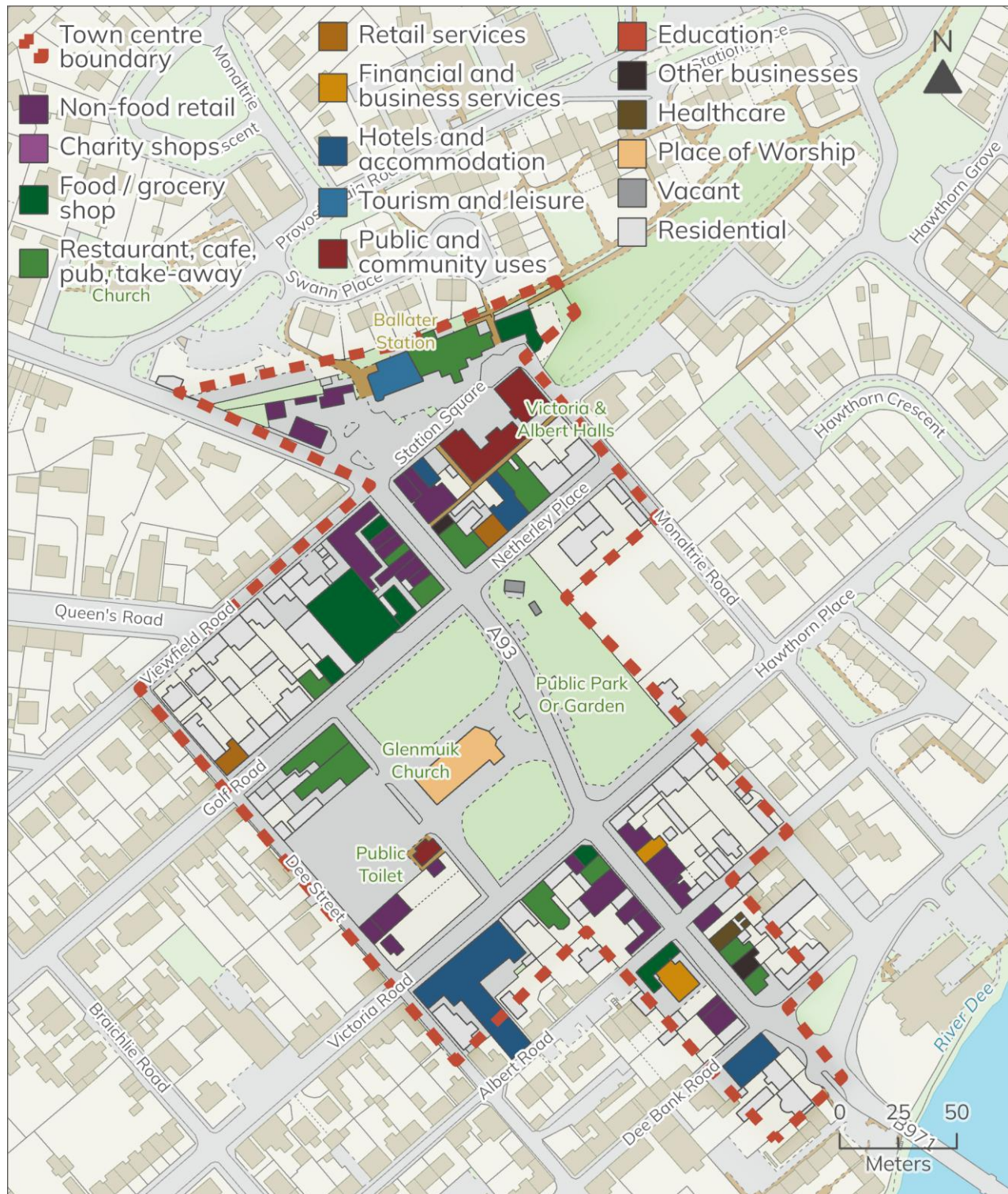
Figure 7 Aviemore town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

Ballater, often cited as a Victorian village, is a significant settlement in the National Park. It sits in Deeside in the eastern part of the National Park and has a population of just over 1,500[15]. The town has strong royal connections due to its proximity to Balmoral and boasts an attractive historical centre. Today its economy is heavily reliant on tourism, attracting visitors because of its royal connections, local scenery, and rural Scottish pastimes (notably fishing and shooting).

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

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

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

Reliable bus services connect the town to Aberdeen, with digital displays offering real-time schedule updates. However, serves are limited. More information on bus services in Ballater can be found in the Sustainable Transport topic paper which is available here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/sustainable-transport-survey?step=step1

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[15]

Understanding Scottish Places, http://www.usp.scot/

Town Centre Businesses

In Ballater 47% of all the buildings within the town centre boundary are currently in non-residential use and 53% are designated as residential dwellings (Figure 8).
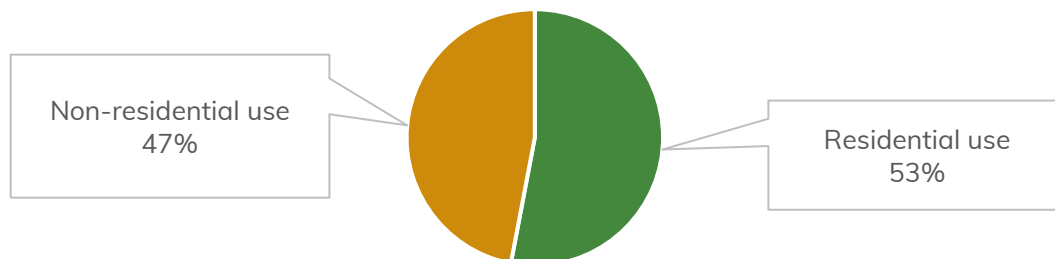
Figure 8 Proportion of premises within the town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non-residential use in Ballater in August 2023.

The highest proportion of businesses in the town centre are non-food retail which account for 39% of all businesses (Figure 9). Other significant proportions include restaurants, cafes, pubs and take-aways which make up 20% (representing 24 establishments) and food and grocery shops which make up 11%. Of the town centre businesses 91% of the premises were recorded as being independent outlets up from 83% in 2018 (84% in 2016).
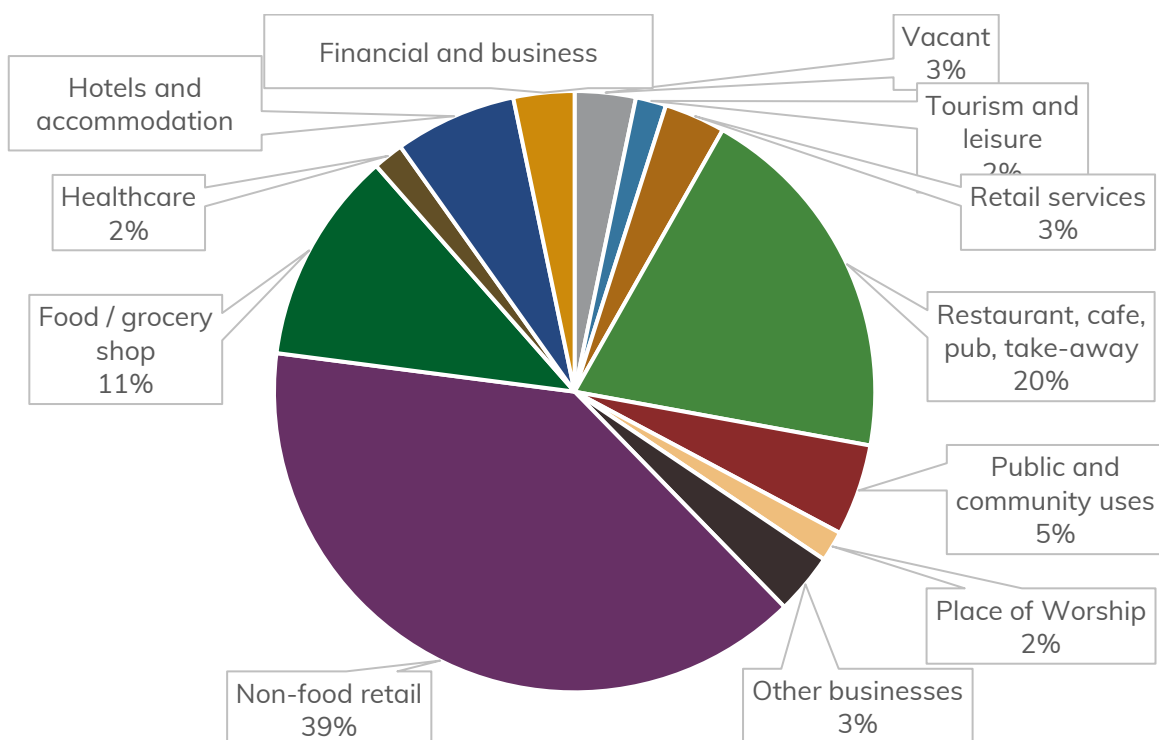
Figure 9 Composition of town centre premises with a non-residential use in Ballater, August 2023.

Composition of town centre business

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

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

Between 2016 and 2023 there have been little or no change in the numbers of hotels and accommodation, public and community use buildings, financial and business services, tourism and leisure or food / grocery shops. It is worth noting the number of financial and business services businesses has reduced from three to two (2016-2023) which is a trend seen across all the towns in the National Park.
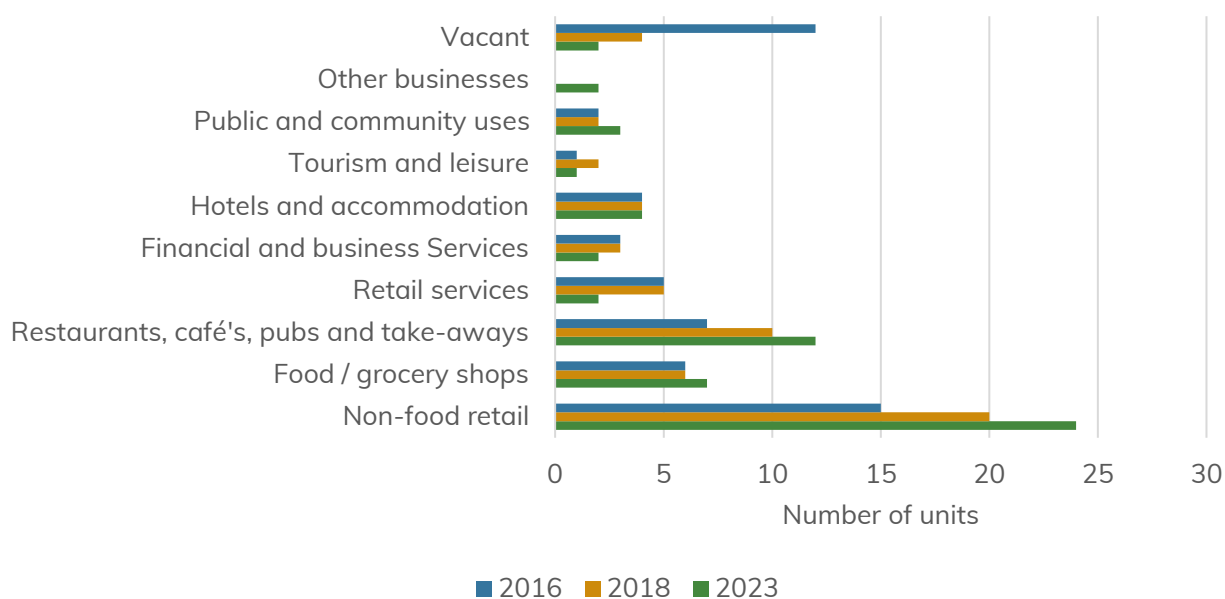
Figure 10 Number of business premises by business type in Ballater town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023.
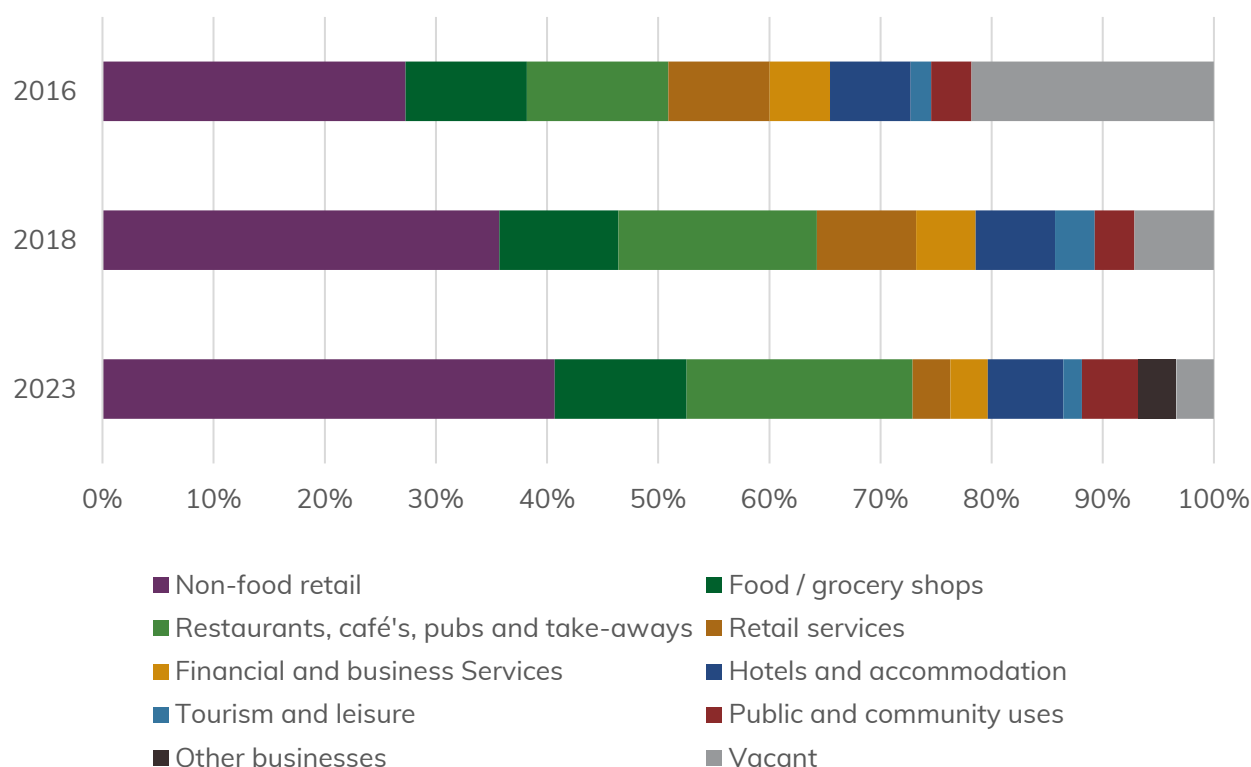
Figure 11 Composition of town centre businesses in Ballater town centre, 2016, 2018 and 2023.

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

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

Threats identified to the town centre include:

- Flooding, as seen in 2015.
- Becoming too popular – during the town centre health check visit it was noted the streets were very busy.
- Car dominance and the reliance on car use – there is already a car dominated feel to town centre with a lot of informal parking around the central church.

Grantown-on-Spey town centre

Legend:
- Town centre boundary
- Non-food retail
- Charity shops
- Food / grocery shop
- Restaurant, cafe, pub, take-away
- Retail services
- Financial and business services
- Hotels and accommodation
- Tourism and leisure
- Public and community uses
- Education
- Other businesses
- Healthcare
- Place of Worship
- Vacant
- Residential
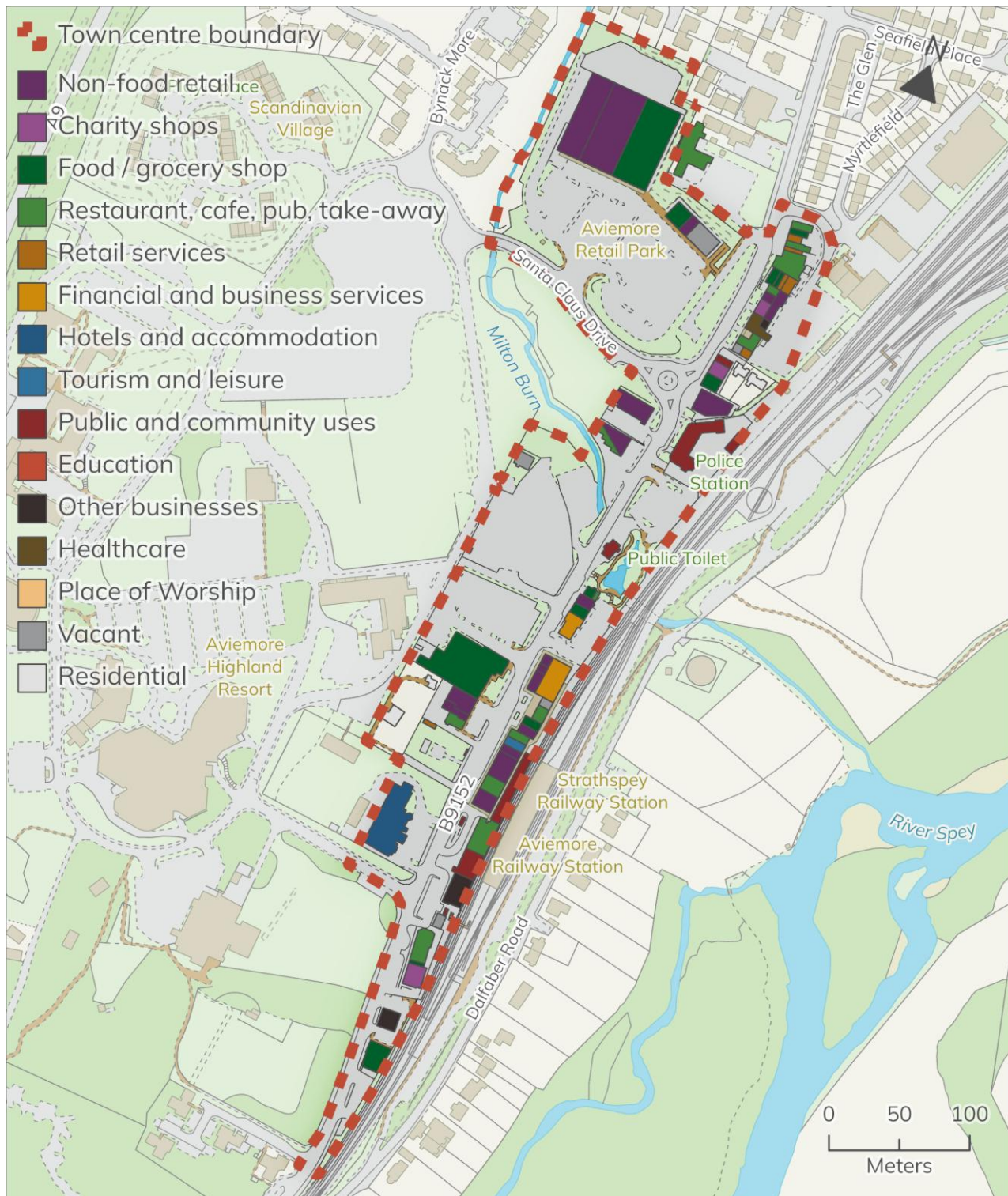
Figure 12 Grantown-on-Spey town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

Grantown-on-Spey lies in the north of the Cairngorms National Park and is one of the main service centres in Badenoch and Strathspey with a population of just over 2,400[16] . The town has a traditional long High Street and central square which forms the hub of the town.

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

- https://her.highland.gov.uk/api/LibraryLink5WebServiceProxy/FetchResourceFromStu b/1-2-2-5-0-8_d88f5522f651305-122508_b8de4120f7f71fd.pdf

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

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

Traffic congestion and unregulated parking are common issues in the town centre, especially on the square and along the High Street. Car dominance makes cycling difficult. Cycle facilities are limited, poorly signposted, and mostly uncovered. It's unclear whether some cycle parking is available to the public.

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

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[16] Understanding Scottish Places, http://www.usp.scot/

Town Centre Premises

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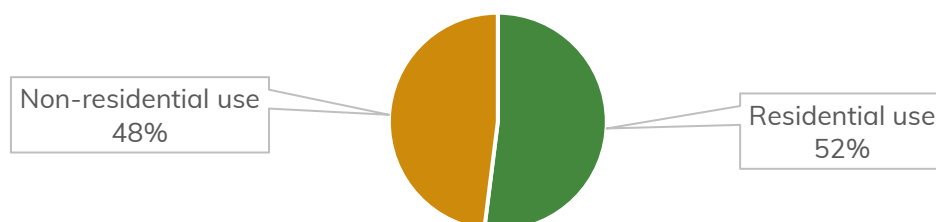
Figure 13 Proportion of premises within the town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non-residential use in Grantown-on-Spey in August 2023.

