
PLANNING

Cairngorms National Park Local
Development Plan 2020

**Strategic Environmental Assessment
Scoping Report September 2016**

Cover Note

PART 1

To: SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
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PART 2

An SEA Scoping Report is attached for the plan, programme or strategy (PPS) entitled:

The Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2020

The Responsible Authority is:

The Cairngorms National Park Authority

PART 3

Please tick the appropriate box

- The PPS falls under the scope of Section 5(3) of the Act and requires an SEA under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. or
- The PPS falls under the scope of Section 5(4) of the Act and requires an SEA under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. or
- The PPS does not require an SEA under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. However, we wish to carry out an SEA on a voluntary basis. We accept that, as this SEA is voluntary, the statutory 5 week timescale for views from the Consultation Authorities cannot be guaranteed.

PART 4

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List of Abbreviations

2000 Act	National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000	MW	Megawatts
2005 Act	Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	NH ₃	Ammonia
ABD	Aberdeenshire	NM VOC	Non-methane volatile organic compound
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area	NNR	National Nature Reserve
BARR	Buildings at Risk Register	NO ₂	Nitrogen dioxide
BGS	British Geological Society	NO _x	Nitrogen oxides
CA	Consultation Authority	NPF	National Planning Framework
CNAP	Cairngorms Nature Action Plan	NPPP	National Park Partnership Plan
CNP	Cairngorms National Park	NRS	National Records of Scotland
CNPA	Cairngorms National Park Authority	NSA	National Scenic Area
EC	European Commission	O ₃	Ground-level ozone
EEC	European Economic Community	ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	PKC	Perth and Kinross Council
EU	European Union	PM _{2.5}	Particulate matter with particles with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres or less
FWPM	Freshwater Pearl Mussel	PM ₁₀	Particulate matter with particles with a diameter of 10 micrometres or less
GCR	Geological Conservation Review	PPS	Plans, Programmes and Strategies
GP	General Practitioner	pSPA	Potential Special Protection Area
Ha	Hectares	PVA	Potentially Vulnerable Area
HES	Historic Environment Scotland	RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance		
LDP	Local Development Plan		

RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivations
SM	Scheduled Monument
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SO ₂	Sulphur dioxide
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPP	Scottish Planning Policy
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SW	Scottish Water
SWWI	Strathspey Wetlands and Waders Initiative
TTWA	Travel To Work Area
WFD	Water Framework Directive
UK	United Kingdom
UK GAP	United Kingdom Geodiversity Action Plan
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Education

A glossary of terms may be found in **Appendix 4** (p. 266).

Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan (LDP) is a statutory requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. SEA is a systematic process developed to ensure that potential environmental impacts of Plans, Programmes and Strategies (PPS) (both positive and negative) are assessed and considered during the course of their preparation.

This section presents a non-technical summary of the SEA Scoping Report. The Scoping Report seeks to identify the environmental issues that need to be taken into consideration during the development of the Plan and seeks the views of the Consultation Authorities on the scope of information to be included within the environmental assessment.

Summary of the LDP Process

The LDP is the spatial planning document that will set out the National Park's policies

and proposals for the use and development of land across the Cairngorms National Park over the 5 to 10 years from its adoption. It will mainly be concerned with the use of land and will guide future development to the most appropriate locations.

The LDP will provide clear guidance on what development will or will not be allowed and where, and it will address a wide range of policy issues, including housing, shopping, business, industry, transport, recreation, and built and natural heritage.

Summary of the SEA Process

SEA aims to:

- integrate environmental factors into LDP preparation and decision making;
- improve LDP and enhance environmental protection;
- increase public participation in decision making; and
- facilitate openness and transparency of decision making.

The SEA process is divided into five main stages which are:

- Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope;
- Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects;
- Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report.
- Stage D: Consulting on the draft LDP and its Environmental Report; and
- Stage E: Monitoring implementation of the LDP.