The highest proportion of non-residential premises in the town centre are non-food retail which account for 26% of all businesses representing 20 establishments (Figure 14). Other significant proportions include other businesses accounting for 13%, restaurants, cafes, pubs and take-aways which make up 11% (9 premises) and food and grocery shops which make up 13% (10 premises). Of the town centre non-residential premises (totalling 78) 84% of the premises were recorded as being independent outlets up from 72% in 2018 (and in 2016). This high proportion of independent to chain led retailers is similar to Ballater's composition (92% independent).
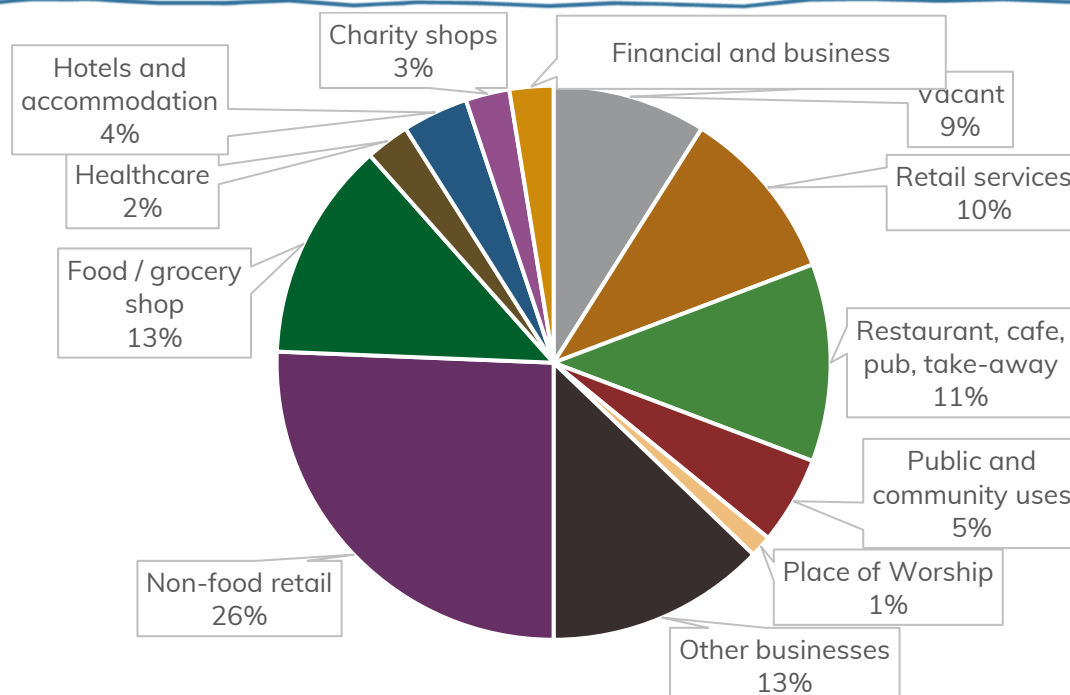
Figure 14 Composition of town centre premises with a non-residential use in Grantown on Spey, August 2023.

Composition of town centre business

In Grantown on Spey, similar to in Ballater, there is an increase in non-food retail. This was stable between 2016 and 2018, but in 2023 rose from 20% of the businesses to 27% representing an increase of 5 new businesses (Figure 15 and Figure 16). Other businesses have also significantly increased proportionally from 4% in 2016 to 13% in 2023. It is possible the increase in these businesses is a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic and a switch from restaurants, cafes pubs and takeaway business and retail services. Restaurants, cafes, pubs and take-aways have reduced from 12 in 2018 to 9 in 2023. Retail services have also decreased in this period from 12 businesses to 8.

Interestingly the number of vacant properties in the town has remained constant at 7 or 9%. Given the fact that there was a 5-year gap between the most recent and last town centre health check it is possible that not enough data has been collected to say whether this is typical or not. However, it does remain a problem given the small size of the town that nearly 10% of the town centres business premises are vacant.

The number of financial and business services businesses have also severely declined (as seen in the other towns to a lesser degree). In Grantown on Spey in 2016 there were 6 businesses serving financial and business needs whereas in 2023 this number has reduced to 2. The loss of the last bank on the High Street is perhaps a visual reflection in the changes in the way financial services are administered in rural towns.

Tourism related businesses have also decreased from 2 (3%) to nothing in 2023. There has also been a modest decline in hotels and accommodation with the loss of one establishment since 2016.
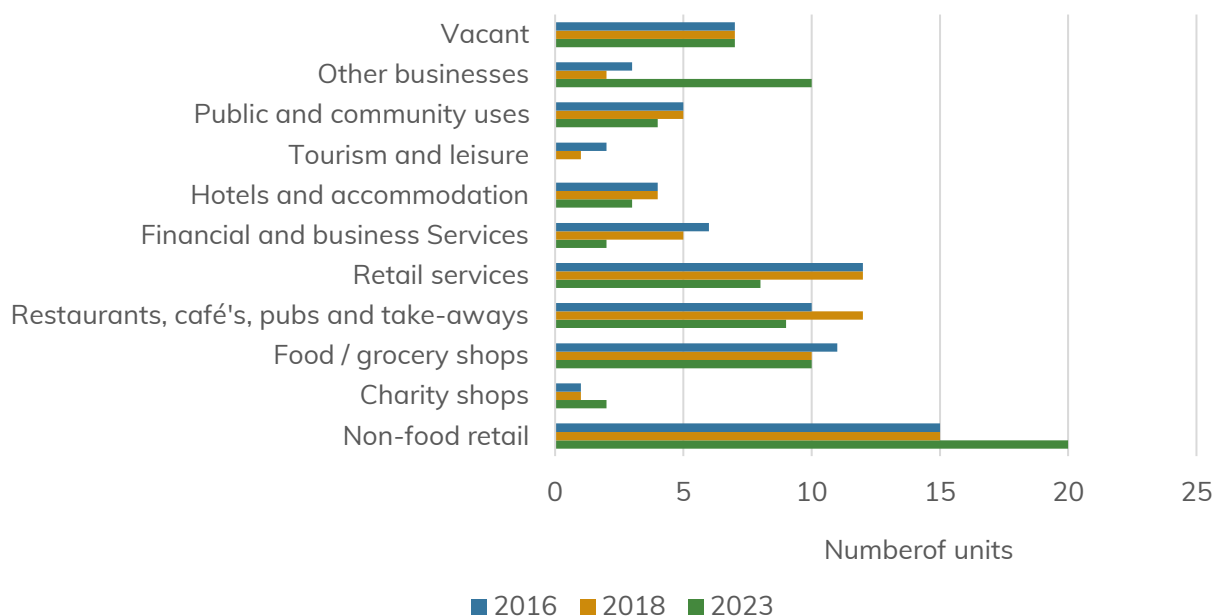
Figure 15 Number of business premises by business type in Grantown on Spey town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023.
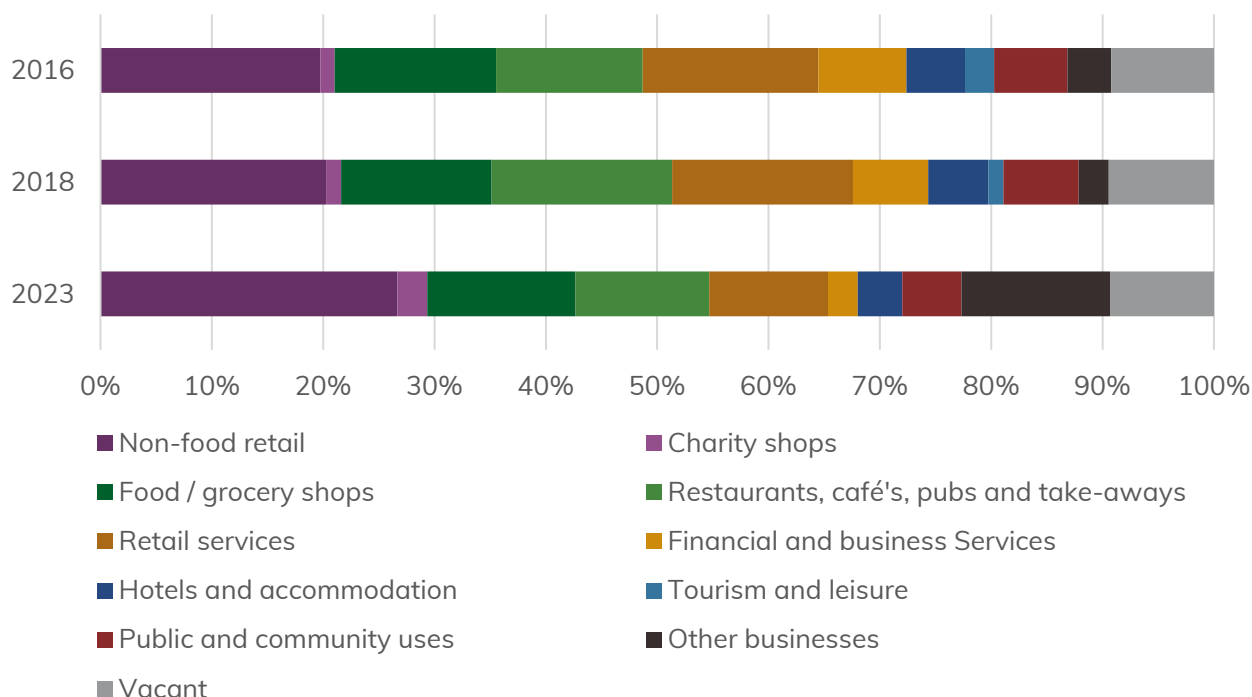
Figure 16 Composition of town centre businesses in Grantown on Spey town centre, 2016, 2018 and 2023.

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

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

Threats identified to the town centre include:

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

Kingussie town centre
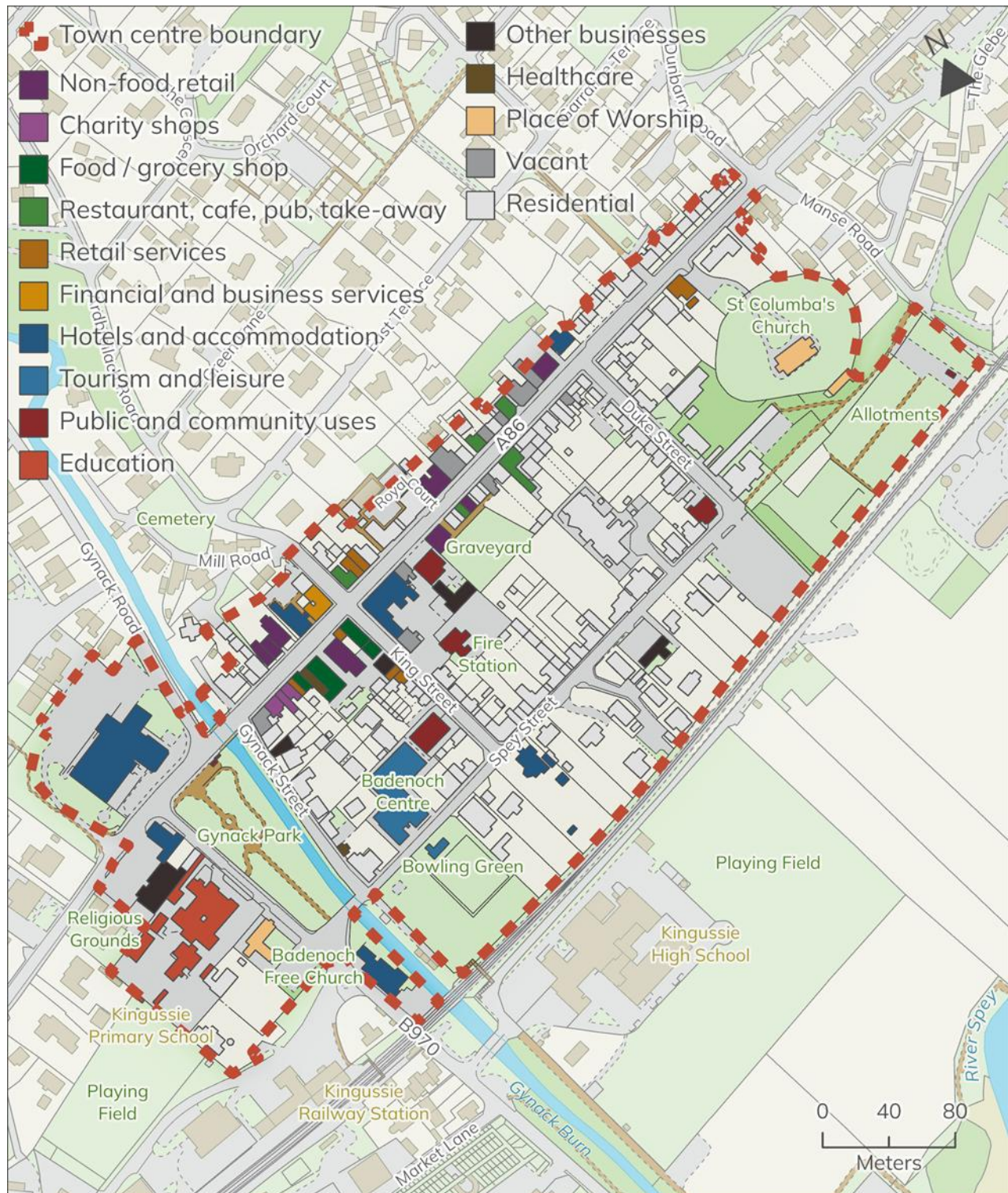
Figure 17 Kingussie town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

Kingussie is the oldest settlement in Badenoch and is a traditional Highland town, which began life as a planned village in 1799. It expanded in the 1800's with the introduction of the railway which brought tourism to the town. However, the A9 has now meant the town is bypassed and may have contributed to a decline in economic activity. It has a population of nearly 1,50017. It is a popular destination for visitors with a number of attractions nearby. The town centre is focused along a long traditional high street typical of the area.

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

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

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

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

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

Town Centre Businesses

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

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[17] Understanding Scottish Places, http://www.usp.scot/
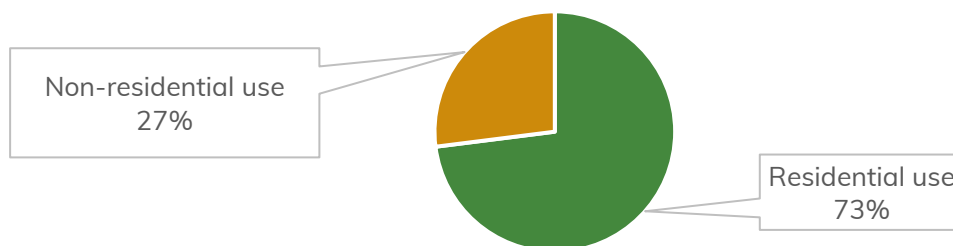
Figure 18 Proportion of premises within the town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non-residential use in Kingussie in 2023.

Figure 19 shows that Kingussie enjoys the most even distributed proportion of different business uses of all the towns in the National Park with no one business/ use dominating too strongly. The greatest proportion of businesses being seen in non-food retail which accounts for 12% of the non-residential premises in Kingussie (8 premises). Hotels and accommodation, retail services and public and community uses each account for 11% (representing 7 premises per use). Proportionally 16% of the premises were recorded as vacant (10 units). Charity shops, tourism and leisure, food and grocery, healthcare, other businesses, restaurants, cafes, pubs and take-aways and places of worship each account for 3-8% each.

Of the town centre businesses 89% of the premises were recorded as being independent outlets up from 75% in 2018 (and 82% in 2016). This high proportion of independent to chain led retailers is equal to the proportion recorded in Ballater in 2023 (92% independent).
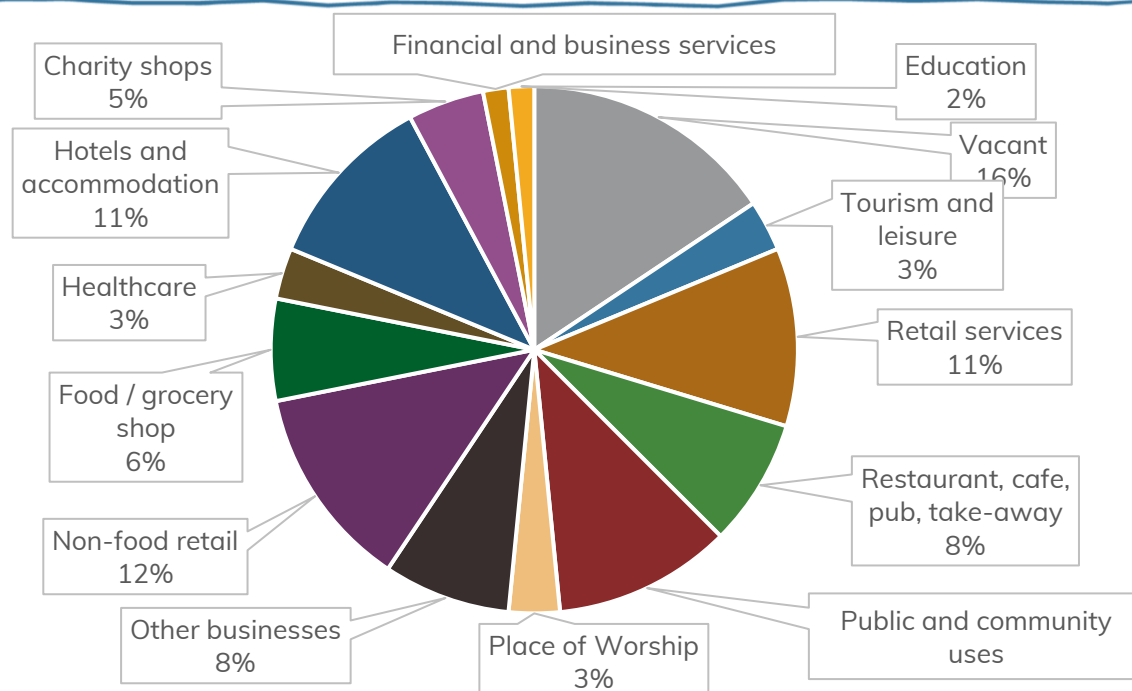
Figure 19 Composition of the town centre buildings recorded as non-residential use in Kingussie in 2023.

Composition of town centre business

The number of vacant businesses in Kingussie has increased since 2016 overall, when only 6 business were recorded at being vacant, with 10 in 2023 (and 11 in 2018).

Dissimilar to other towns the numbers of hotels and accommodation businesses have been steadily increasing from 5 in 2016, 6 in 2018 to 7 in 2023 (Figure 20 and Figure 21). Charity shops have increased from 1 shop being recorded in both 2016 and 2018 to 3 in 2023. This may be attributed to the inception and growth of the Caberfeidh Horizons charity operations in Kingussie. Non-food retail businesses have also increased since 2016 from 7 to 8.

There is a clear decreasing trend in financial and business services (as seen in other towns in the National Park since 2016). These businesses have decreased from 3 in 2016, 2 in 2018 to only 1 being left in 2023.

Retail services have also decreased both proportionally and in terms of absolute numbers throughout the three town centre health checks, reporting 9 (19%) in 2016, 8 (16%) in 2018 down to 7 (12%) in 2023.
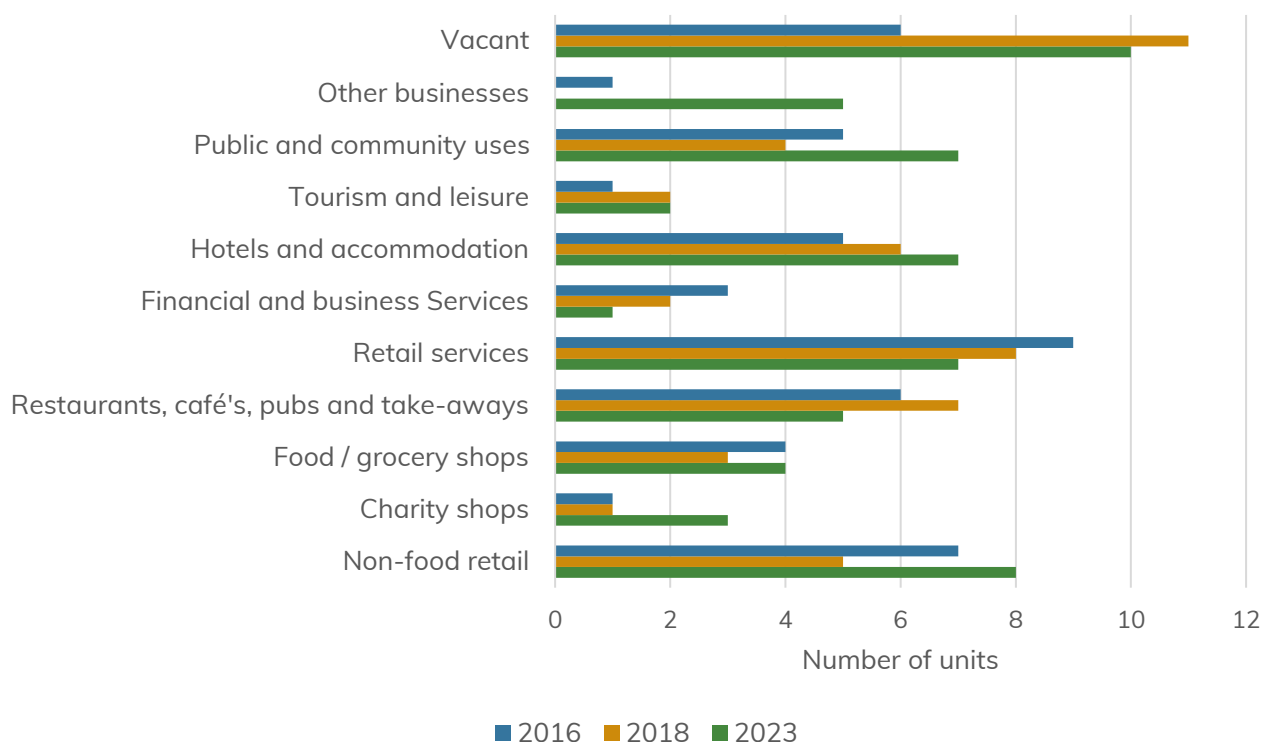
Figure 20 Number of business premises by business type in Kingussie town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023.
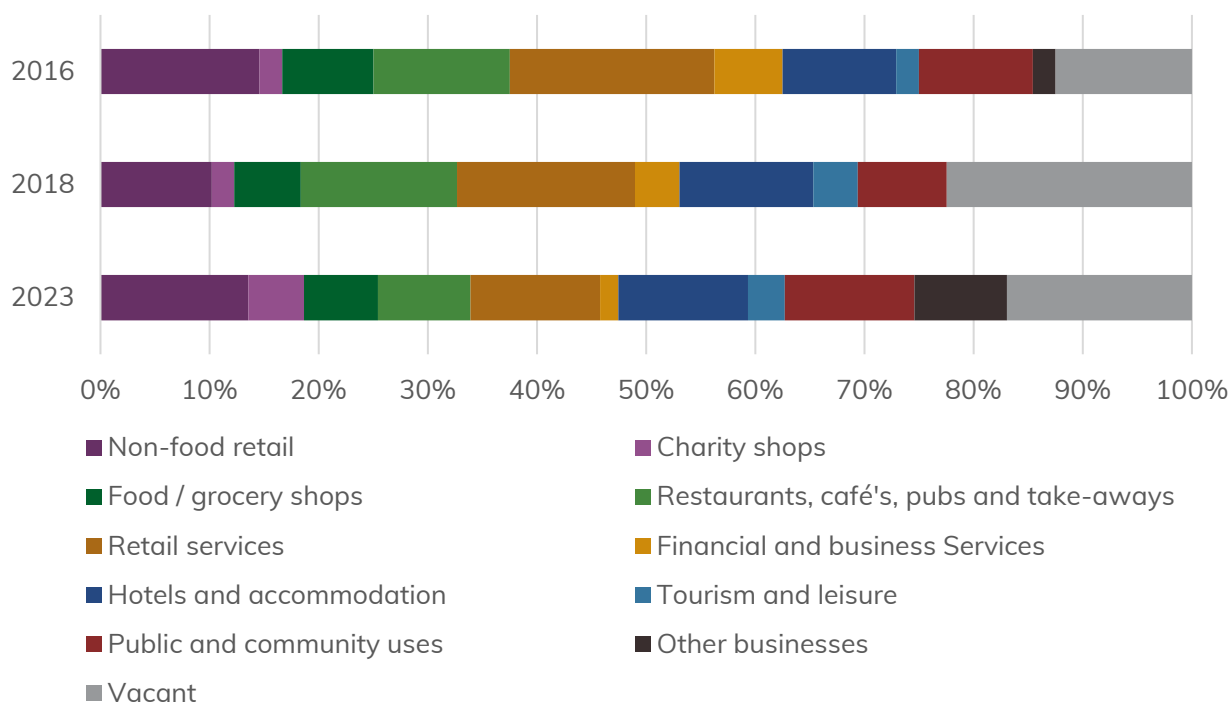
Figure 21 Composition of town centre businesses in Kingussie, 2016, 2018 and 2023.