The Scoping Report sets out the findings of Stage A. To assist this process of the work has been categorised into 8 topic areas designed to provide a wide and detailed coverage of the environmental issues across National Park. These topics are:

- Topic 1: Climatic Factors
- Topic 2: Air
- Topic 3: Water
- Topic 4: Soil
- Topic 5: Material Asset

- Topic 6: Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora
- Topic 7: Landscape and Cultural Heritage
- Topic 8: Population and Human Health

Summary of SEA Objectives

Proposed SEA Objectives have been developed as a result of the review of PPS (**Policy Context**, p. 10) and baseline information (**Baseline**, p. 11). Identifying objectives is an important part of the SEA process as these will be used as the primary tool for testing the emerging LDP to ensure it will not result in any significant environmental effects. This process is referred to as the assessment stage (Stage B). At the Scoping Stage of the SEA, it is only necessary to publish 'proposed' SEA Objectives to allow the Consultation Authorities to offer feedback during the consultation of the Scoping Report.

The SEA Objectives have been separated into 'main' and 'sub' objectives. It is

important that the assessment process is proportional, practical and manageable. Consequently, the assessment process will utilise the 'main' SEA Objectives, but take account of the SEA Sub-Objectives. This distinction is important to ensure the assessment work is practical and achievable. The proposed SEA Objectives for the SEA of the Cairngorms National Park LDP are shown in **Table 4** (p. 21).

Summary of Next Steps

The SEA Scoping Report will be consulted on for a period of six weeks between 12th September and 24th October 2016. The development of the LDP's Main Issues Report and the environmental assessment will take place between February and April 2017.

Following consultation on the Scoping Report, the CNPA will consider any comments received and will amend the SEA work where appropriate. This will take place in the late part of 2016.

Future stages of the SEA process will take place alongside the development of the LDP. Details of the LDP process can be found in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan - Development Plan Scheme, which is updated on an annual basis and is available on the CNPA's website:

www.cairngorms.co.uk

The SEA is an ongoing process and will need to be updated at regular intervals throughout the work. For further information contact:

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Introduction

“The objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.”

Directive 2001/42/EC

What is a Strategic Environmental Assessment?¹

As part of the preparation of the Cairngorms Local Development Plan (LDP), the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is required under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 to carry

¹ A glossary of terms used in this report is provided in Appendix 4.

out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). SEA is a systematic method for considering the likely environmental effects of certain Plans, Programmes or Strategies (PPS). SEA aims to:

- integrate environmental factors into PPS preparation and decision making;
- improve PPS and enhance environmental protection;
- increase public participation in decision making; and
- facilitate openness and transparency of decision making.

The SEA process is divided into five main stages which are:

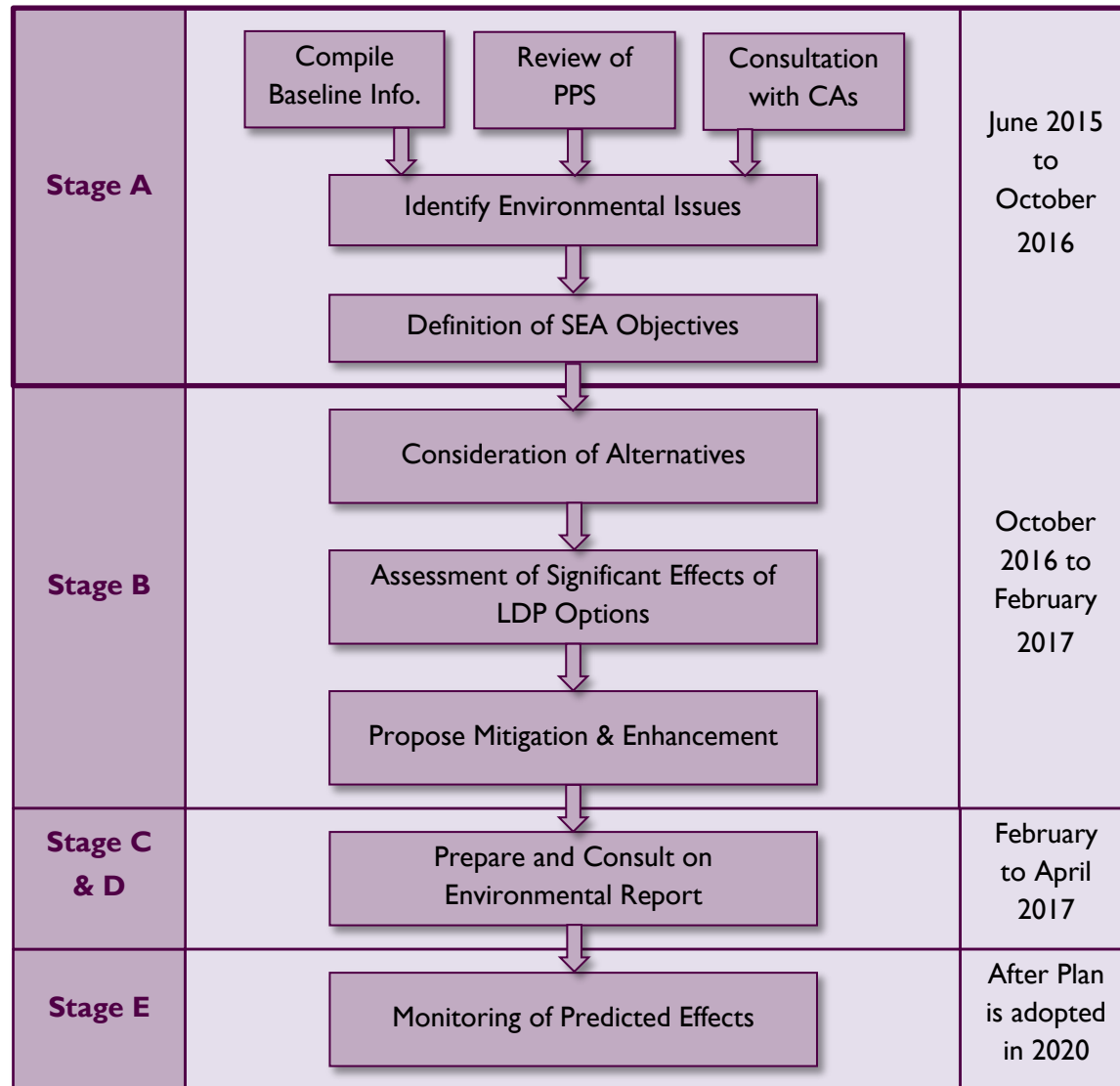
- Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope;
- Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects;
- Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report.
- Stage D: Consulting on the draft LDP and its Environmental Report; and

- Stage E: Monitoring implementation of the LDP.

Figure 1 provides details of the actions required during these stages as well as the indicative timetable for their completion alongside the production of the LDP.

It is also necessary for the CNPA to undertake a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) in accordance with the The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended). The HRA will be reported separately during the LDP process.

Figure I Stages of the SEA of the Cairngorms National Park LDP and its indicative timetable; Scoping stage is outlined in bold.



What is a Scoping Report?

“The purpose of scoping is to define the level of detail to be covered in the assessment, and to reach agreement on the consultation timescales.”

SEA Guidance
(Scottish Government, 2013)

This is the ‘Scoping Report’ for the SEA of the Cairngorms National Park LDP. It represents **Stage A** of the SEA process (see **Figure I**). During this stage, the CNPA must seek to identify the environmental issues that need to be taken into consideration during the development of the Plan and seek the views of the Consultation Authorities (CAs) on the scope of information to be included within the environmental assessment. This Report is the result of this process.

The Cairngorms National Park

The Cairngorms National Park was designated in 2003 by the Scottish Parliament because it satisfied the conditions for a National Park as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

The National Park is the UK's largest, with a total land area of some 4,528km². Dominated by mountain plateau, it bastes extensive moorland, forest and straths and is home to around 25% of the UK's threatened bird, animal and plant species. Approximately 18,000 people live in the National Park and it welcomes around 1.4 million visitors each year.