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

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

Threats identified to the town centre include:

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

Newtonmore town centre
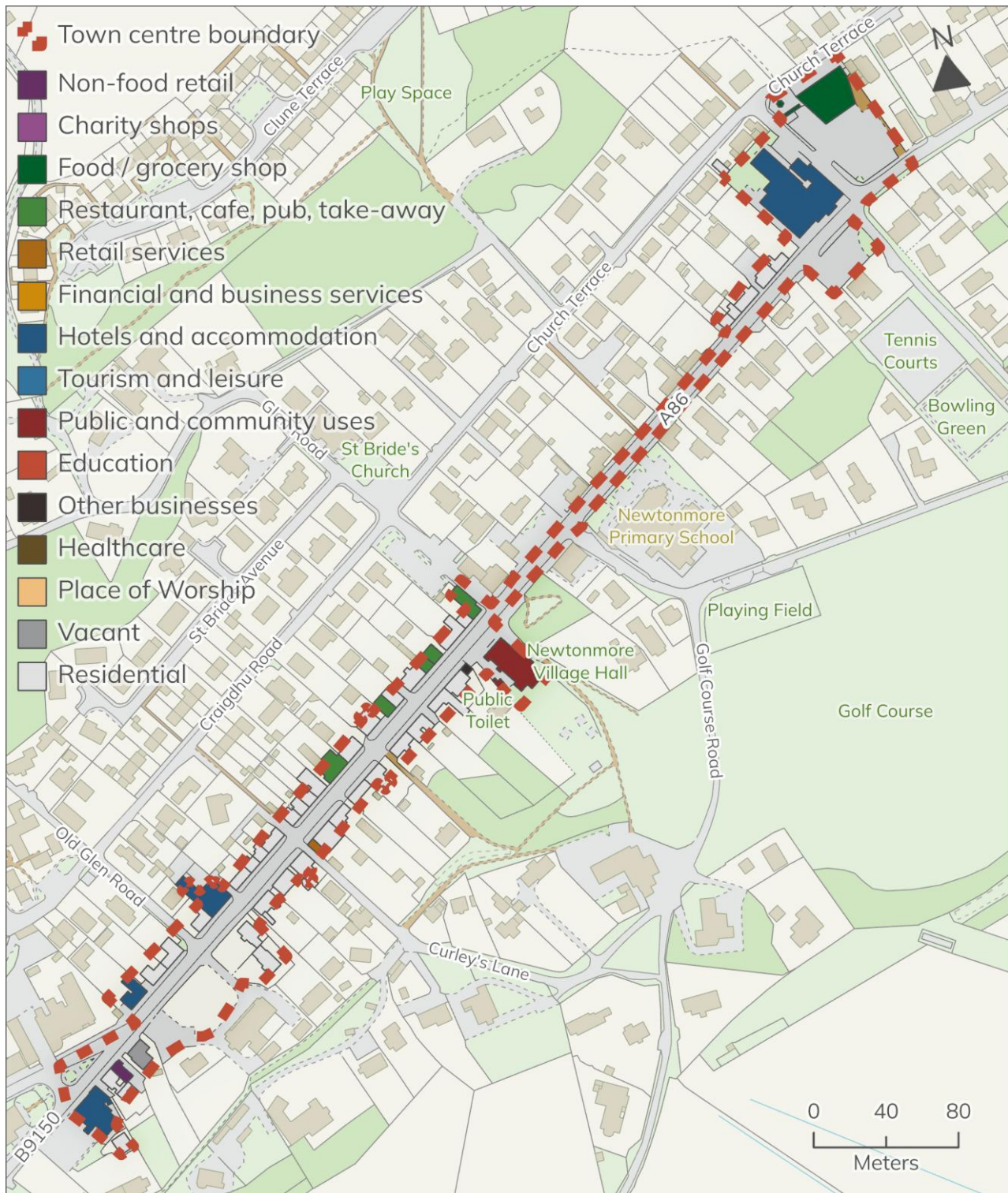
Figure 22 Newtonmore town centre uses. Cairngorms National Park Authority Town Centre Health Checks, 2023. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

Newtonmore is a village which lies on the western edge of the National Park, around 3 miles southwest of Kingussie and approximately 17 miles southwest of Aviemore. It is a popular destination for anglers and grouse shooting tourists. It is also home to the Highland Folk Museum which is popular with visitors in the summer season. The area also hosts the Wild Cat Trail and Wild Cat Experience and there is a dedicated Wildcat Centre in the town centre. Surrounding the town there are also a number of bike and walking trails. It also has a long linear village centre typical of the area with a strong historic character. It has a population of just over 1,000[18].

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

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

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

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

Town Centre Businesses
In Newtonmore the majority (73%) of the buildings within the town centre boundary are designated for residential use (Figure 23). This represents a significantly different town centre composition compared to Aviemore (Figure 3) where the majority of premises in the town centre are designated for business use, and to a lesser degree but just as

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[18] Understanding Scottish Places, http://www.usp.scot/

significant difference from to Grantown on Spey and Ballater where the distribution is more equally weighted. In Newtonmore proportionally 86% of the non-residential premises are independent retailers – representing 13 premises.
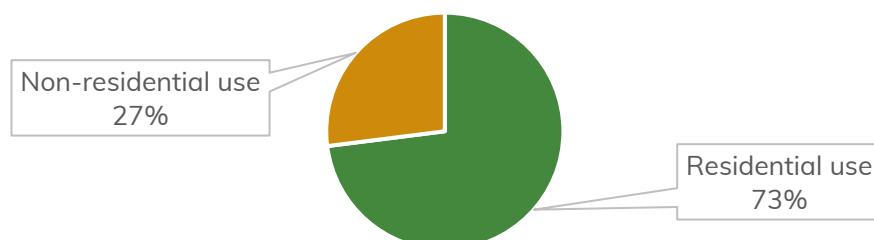

Figure 23 Proportion of buildings within the town centre boundary used for residential use compared to non-residential use in Newtonmore in 2023.

Figure 24 shows the largest proportion of premises for non-residential use in Newtonmore are recorded as restaurants, cafes, pubs and take-aways and hotels and accommodation both 28% (representing 4 establishments each). Food and grocery shops make up 7% with the remaining 37% of the non-residential premises comprising of retail services (1), vacant properties (1), non-food retail (1), other businesses (1) and public and community uses (13% but only equating to two units – the town hall and public toilets). It should be noted that there are a far lower number of buildings within the town of Newtonmore with a much higher proportion of buildings designated as residential dwellings meaning the actual numbers of each type of business are relatively low, thus meaning the proportional figures have less significance than some of the other towns.
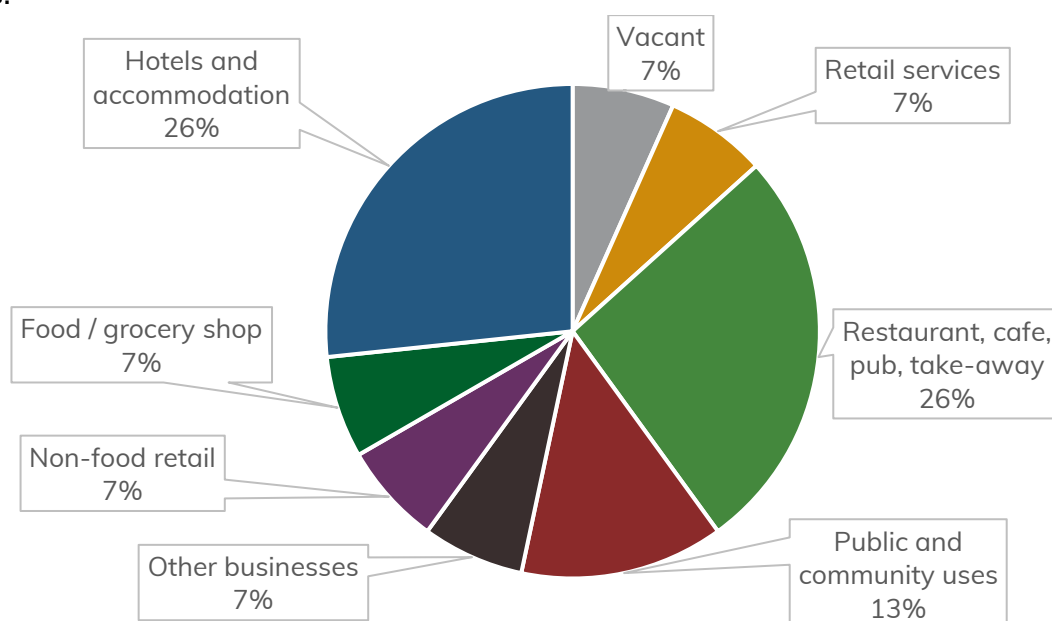
Figure 24 Composition of town centre premises with a non-residential use in Newtonmore, August 2023.

Composition of town centre business

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

The numbers of vacant properties have decreased from 3 in 2016 to 1 in 2023, however it should be noted there was 1 recorded in 2018, so any meaningful trend at this point is not evident. Hotels and accommodation and restaurant, cafes, pubs and take-away businesses have been fairly stable with the same figures reported for 2023 as 2016. Across all years three has been no-change in the number of food / grocery shops remaining constant at 1.

Public and community uses have increased by one, and tourism and leisure decreased by one, with one extra other business type recorded (2016 - 2023). These small discrepancies may be changes occurring as a consequence to the recording method, which with the introduction of spatial data capture should produce more accurate and consistent results going forward. Overall, there has been little change in the business composition, with the exception of vacant buildings, since 2016.
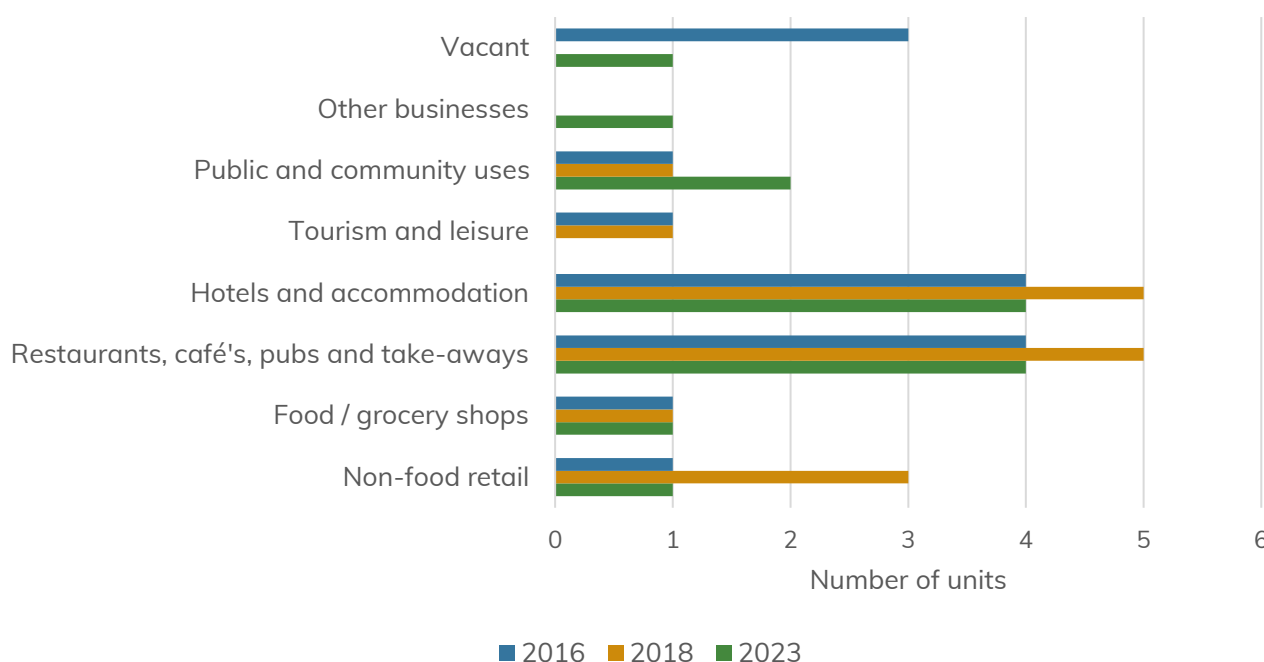
Figure 25 Number of business premises by business type in Newtonmore town centre for 2016, 2018 and 2023.
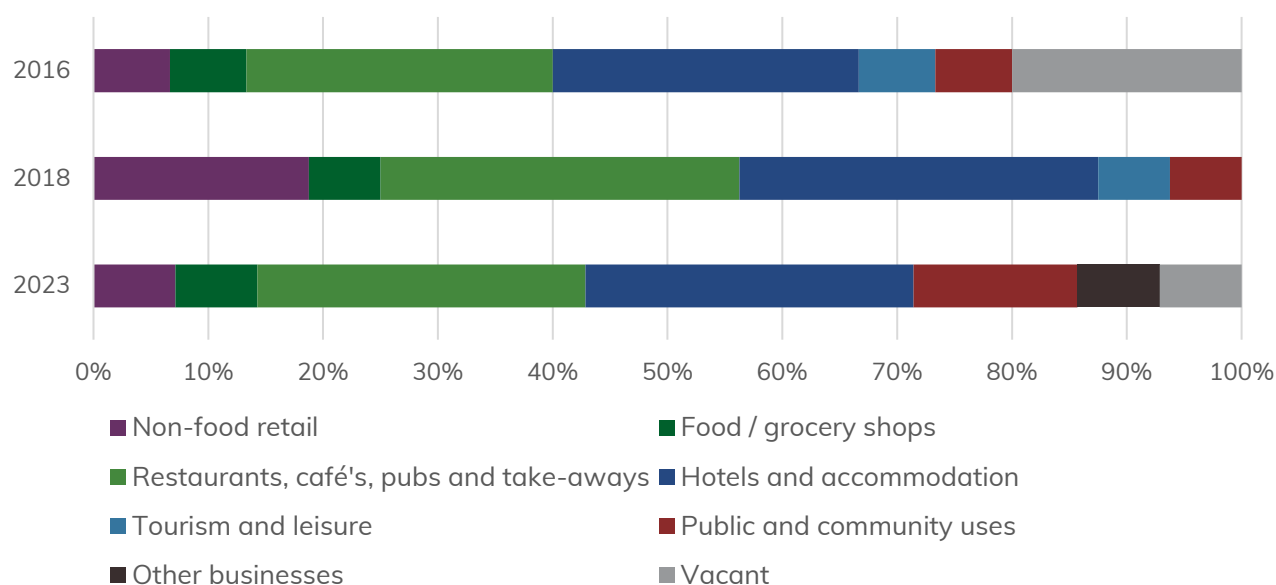
Figure 26 Composition of town centre businesses in Newtonmore town centre, 2016, 2018 and 2023.

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

- Future cycle path connection and opportunity to promote cycling in the town.
- Utilising other vacant shop fronts for aesthetic improvement – for example Art displays, window graphics.
- The disused/ vacant old bank could be used for either commercial or residential purposes.

Threats identified to the town centre include:

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

Town centre health check implications

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

Vacant and derelict land and buildings

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

Electric vehicle charging

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

Active travel infrastructure

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

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

Strathspey Railway

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

Town centre boundaries

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

- Grantown on Spey: An extension of the town centre boundary to include the library and adjoining car park and toilets, as well as the Garth Hotel and public gardens adjoining the square. The rational for this is that the current boundary does not include the whole square, which is to many residents and visitors seen as the main

focus if the town. The library and gardens opposite form an important part of the public space and amenities of the town.

- Kingussie: A review of the boundary to reduce its size given the high proportion of residential premises in the southern half of the current area.
- Newtonmore: An extension of the boundary to include the buildings adjacent to the Community Hall, including the primary school and pharmacy, two key building uses in the town centre.

Village centres

In the smaller rural settlements, there are village centres that act as local centres for the local communities. Village centres (Figure 27) in this context are defined by the designation of the settlements in the National Park Partnership Plan 2022's strategic diagram as intermediate settlements. Therefore, the village centres covered by this report are:

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

In 2025 the Cairngorms National Park Authority introduced a village health check approach to assess the health of local villages. Such checks can aid in understanding local needs, thus helping planners and community groups in identifying issues such as gaps in services as well as addressing vacant units. They also support evidence-based planning, track changes over time, and assess how villages respond to economic, social, and environmental pressures. Additionally, they promote sustainable development and encourage community involvement, ensuring locals opinions are reflected in future strategies.
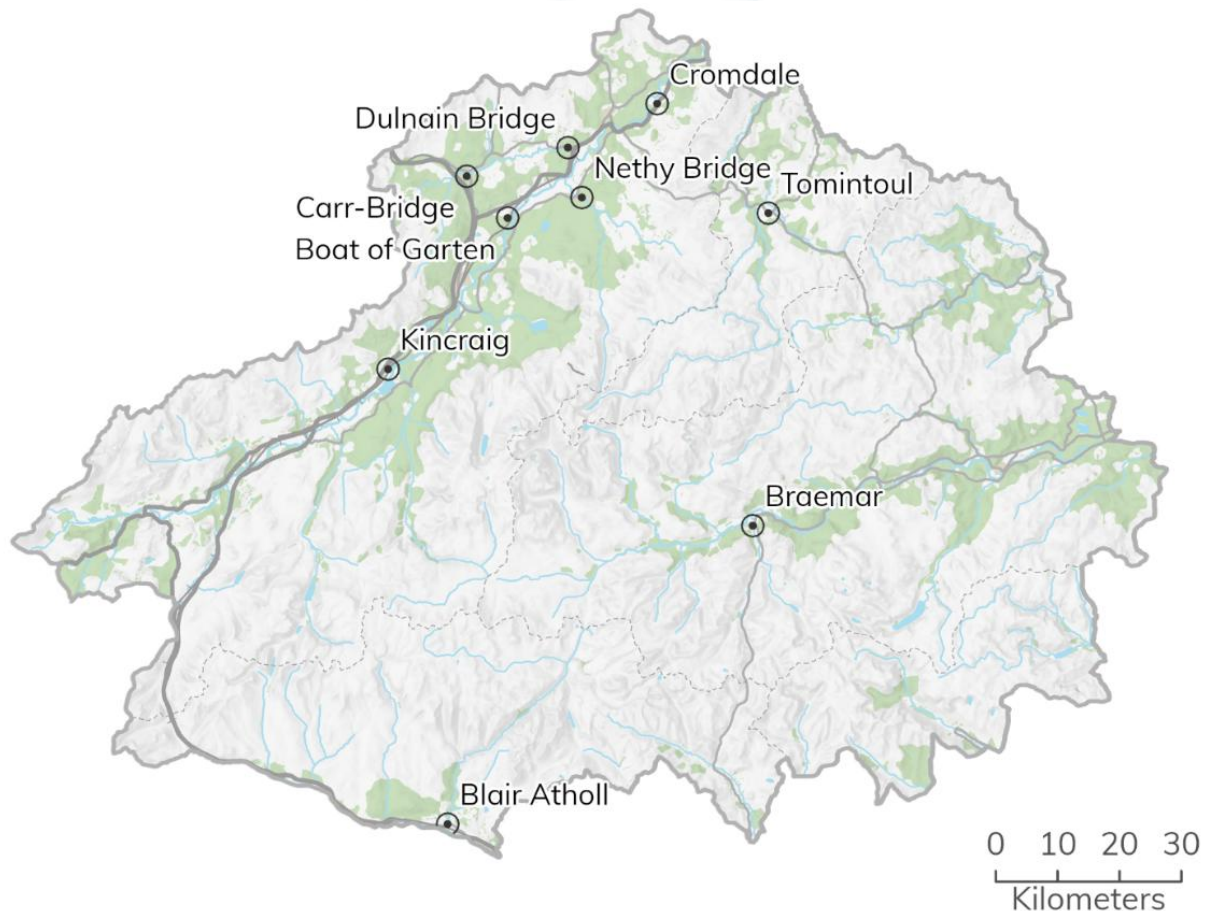
Figure 27 Village centres (Intermediate settlements) in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