The general purpose of the National Park Authority (NPA), as set out in the 2000 Act, is to ensure that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in a co-ordinated way. The CNPA is therefore an enabling organisation that must work with and through other bodies to bring added value to the management of the National Park, to achieve the four aims.

The aims of the National Park are:

- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
- to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

If it appears to the authority that there is conflict between the first aim and the others, the first aim must be given greater weight.

Planning in the Cairngorms National Park

Planning in the Cairngorms National Park is unique. It involves the CNPA working alongside the five local authorities which operate in the Park – Aberdeenshire, Angus, Highland, Moray and Perth &

Kinross. The LDP together with any Supplementary Guidance sets the detailed policies and proposals for the whole of the National Park. It is the document against which all planning applications will be judged.

Planning applications are submitted to the relevant local authority in the normal manner. The local authority ensures all the necessary information is supplied and registers receipt of the application. The CNPA is informed by the local authority and then decides whether to call-in the application. Only applications which are of general significance to the aims of the Park are called in and determined by the CNPA. The local authority determines those applications not called-in. The Local Development Plan applies to all planning applications, regardless of whether they are called-in or not.

The Local Development Plan

The CNPA is required to prepare an LDP for the Cairngorms National Park under the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. This is the second LDP for the Cairngorms National Park, the first and current LDP having been adopted on 27th March 2015. The Act requires the LDP to set out where most new development will happen and include policies that will guide decision making on planning applications. It also requires that the LDP be updated every five years, therefore once adopted, this LDP will update and replace the current one.

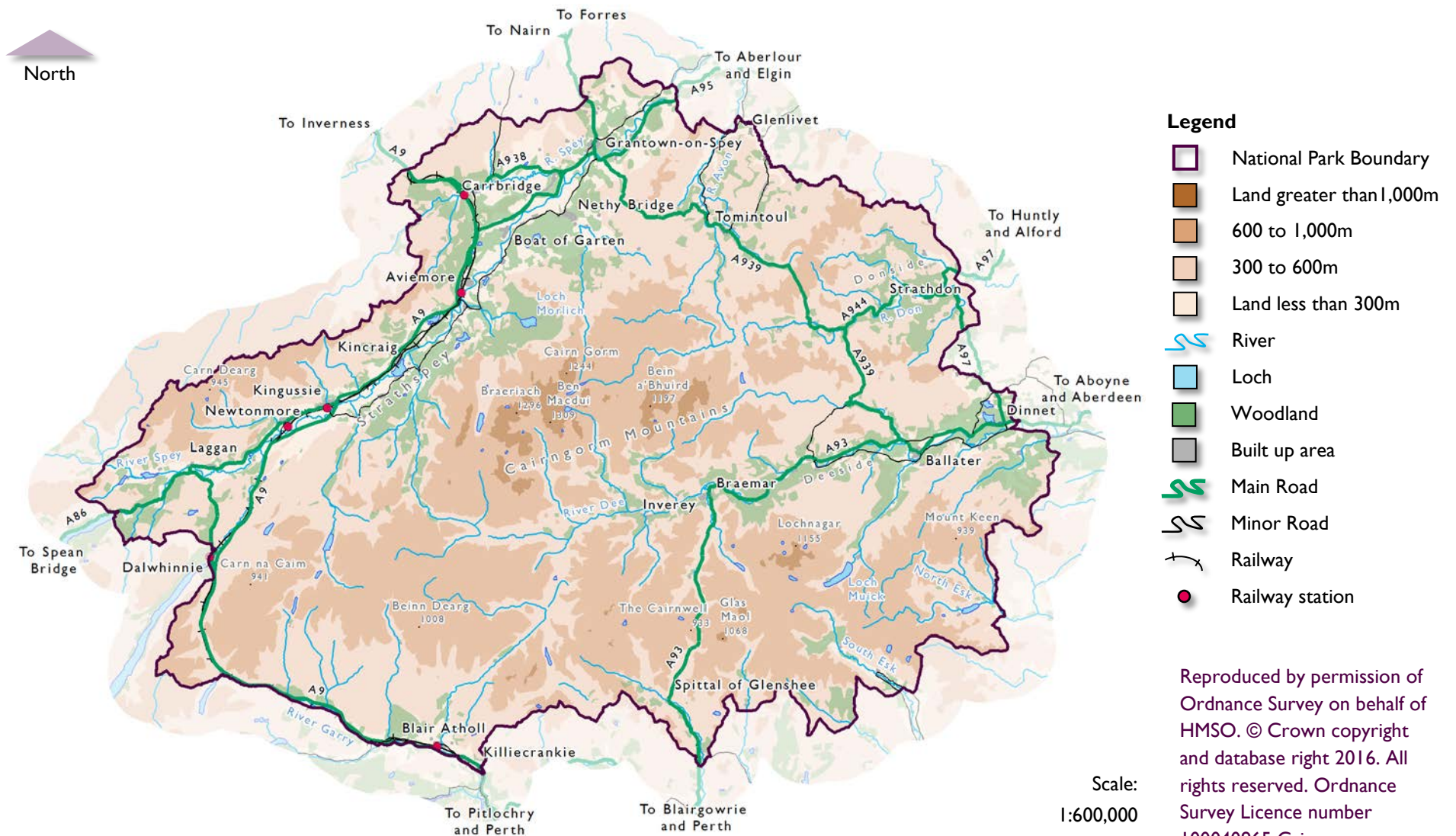
The LDP falls under the scope of Section 5(3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. It has potential to generate significant environmental effects and so a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is being undertaken.