This section provides a summary of the information gathered by the village centre health check. For full information, see:

- https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Local-Development-Plan-Evidence-Report/Supporting-Documents/Cairngorms-National-Park-Village-Centre-Health-Checks-2025.pdf

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

Blair Atholl
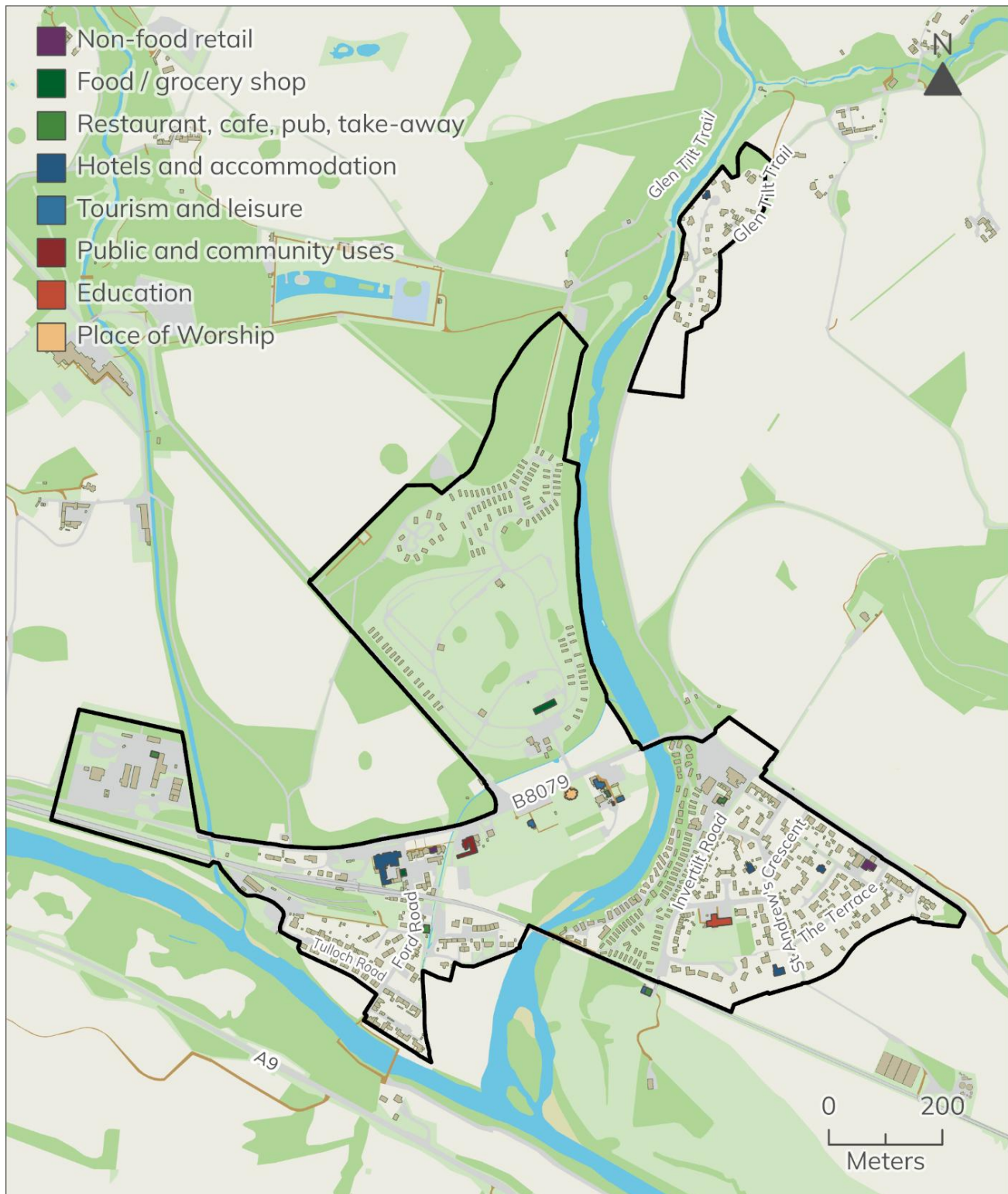
Figure 28 Business composition and distribution in Blair Atholl in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

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

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

Business composition

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

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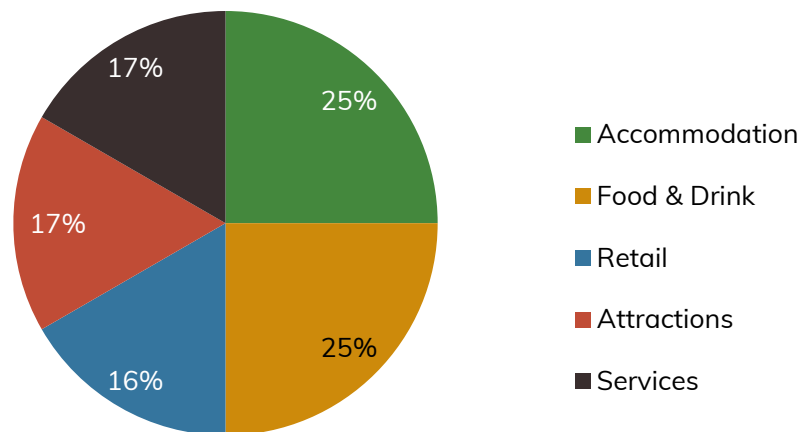

Figure 29 Business composition of Blair Atholl in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025.

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

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

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:
- Potential to improve signage, cycle parking, and footpaths.
- Strengthen links between key attractions and village centre.
- Enhancing public realm and shared spaces.

Boat of Garten
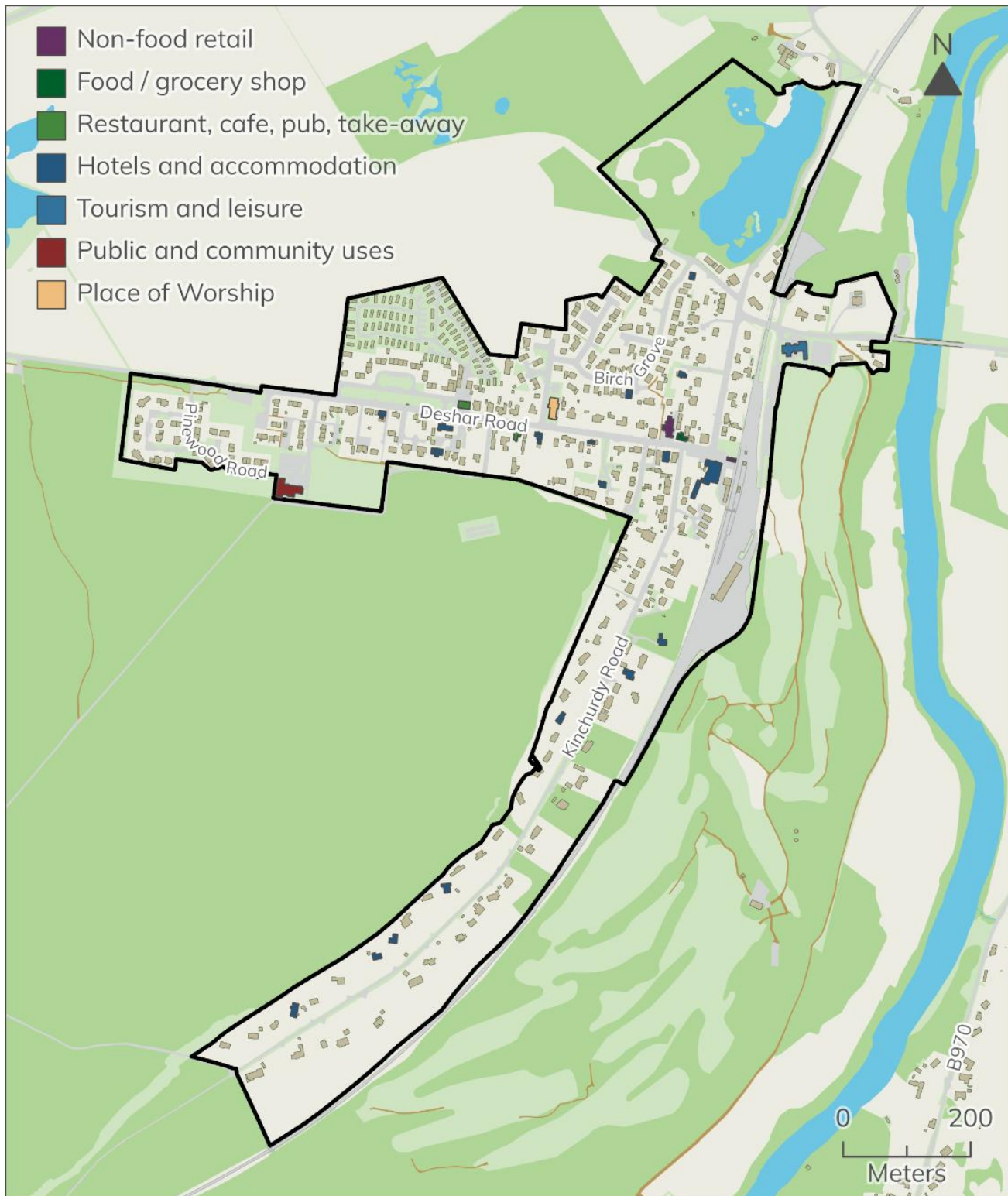
Figure 30 Business composition and distribution in Boat of Garten in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bus routes 37 and X37 connect Boat of Garten to nearby towns, though service frequency is low, especially on weekends. This reflects wider transportation challenges common in rural areas of the National Park. Bus facilities are in good shape, offering shelter and real-time timetables.

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

Business composition

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

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

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

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

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:
- Enhancing signage, crossings, and formalised cycle infrastructure.
- Developing more formalised public realm and event space.
- Promoting tourism and active travel links with natural assets and heritage sites.
- Leveraging the community hall as a central hub for services and events.
- Strengthen transport connections to Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey.
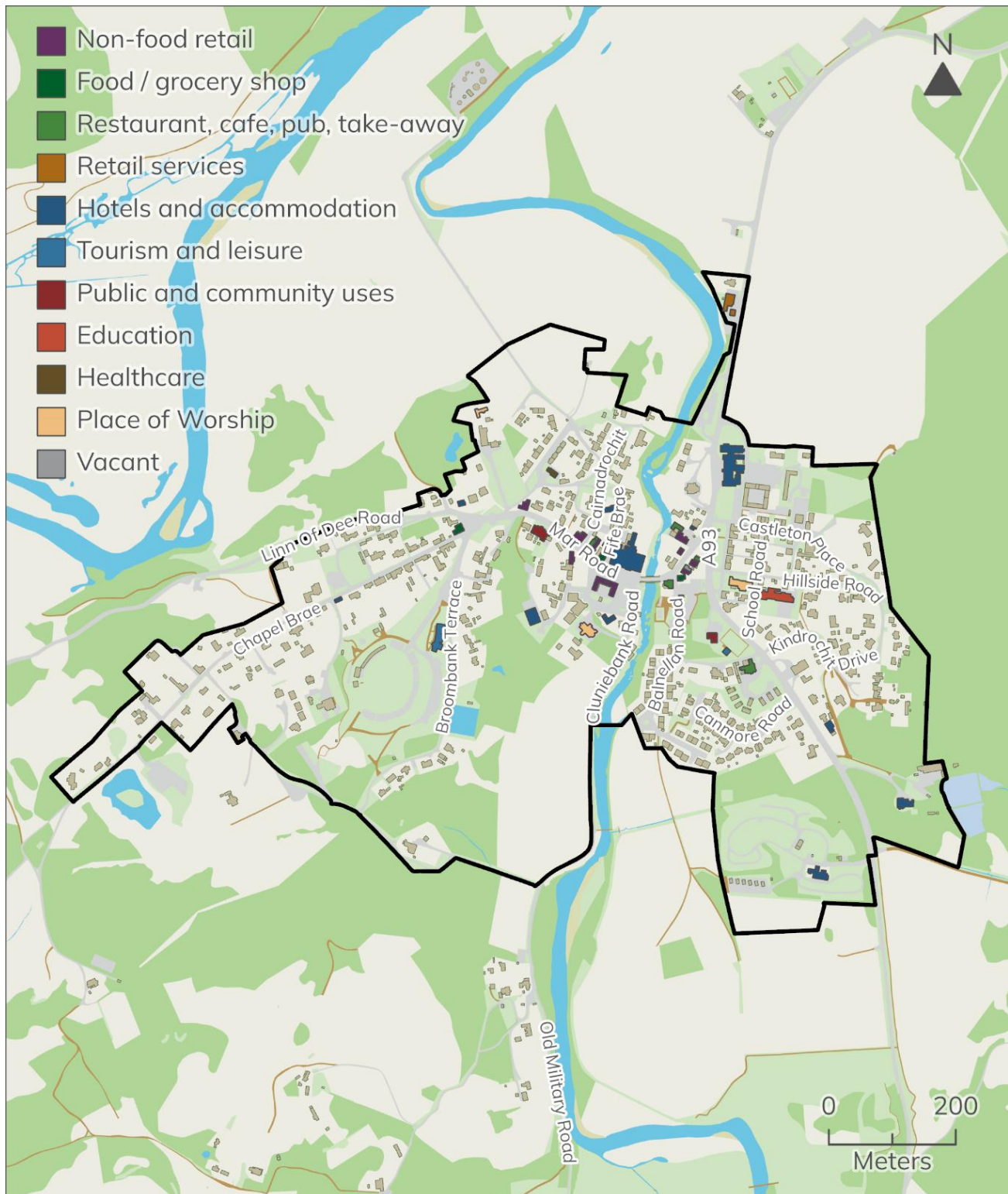
Braemar

Figure 31 Business composition and distribution in Braemar in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

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

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

Business composition

Braemar has a varied business offer for its size, with a strong focus on tourism, hospitality, and outdoor recreation. The village centre includes several hotels and guest houses, notably The Fife Arms, as well as cafes, pubs, restaurants, and specialist retail such as gift shops and outdoor equipment suppliers. Recent changes include the relocation of the chocolate shop and the closure of a local bistro.
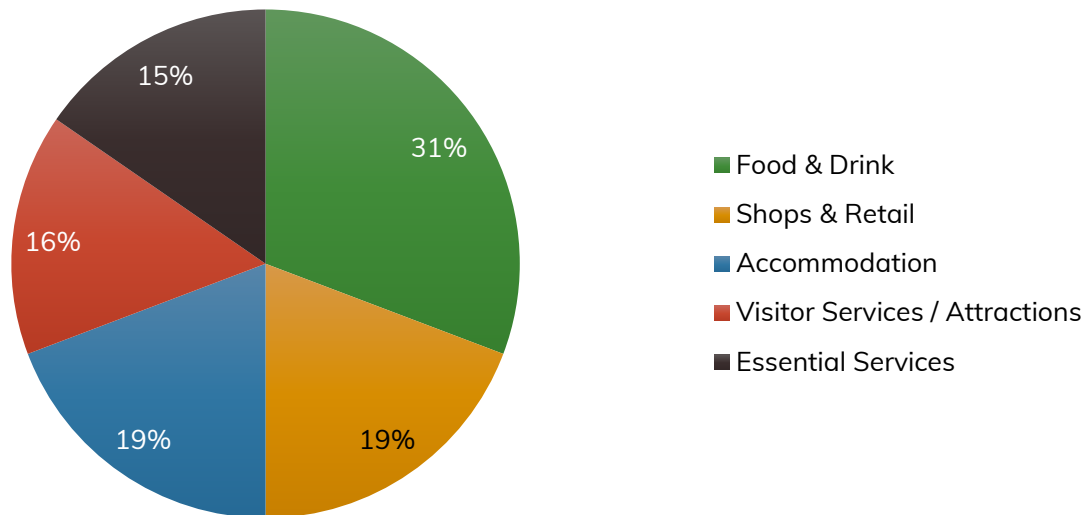
Figure 32 Business composition of Braemar in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025.

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

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:
- Enhancing cycle facilities and improve pedestrian crossings.
- Promoting year-round tourism through events and exhibitions.
- Expanding accessible infrastructure at car parks and public toilets.
- Developing flood resilience strategies to protect key assets.
- Supporting local housing initiatives to retain young families.
- Improving public realm through continued investment in amenity spaces.
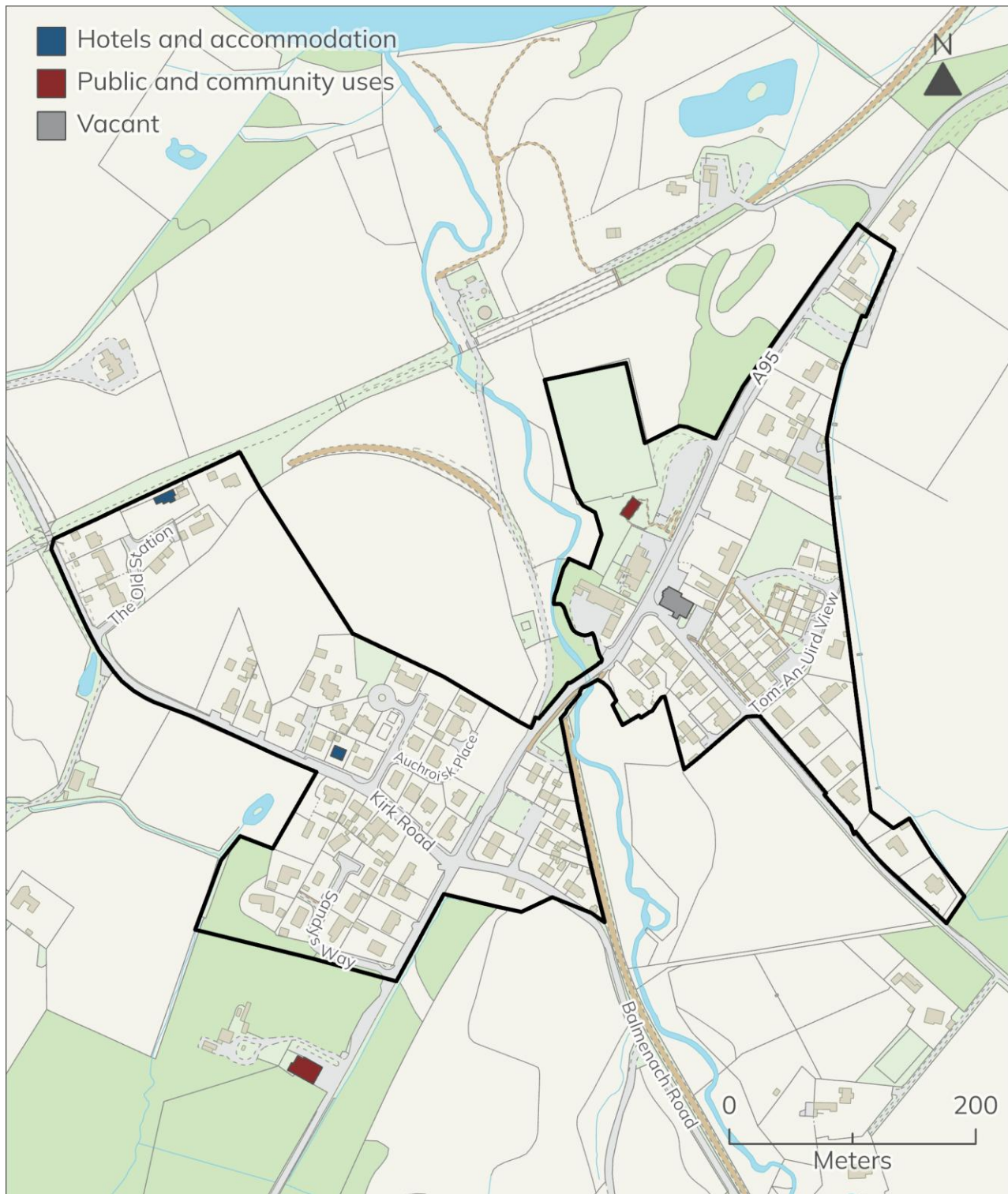
Carrbridge
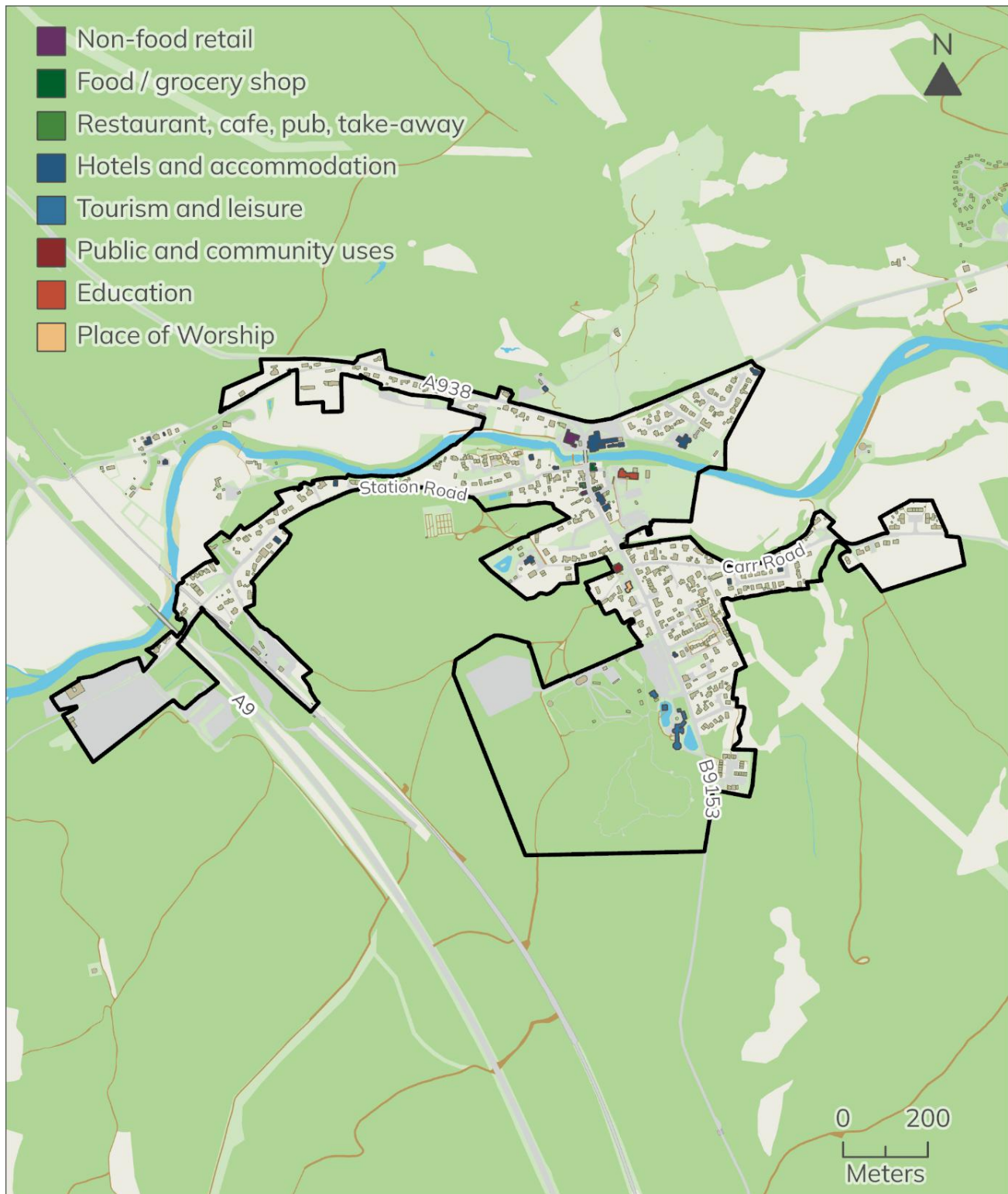
Figure 33 Business composition and distribution in Carrbridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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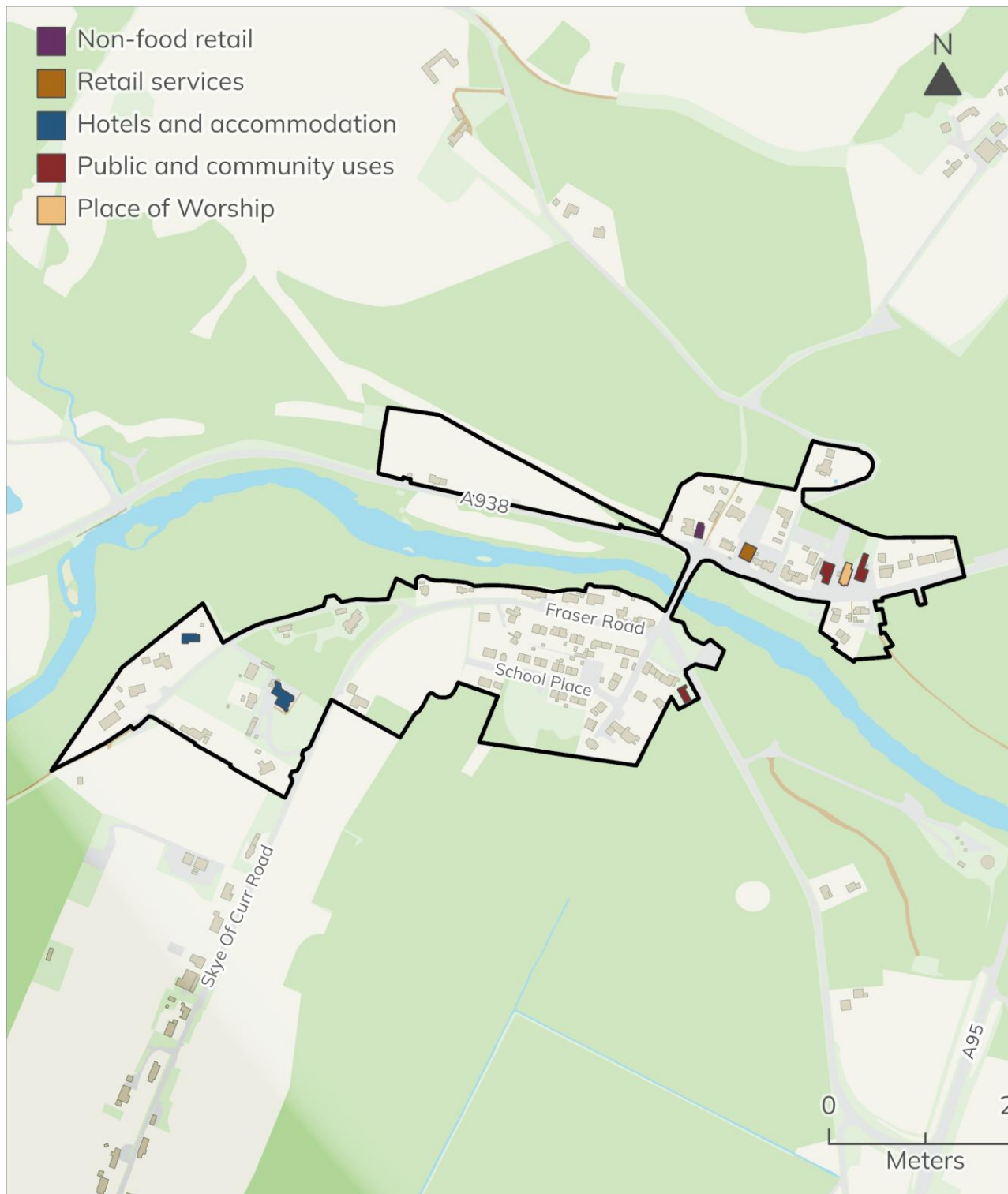- Upgrading bus infrastructure and service frequency.

Cromdale

Figure 34 Business composition and distribution in Cromdale in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

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

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

The public toilets are located inside the pavilion beside the football pitch, car park, and play area. They are currently closed but remain signposted both with a brown tourist sign on the roadside and signage on the building itself. The step-free access is present but narrow and steep.

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

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

Dulnain Bridge

Figure 35 Business composition and distribution in Dulnain Bridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

Business composition
Dulnain Bridge supports a modest but functional business composition reflective of its small population and rural character. The village includes a limited number of customer-facing businesses, primarily focused on essential local services and small-scale tourism. Key facilities include a garage and a post office, with accommodation offered through local guesthouses and self-catering providers. While the overall business offer is minimal, it plays a vital role in maintaining village life and ensuring access to basic goods and services. The lack of retail or hospitality venues is typical of settlements of this scale but also highlights the importance of retaining and supporting existing businesses to sustain community resilience.
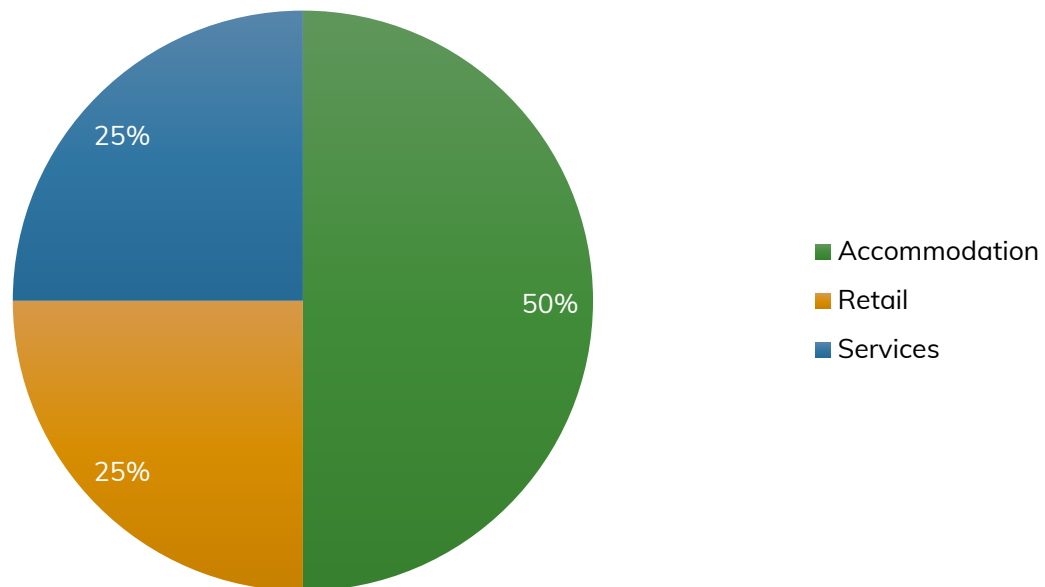
Figure 36 Business composition of services in Dulnain Bridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025.

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

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:
- Village would benefit from Grocery / retail and / or café facilities.
- Enhancing the woodland walks and trails – create circular route

Kincraig
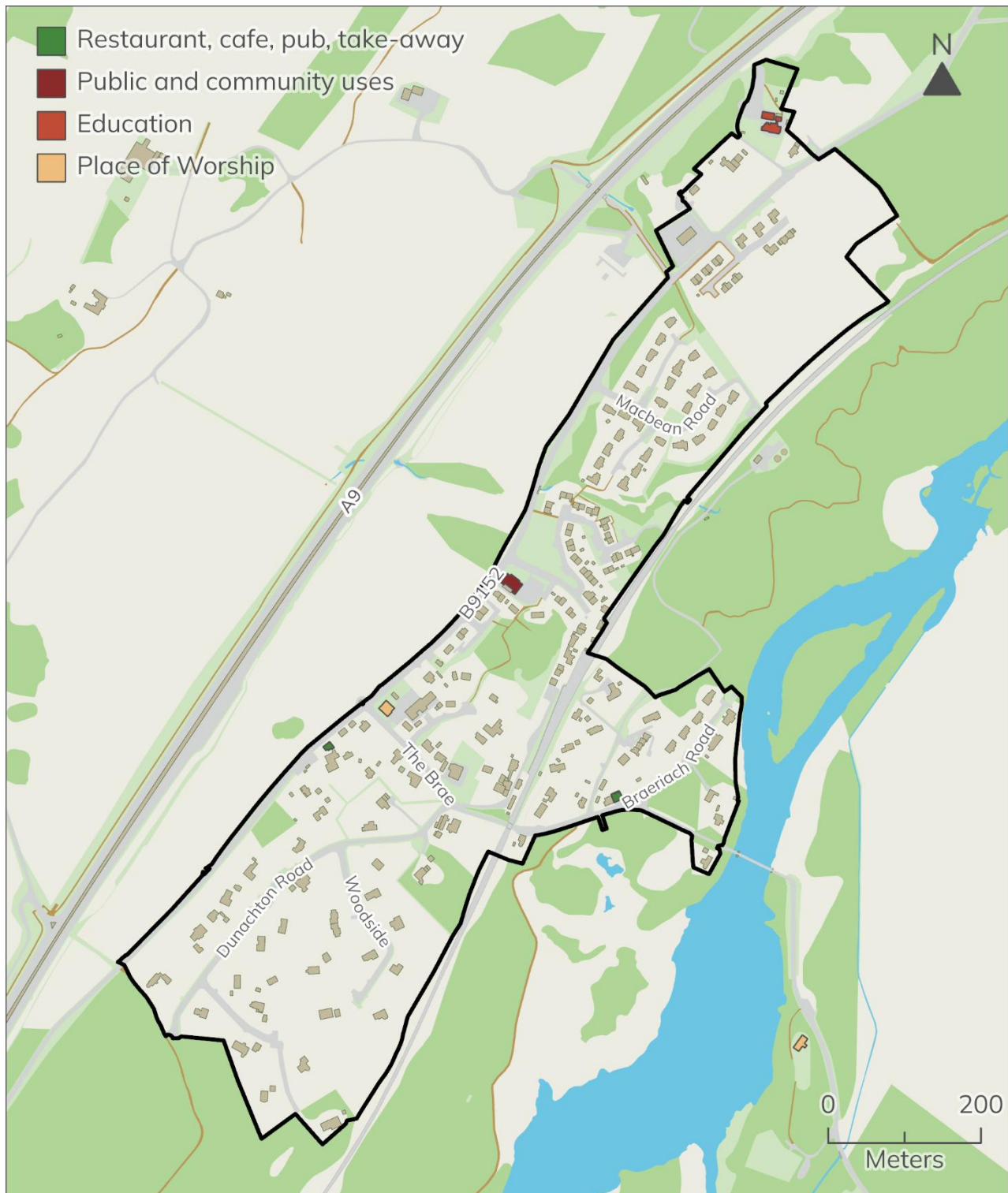
Figure 37 Business composition and distribution in Kincraig in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

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

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:
- Develop community focal points or enhance space around the community hall.
- Formalise cycle facilities and expand signage for active travel.
- Integrate natural assets such as river and loch access into village layout.
- Support local services and improve community infrastructure through investment.

- Leverage existing assets (café, trails, Wildlife Park) to reinforce identity and attract visitors.
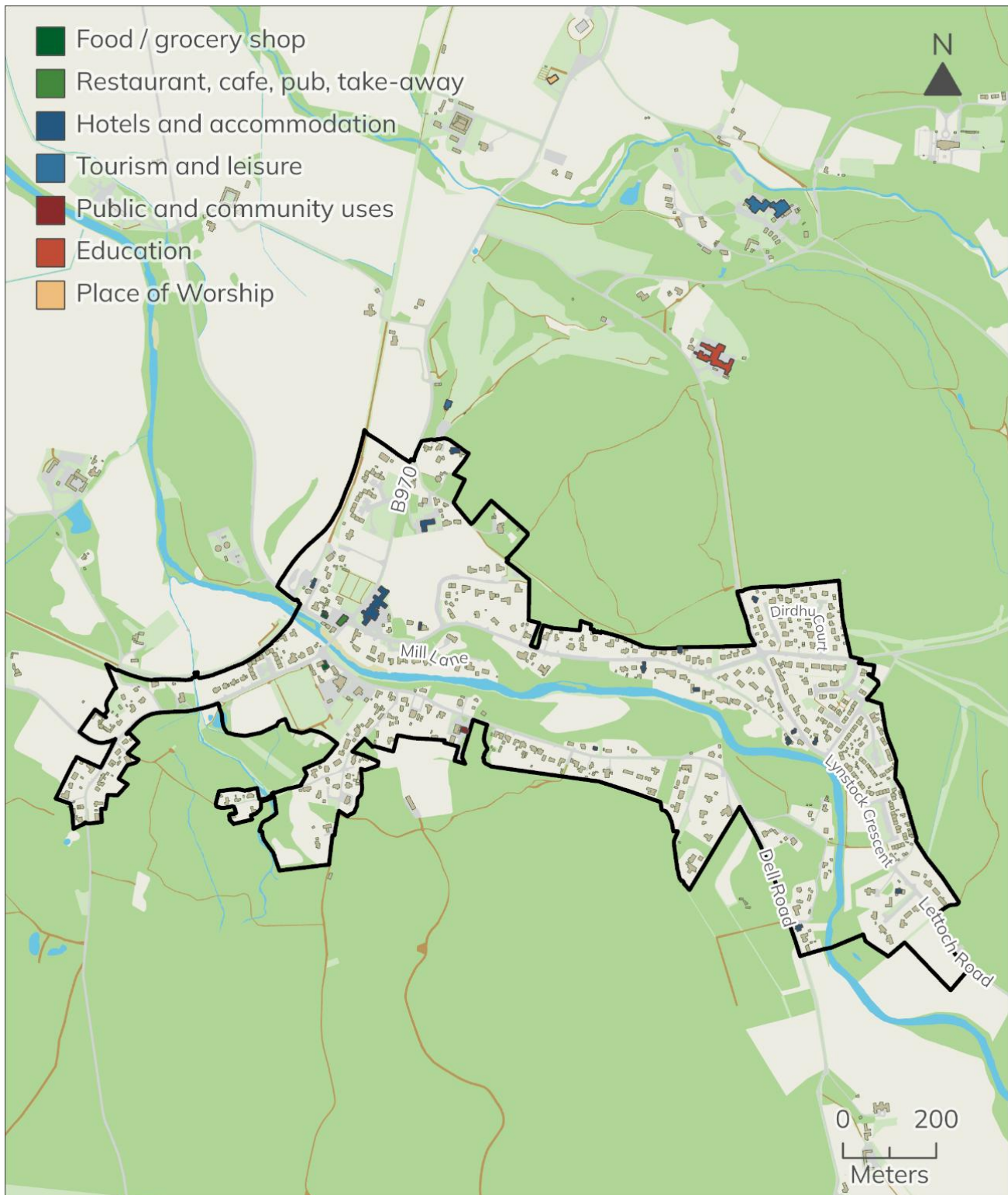
Nethy Bridge

Figure 38 Business composition and distribution in Nethy Bridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

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

Business composition

Nethy Bridge supports a modest but locally important mix of businesses that serve both residents and visitors. The business landscape is shaped by the village's dual function as a residential community and a popular destination within the Cairngorms National Park. Local services such as a village store, café, and post office are complemented by tourism-oriented enterprises, including guest houses and outdoor activity providers.
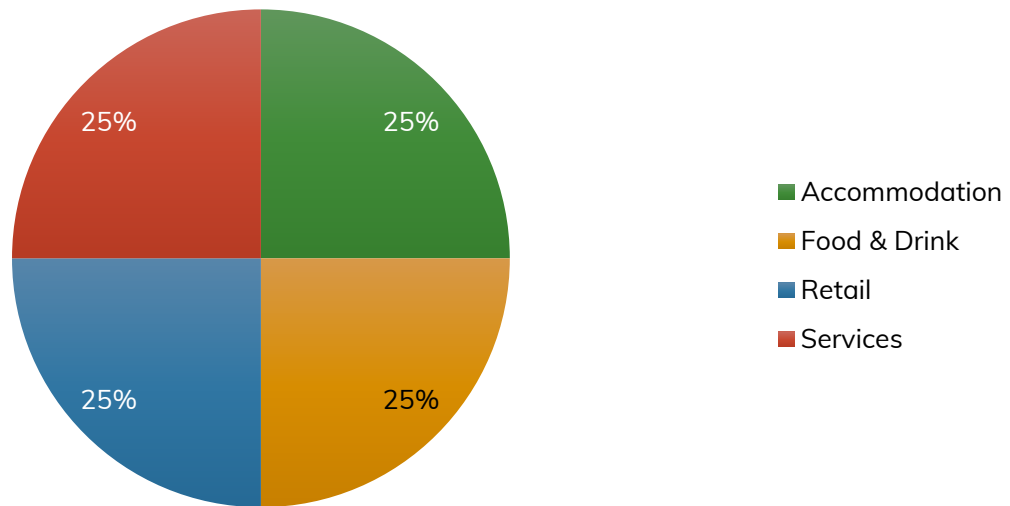
Figure 39 Business composition in Nethy Bridge in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025.

Threats to the village include:
- Infrequent public transport services.
- Lack of dedicated cycle infrastructure could hinder move to active / sustainable travel changes.
- On-street parking detracts from the visual quality of the streetscape.

Opportunities for improvement in the village include:
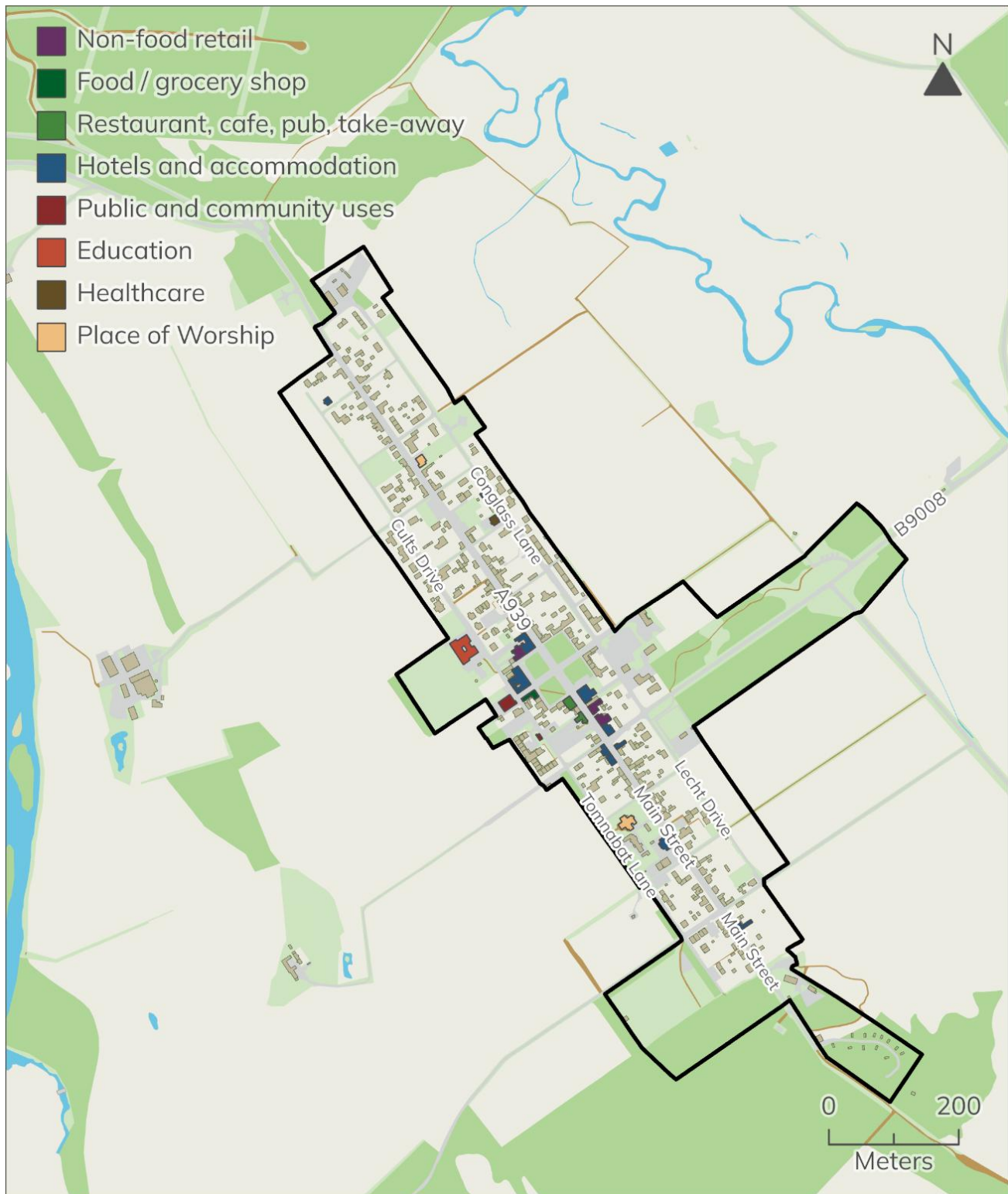- Large open spaces next to the village hall could be used or pop-up farmers / local markets.

Tomintoul

Figure 40 Business composition and distribution in Tomintoul in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

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

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

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

Business composition

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

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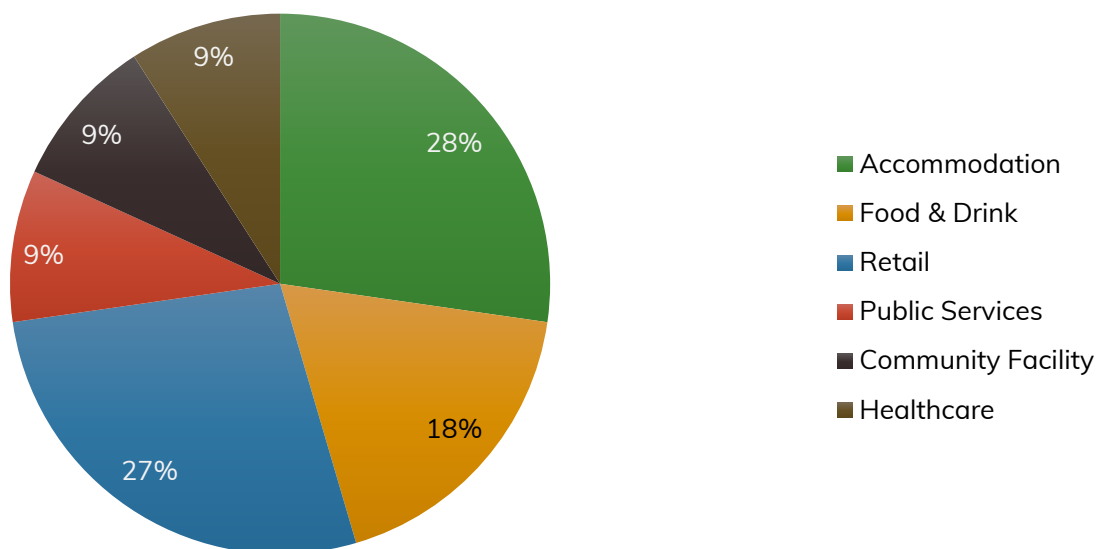

Figure 41 Business composition of Tomintoul in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025.

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

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

Village centre health checks implications for Proposed Plan

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

Second home ownership

The rise in second home ownership within the Cairngorms National Park has been highlighted extensively throughout the course of the report, with local authorities implementing a let control area in an effort to curtail rising prices. In addition to the data taken from the community action plans evidence of need can also be drawn from the

Cairngorms National Park resident and worker survey 2024 – 2025. While this data cannot be used to quantify need in terms of the housing land requirement, it does highlight the experiences, including barriers to finding affordable housing, of those living and working in the National Park.

Vacant and derelict land and buildings

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

Electric vehicle charging

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

Active travel infrastructure

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

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

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

Other types of centres

There are other local centres identified in town that support greater accessibility to local shops and services and also provide a focus for community activities / facilities. Granish Way in Aviemore (Figure 42 and Figure 43) has been identified as a local centre. Services located at this centre include a local co-op, veterinary centre, two takeaways, a bike shop, dentist and a beauty salon.
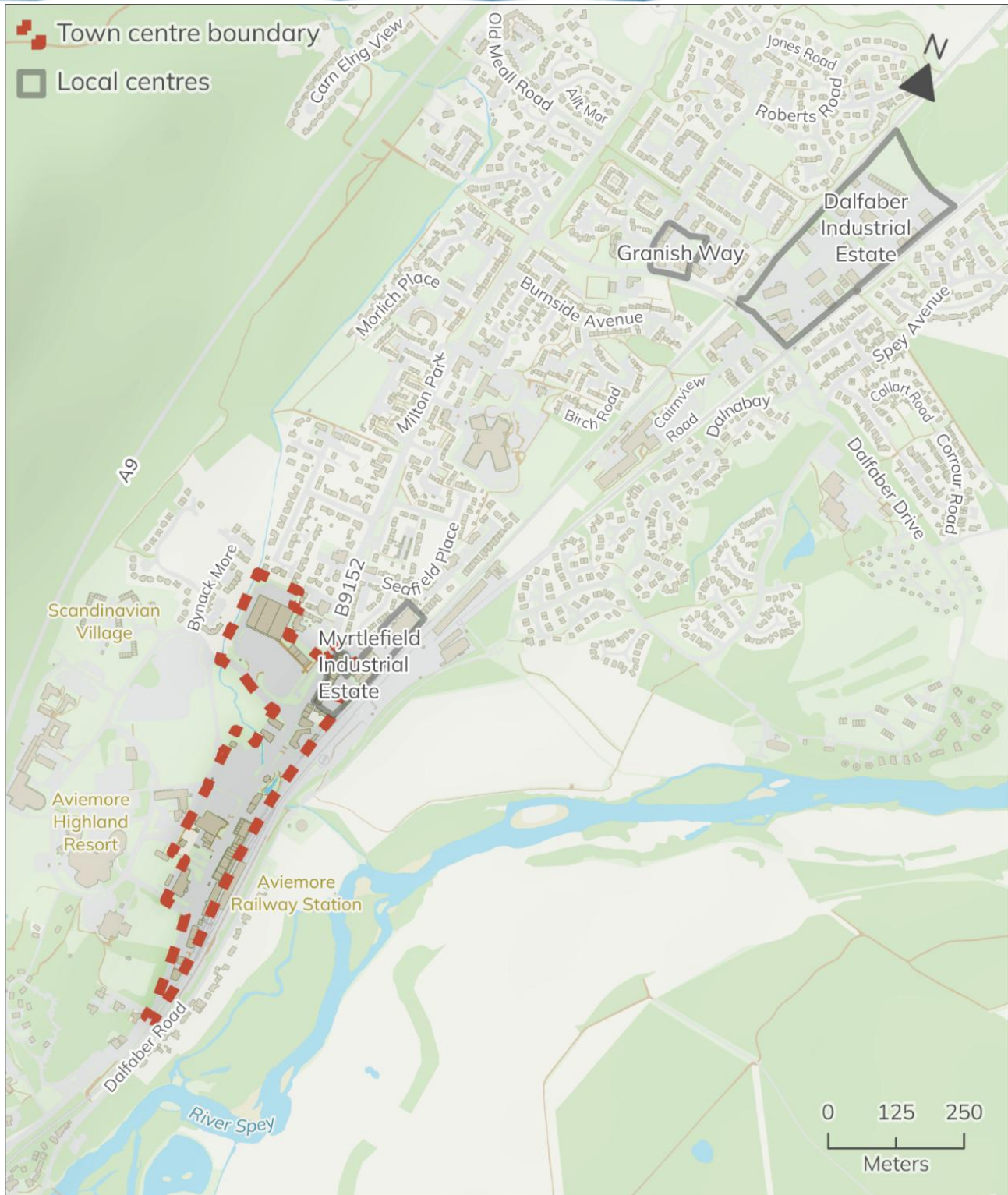
Figure 42 Map showing the local centres in Aviemore in proximity to the town centre boundary. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.
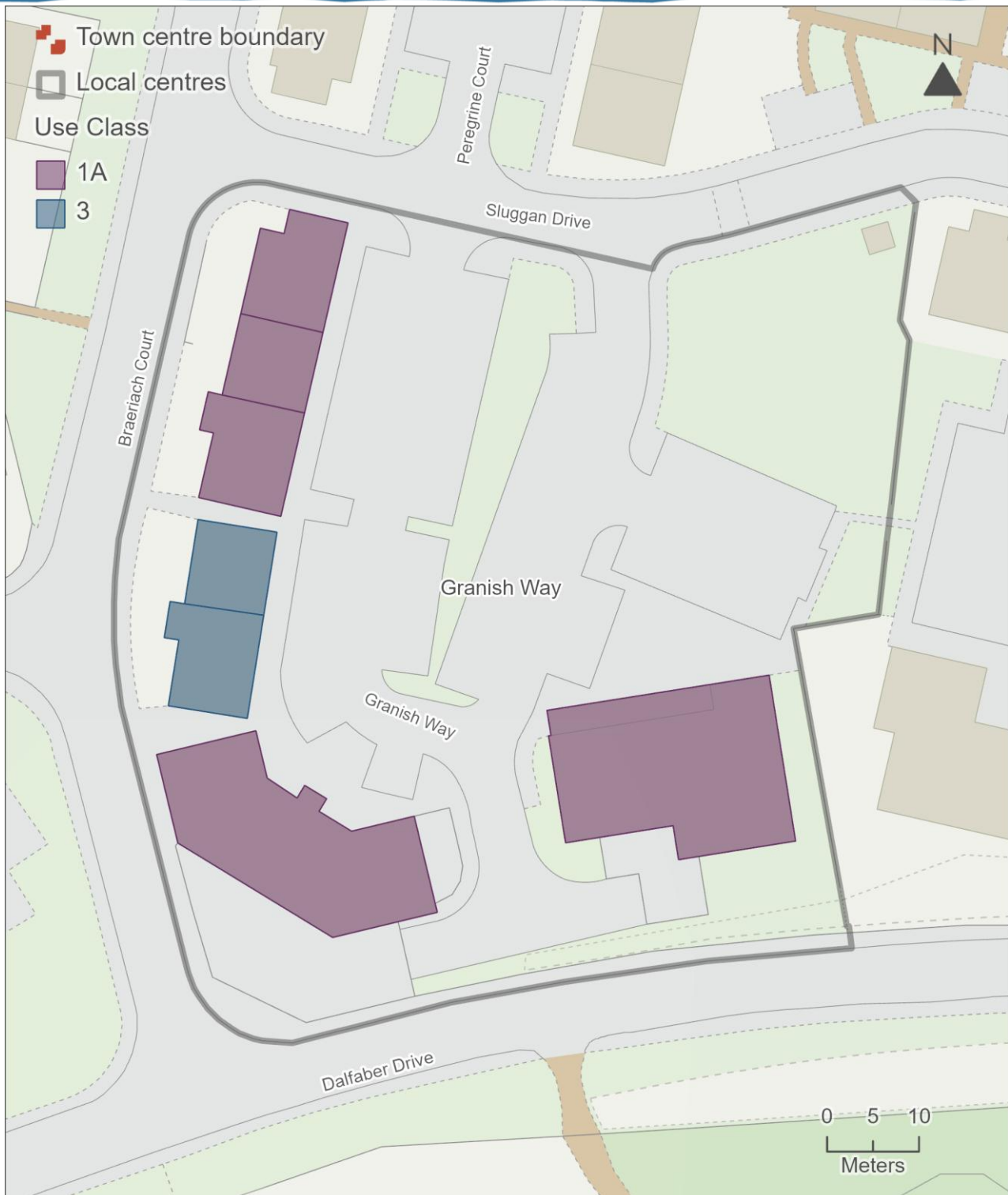
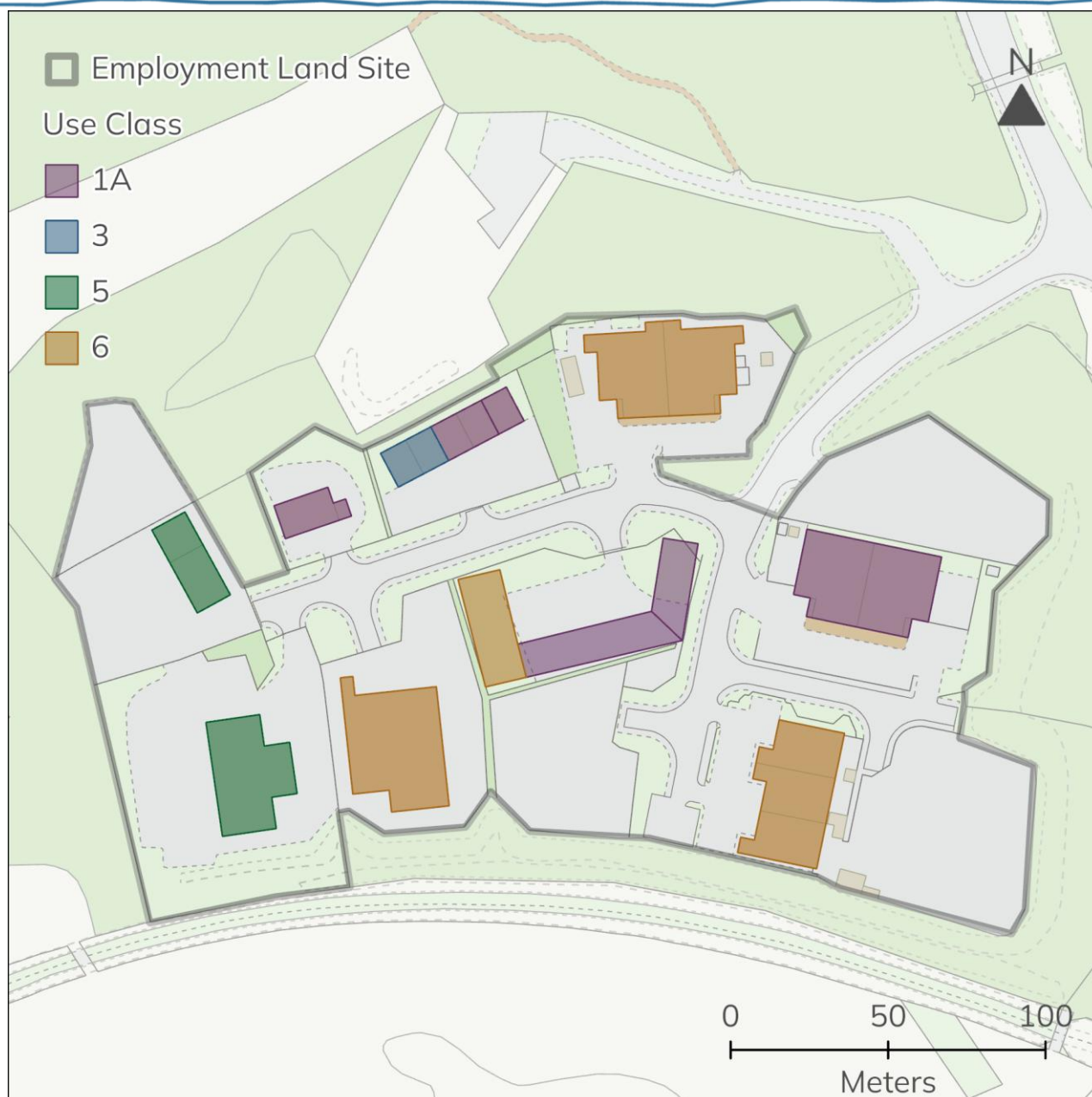Figure 43 Granish Way 'local centre' in Aviemore in the Cairngorms National Park in 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

There are other local centres (Figure 42) that have been identified through the Employment Land Audit which offer retail services, these include:

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

Figure 44 Dalfaber Industrial Estate, Aviemore. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

Figure 45 Myrtlefield Industrial Estate, Aviemore. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

Figure 46 Achnagonlin Industrial Estate, Grantown-on-Spey. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

Summary of retail information

This section provides a summary of the proportion of units (including vacant units but excluding residential) designated as Class 1A retail units in the town centres, and other identified centres that offer significant retail offerings. Across all the town centres and other centres with a significant proportion of retail offerings (Table 2) there is around 33,200 m² of retail (1A use class) building footprint in operation in the National Park. This represents 234 retail units. With the exception of Newtonmore town centre (Table

2) all the other main retail offering centres are made up of at least 1/3 of the building footprints being operated for retail purposes.

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

Table 2 Retail Class 1A breakdown with identified retail centres in the Cairngorms National Park.

Centre	Total number of units	Operating Class 1A units	Percentage of units operating as Class 1A	Total Class 1A building footprint m²	Percentage of total unit footprint in centre designated as Class 1A
Aviemore	76	52	68.4%	12,209.3 m²	58.3%
Ballater	59	40	67.8%	5,620.07 m²	51.7%
Grantown-on-Spey	75	59	78.7%	8,938.1 m²	51.2%
Kingussie	59	40	67.8%	3673.1 m²	33.8%
Newtonmore	14	3	21.4%	617.7 m²	15.7%
Granish Way, Aviemore	7	5	71.4%	1,063.6 m²	85.2%
Dalfaber Industrial Estate, Aviemore	31	16	51.6%	4,667.0 m²	43.3%
Myrtlefield Industrial Estate, Aviemore	21	13	61.9%	1,966.7 m²	40.3%
Achnagonlin Industrial Esate, Grantown-on-Spey	13	6	46.2%	2,509.3 m²	33.0%

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

Town centre retail provision analysis 2016 to 2023

Data collected from the town centre health checks provides a timeline for change from 2016 to 2023[19]. No equivalent data is available for the smaller centres, so this section looks only at the change in town centre provision (1A use class) and vacant buildings in the town centres. In the context of the current Local Development Plan, the town centres are only located in the strategic settlements of Aviemore, Ballater, Grantown-on-Spey, Kingussie and Newtonmore.

The number of retail units in all the town centres in the National Park rose from 138 in 2016 to 163 in 2023 (Figure 47). Proportionally retail businesses made up 59.4% of all non-residential units within the town centres in 2023, slightly higher than the 53.1% recorded in 2016. In 2018 the number of retail units in all town centres fell from 138 in 2016 to 107 in 2018 and only accounted for 40.1% of all non-residential units in the town centres.
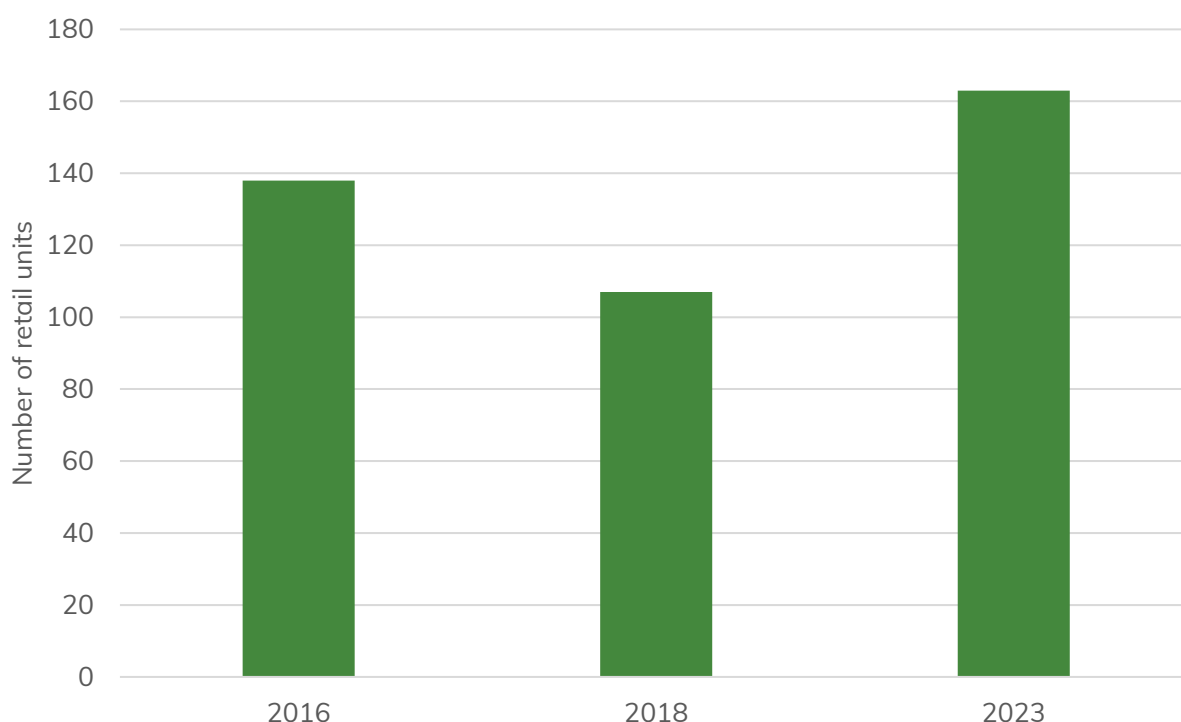
Figure 47 Combined number of retail units (1A use class) in all the five town centres in the strategic settlements in the Cairngorms National Parks from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks.

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

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[19] There is no historic data on the composition the village centres or other centres.
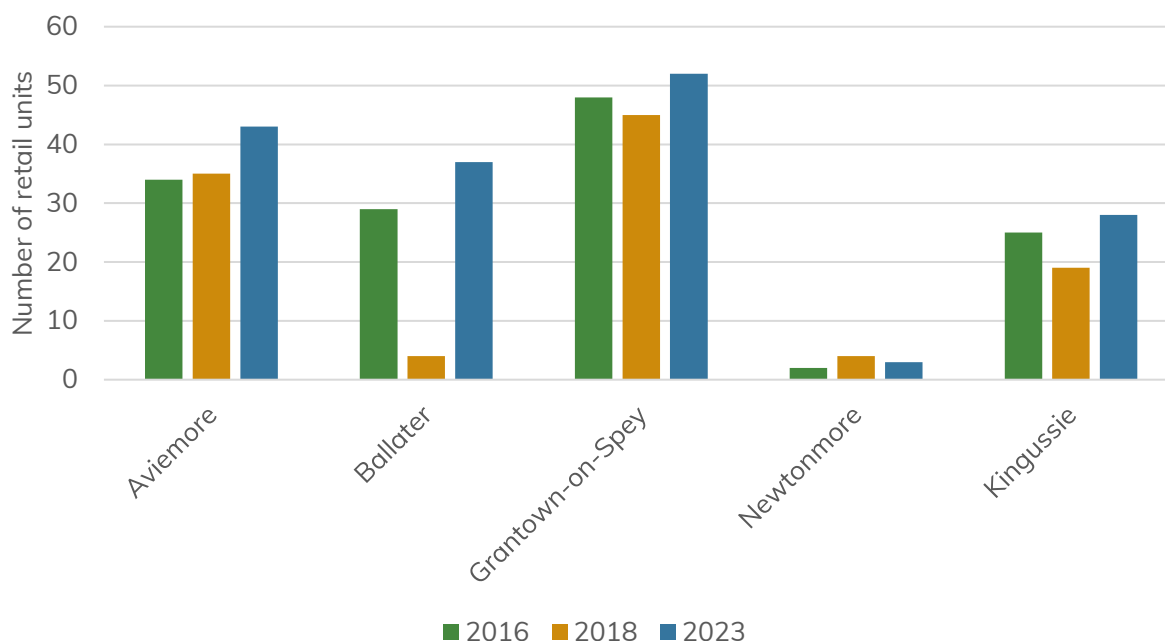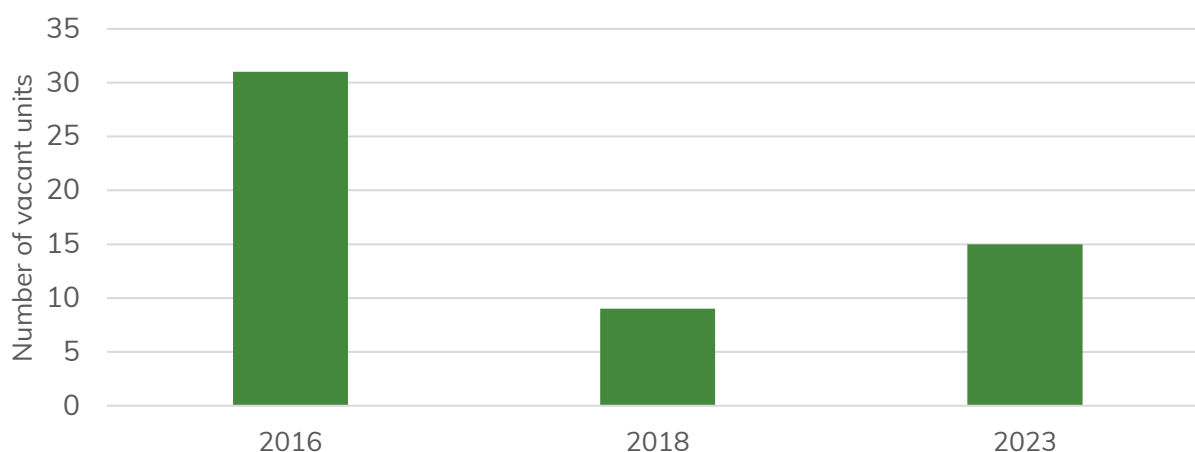
Figure 48 Number of retail units (1A use class) in the town centres in the Cairngorms National Park from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks.

The proportion of retail units relative to the total non-commercial units in the town centres have increased in most notably in Kingussie from 42% in 2016 to 58% in 2023, and in Ballater from 53% in 2016 to 63% in 2023 (Figure 49). Proportionally the number of retail units has fallen in on Aviemore from 60% in 2016 to 57% in 2023 (Figure 49).
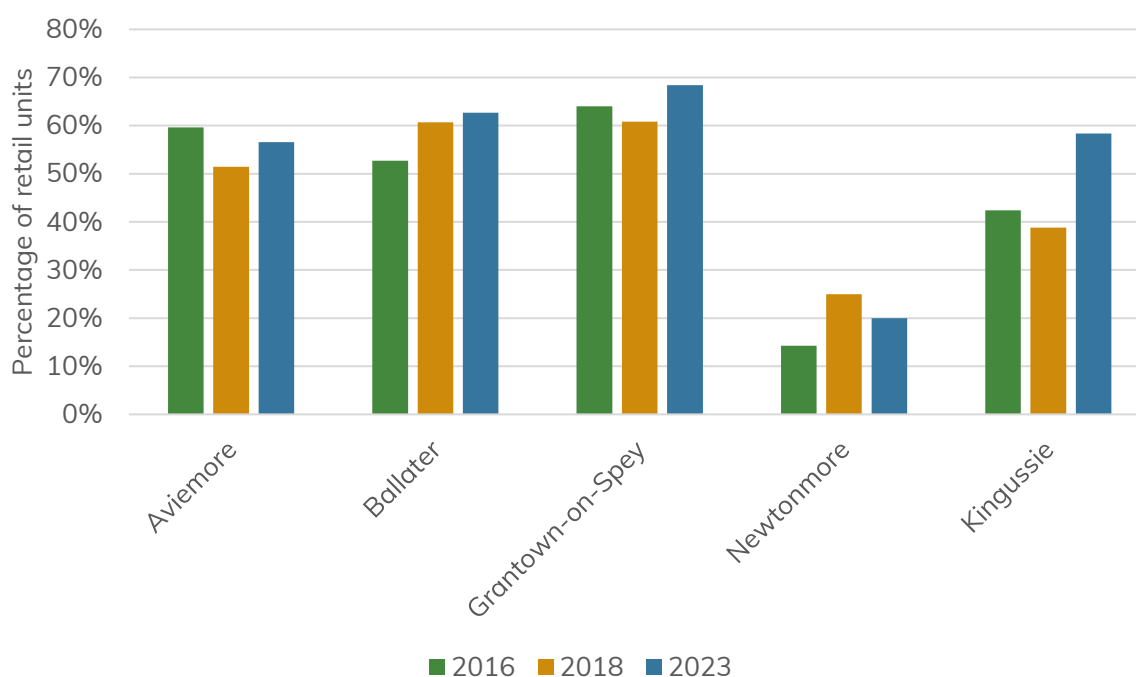
Figure 49 Percentage of all units recorded with a 1A use class units in the town centres in the Cairngorms National Park from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks.

Vacancy rates across all town centres

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

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

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

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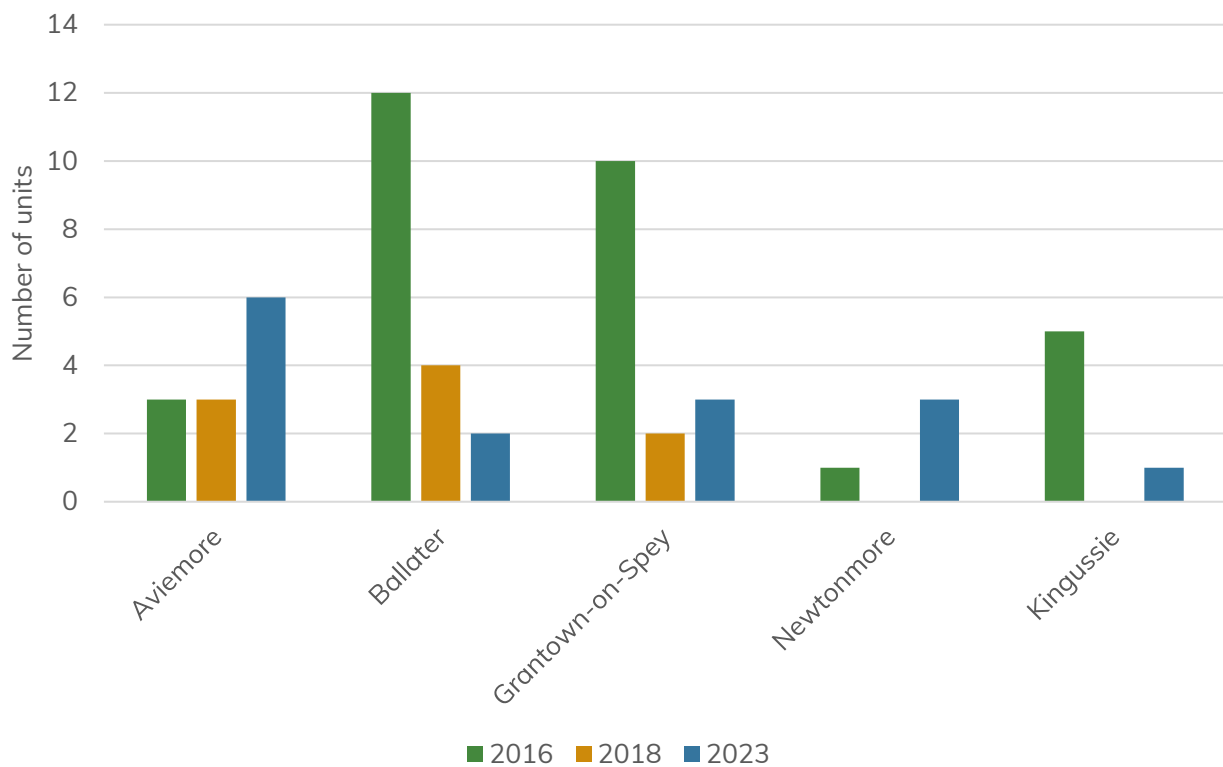
Figure 51 Number of vacant units in the town centres in the Cairngorms National Park from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks.
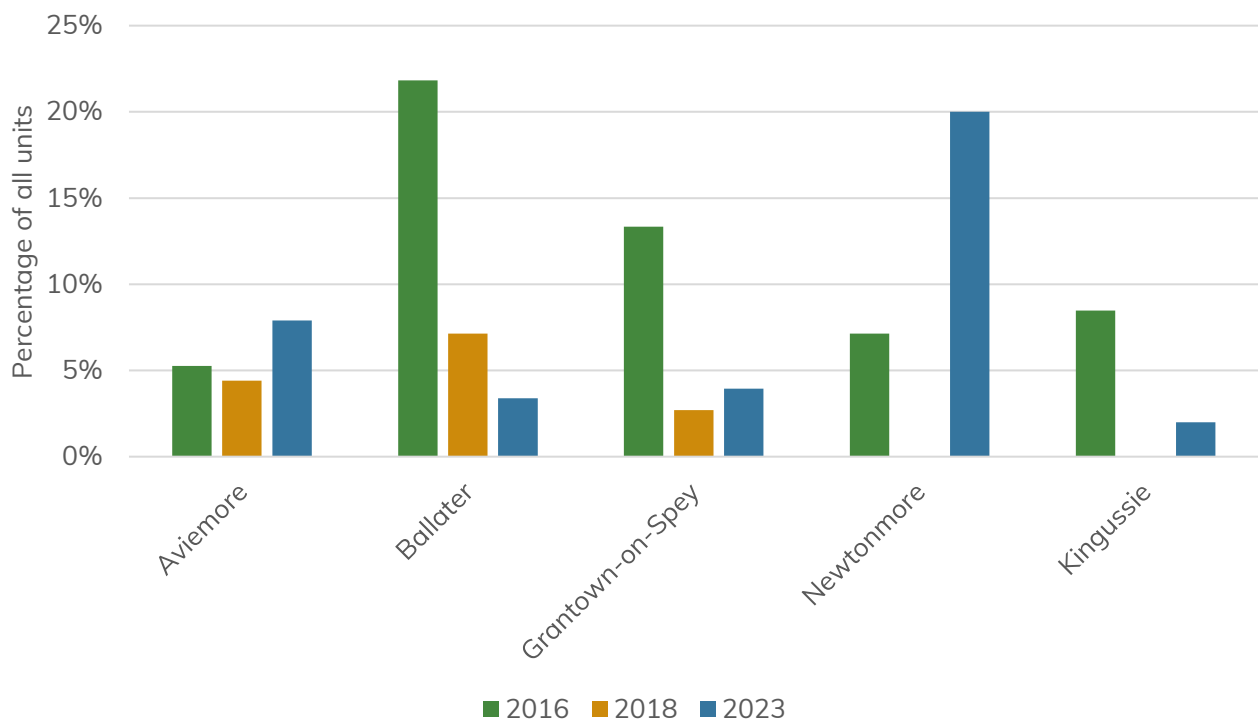

Figure 52 Percentage of all units recorded as vacant in the town centres in the Cairngorms National Park from 2016 to 2023. Cairngorms National Park Town Centre Health Checks.

Non-retail clusters

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

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

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

Hot food takeaways

Food Standards Scotland's (FSS) report, Overview of the Total Food and Drink Landscape in Scotland, highlights a significant drop in out-of-home (OOH) food and drink spending in 2021 compared to 2019, likely due to lingering effects of pandemic restrictions. Among the out-of-home food sectors, only quick service restaurants experienced an uptick in trade during that time. Meanwhile, there was a substantial surge in online out-of-home orders, with food delivery apps playing a key role in boosting the home delivery market (for example meals bought from restaurants or takeaways but eaten at home). According to the report, the average person placed 14.9 delivery orders in 2021, compared to 36.6 dine-in occasions.

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

The clustering of hot food takeaways can have a detrimental impact on health and be a factor in limiting healthy food options. The Health and Safety topic paper sets out the clear links between obesity risks, poor health and takeaways.

More information on takeaways, locations and the proximity of takeaways to secondary schools in the National Park is covered in the Health and safety topic paper which is available to view here:

- https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/health-and-safety-survey?step=step1

Betting offices and high interest money lending premises.

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

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

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

Drive throughs

There are no drive through businesses currently operating in the Cairngorms National Park. The Park Authority will consider restricting drive through development in the town and village centres as it could have a negative effect on both health (see the Health and safety topic paper[20]) and character of the existing built environment.

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

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[20] See: https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/health-and-safety-survey?step=step1

Culture and creativity

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

The national Creative Learning Plan (2013) sets out the importance of creativity in Scottish education. The vision of this plan is for a more creative Scotland and for its people to be proud of who they are and where they live. To achieve that, the Plan identifies a need to be creative. To generate ideas, to invent, write, and express identity through the dramatic arts and film. The Plan sets out the detail of how these aspirations will increase Scotland's resilience to change and release the potential of its people.

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

*   https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/historic-and-cultural-heritage-survey?step=step1

The Tourism topic paper provides further detail on visitor attractions, including whiskey distilleries and heritage and nature-based attractions, in the Cairngorms National Park. The Tourism topic paper is available to view here:

*   https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/tourism-in-the-national-park-survey?step=step1

There are a number of other cultural offerings available in the Cairngorms National Park, offering opportunities for employment and investment in this sector, including:
*   Three dedicated arts and crafts businesses (Figure 54)
*   Three cinemas (Figure 55)
*   Thirteen art galleries (Figure 56)

- Forty-one heritage attractions (Figure 57)
- Thirty-three Community halls supporting cultural and creative activities (Figure 58)
- Fifteen music venues (Figure 59)

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

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

Libraries

Libraries (Figure 53) also serve as cultural centres bringing communities together through creative activities such as knitting or children's classes. There are five public libraries in the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 53).
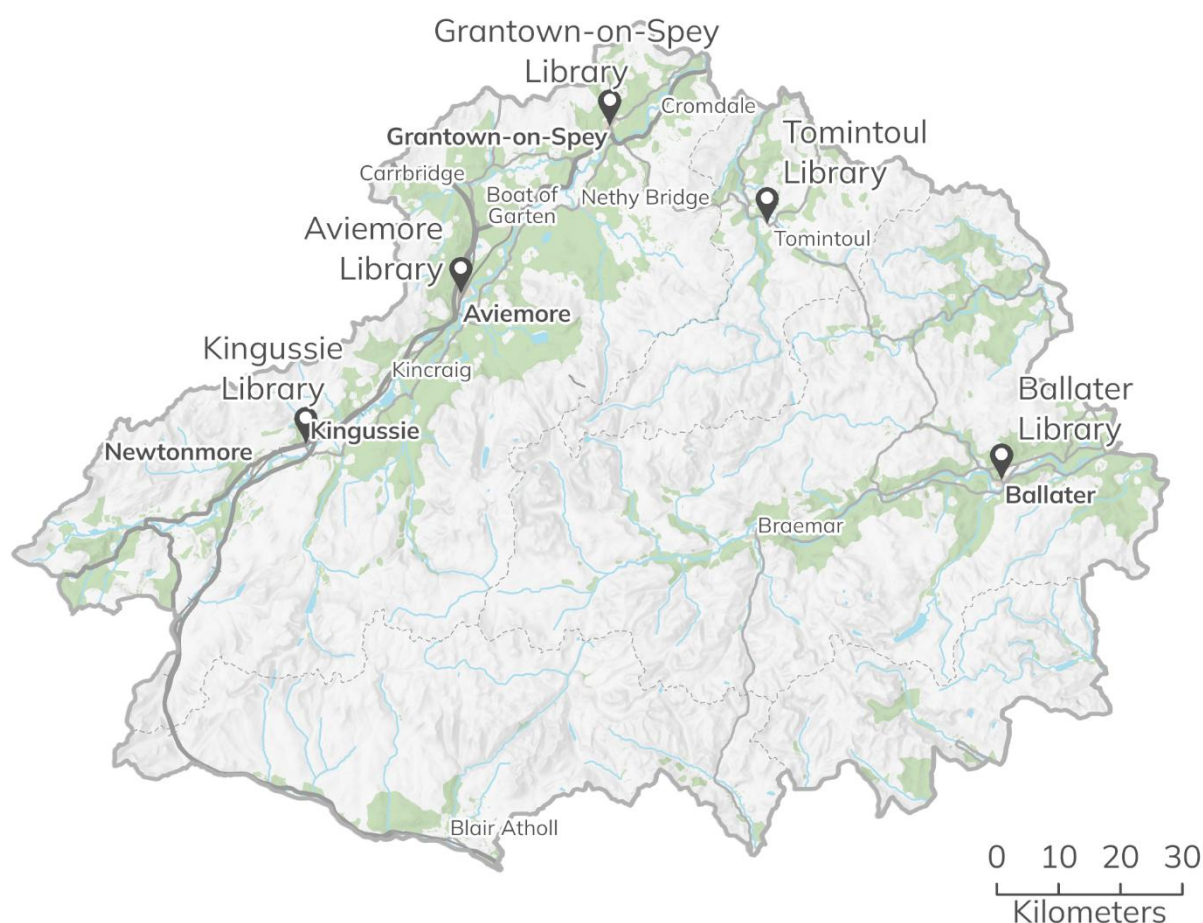
Figure 53 Location of public libraries in the Cairngorms National Park, 2025. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.
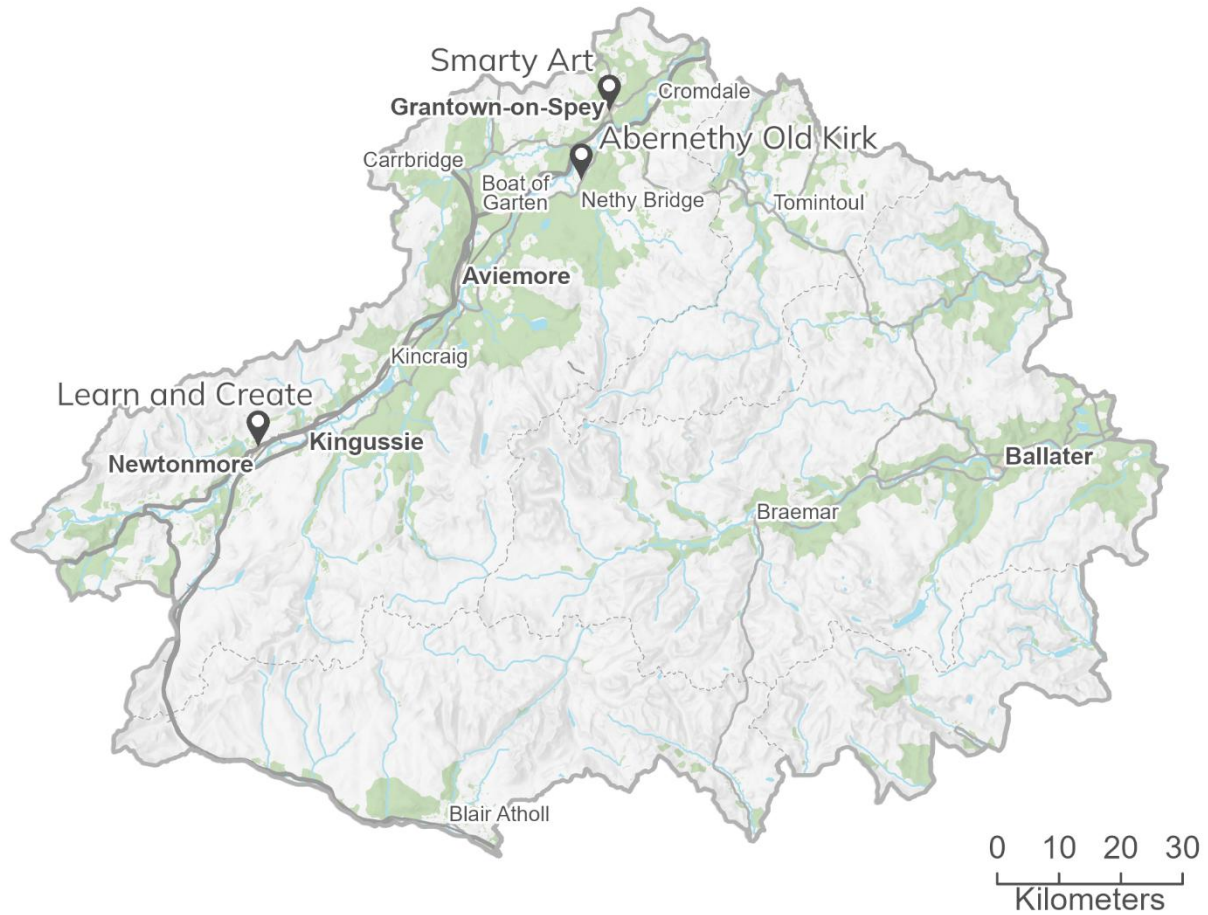
Figure 54 Arts and crafts services in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.
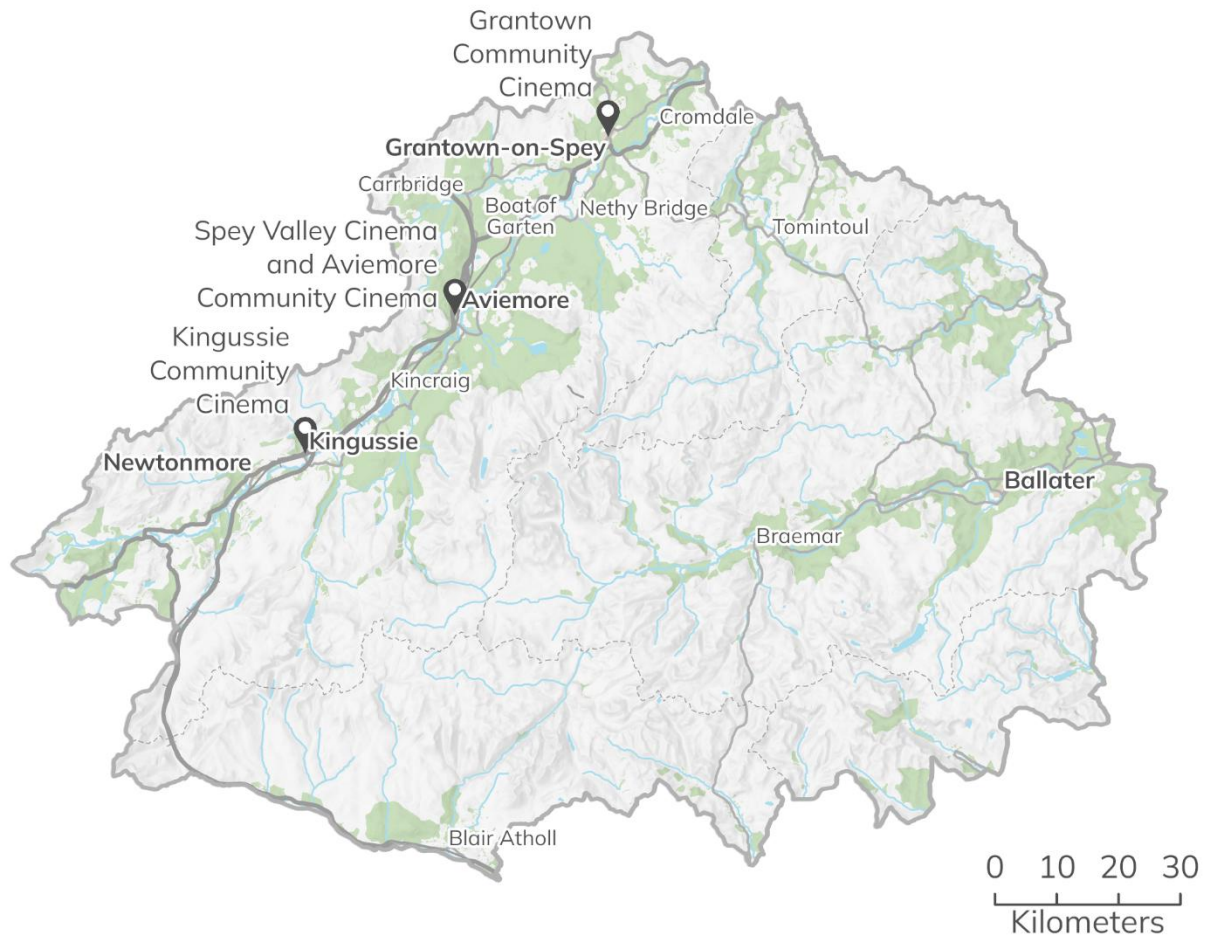
Figure 55 Cinemas in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.
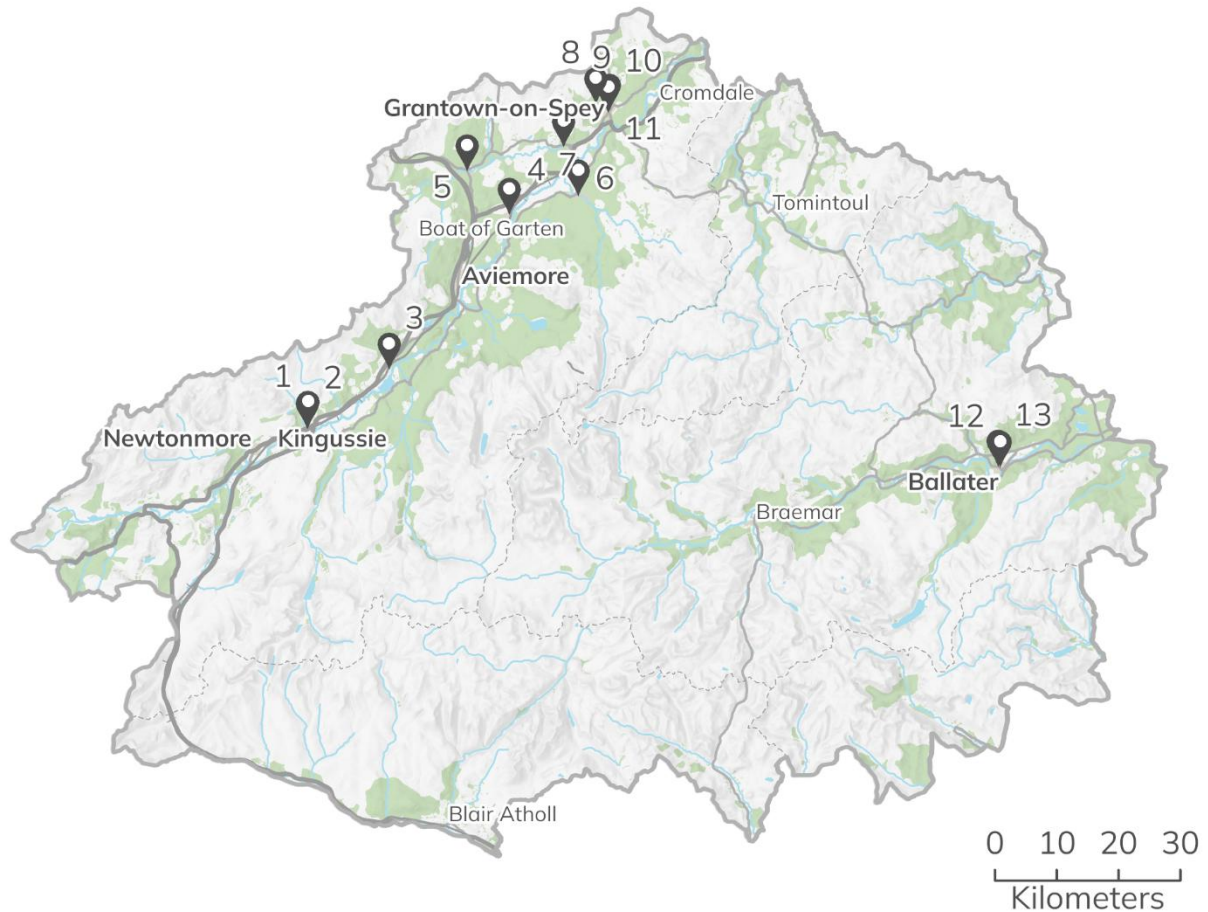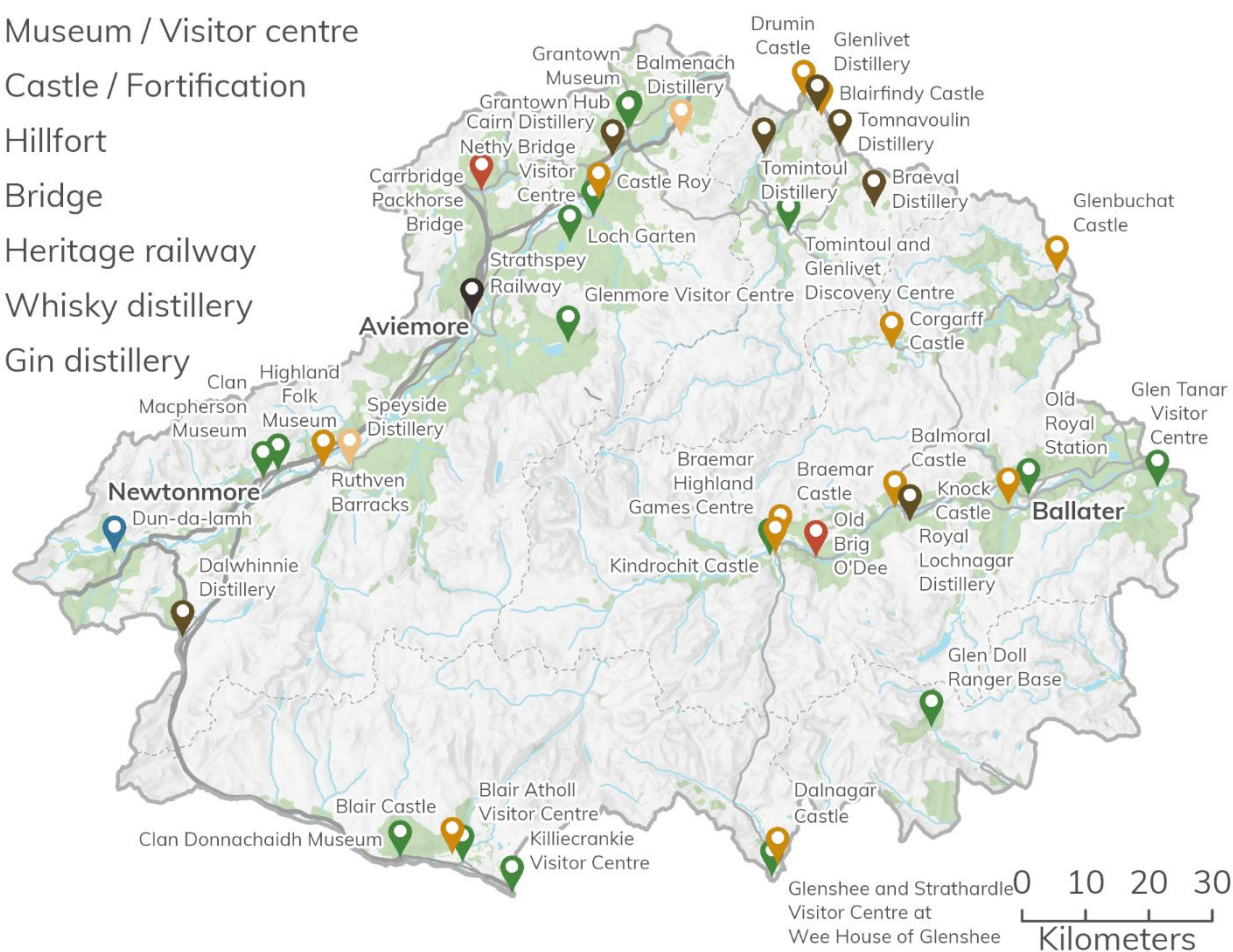
Figure 56 Art galleries in the Cairngorm National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

Type of attraction

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

Figure 57 Heritage attractions in the Cairngorm National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.
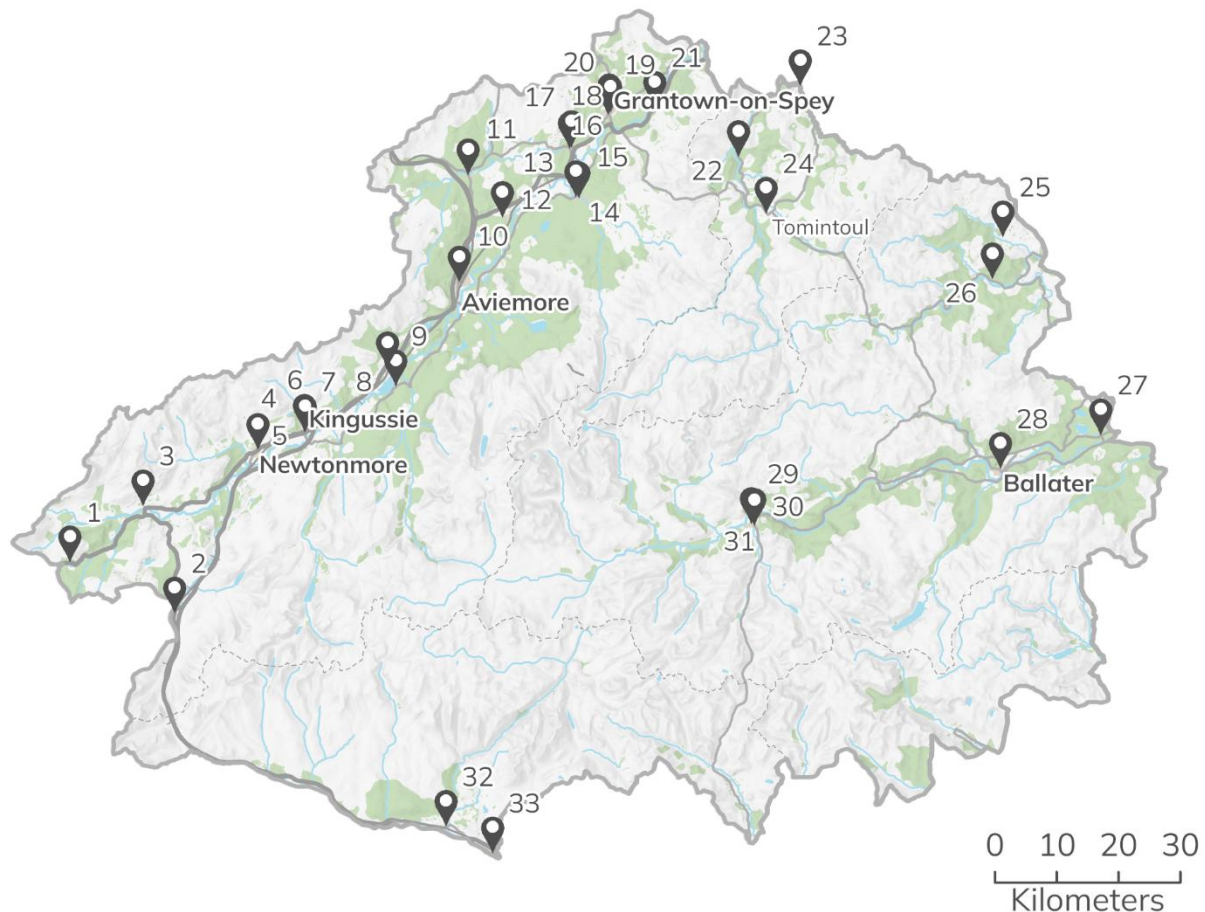
Figure 58 Community halls that may be used for cultural events and classes in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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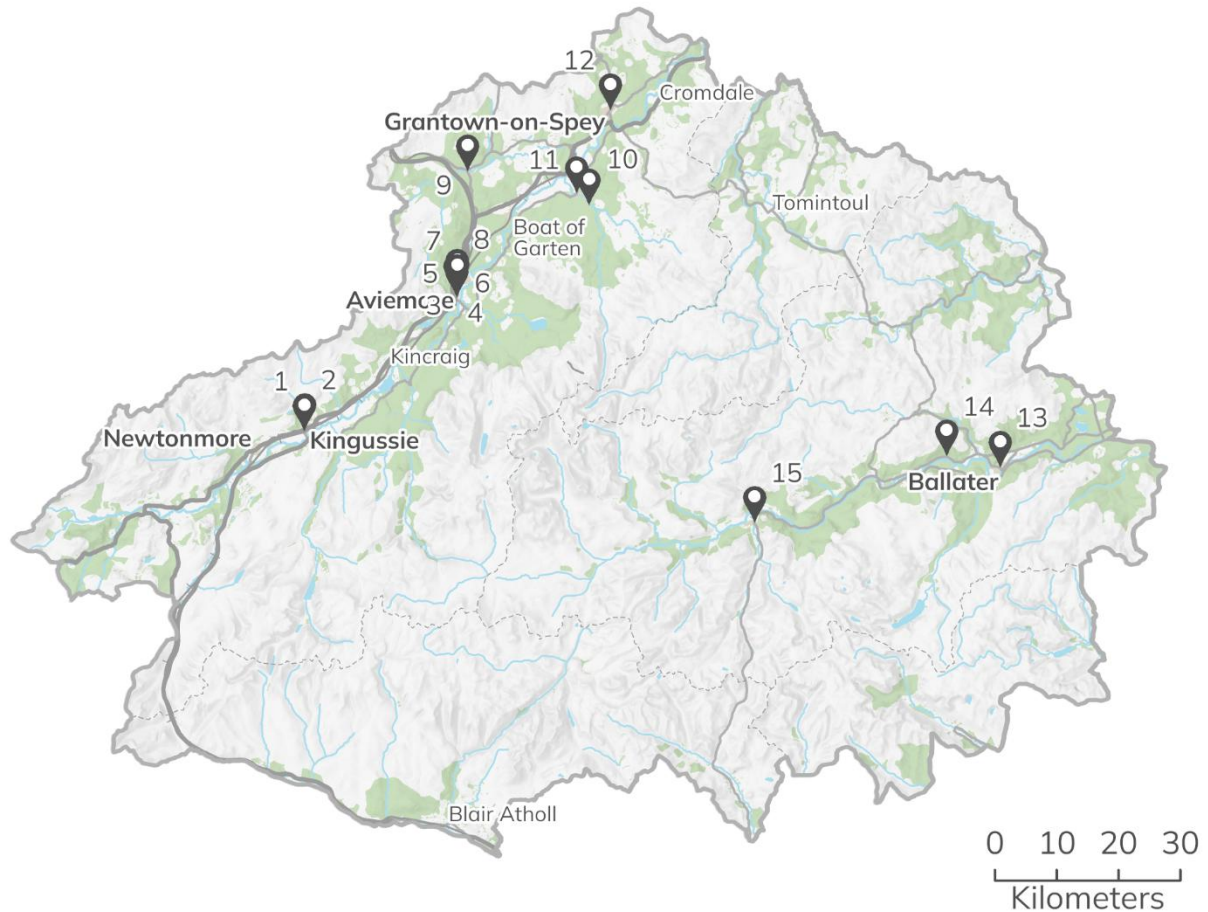32. Blair Atholl Village Hall
33. Killiecranckie Village Hall

Figure 59 Music venues in the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorms National Park Authority © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000821810.

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

Summary of implications for Proposed Plan

The Proposed Plan needs to be prepared in accordance with:

- The four aims of the National Park as set out in The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000), in particular the fourth aim to 'to promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area'.
- The spatial strategy and principles of National Planning Framework 4.

The Proposed Plan should seek to:

- Review town centre boundaries. Conduct a review of town centre boundaries to better reflect the National Planning Framework 4 definition of a town centre use, and to ensure that the centre includes shops, community services and leisure and cultural facilities which are accessible by the local population.
- Consider restricting further fast food and takeaway development including prohibiting drive through development in the National Park.
- Reflect the aspirations and actions where possible set out in the Community action plans.
- Reflect the town centre and village centre health checks findings including:
  - Appraising vacant and derelict land and buildings for allocation for various uses, including residential development to support the local need for housing.
  - Support electric vehicle charging infrastructure and active travel infrastructure in centres.
  - Support the extension of the Strathspey railway to Grantown-on-Spey.
  - Safeguard village services and amenities
  - Preserve town and village cultural and historic assets.
- Identify the need for town centre strategies that sit within / alongside settlement strategies.
- Take into account feedback received from public engagement activities.
- Support opportunities for jobs and investment in the creative sector, culture, heritage and the arts.
- Support the sustainability and prosperity of the rural economy.
- Safeguard / protect cultural and historic assets from any adverse effects of development.
- Consider the need for additional neighbourhood retail facilities to support 20-minute neighbourhoods, particularly in relation to any significant new residential allocations that are proposed.
- Support new development in remote rural areas as appropriate, where it can help support community resilience and sustain fragile populations.

- Support a place-based approach to rural development reflecting how the safeguarding of and investment in cultural and historic assets, which can underpin tourism, local identity and quality of place.
- Engage with estates to consider the aspiration of the estates and the public reflecting a balanced approach that supports vibrant rural economies.
- Consider support for rural or farm shops that support local living and the 20-minute neighbourhood principle.
- Consider including a local policy which reflects the 'new ways of working' which are specific to the National Park. National Planning Framework, Policy 29(a) is clear that diversification of existing business will be supported. Policy 29a(ix) stipulates that 'small scale developments that support new ways of working such as remote working, homeworking and community hubs, will be supported'.