The key facts relating to the proposed LDP are set out in **Table I**.

Table 1 Key Facts about the LDP.

Responsible Authority	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Title of PPS	Local Development Plan
Purpose of PPS	<p>The Local Development Plan (LDP) is a land use planning document that will set out the National Park's policies and proposals for the use and development of land across the Cairngorms National Park over at least the next 10 years. It will mainly be concerned with the use of land and will guide future development to the most appropriate locations.</p> <p>The LDP will provide clear guidance on what development will or will not be allowed and where, and it will address a wide range of policy issues, including housing, shopping, business, industry, transport, recreation, and built and natural heritage.</p>
What prompted the PPS?	<p>Planning Authorities are required to prepare a LDP under Section 2 of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006.</p> <p>Planning Authorities must from time to time review their NPPs and, if thought fit, prepare an amended Plan. The review, which must take place at least every 5 years, should focus on what has to change rather than invite the re-opening of settled issues.</p> <p>Therefore, a review of the current LDP 2015 must now take place if the reviewed LDP is to be adopted within the set timescale.</p>
Subject (e.g. Planning, transport etc)	<p>The LDP is concerned with spatial planning and due to its strategic nature will have influence over a wide range of subjects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Housing development; ➤ Economic development; ➤ Infrastructure development; ➤ Natural Heritage; ➤ Historic and cultural heritage; ➤ Transport; ➤ Waste management;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Energy; ➤ Resources; ➤ Leisure and recreation; ➤ Tourism.
Summary of the nature / content of PPS	<p>Taking its strategic direction from the National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022, the LDP will set out the planning policies for the whole of the Cairngorms national Park.</p> <p>These policies will guide development by identifying sites for specific uses as well as setting out policies covering such issues as affordable housing, economic development and nature conservation.</p>
Period Covered by PPS	2020-2025.
Frequency of Updates	Document reviewed every 5 years.
Area covered by PPS	4,528 km ²
Map included?	A map of the Cairngorms National Park is provided on page 9.
Are there any proposed PPS objectives	PPS objectives are not yet fully developed, however a very broad idea may be gained from the current LDP (2015).
Copy of attached objectives	None to attach.



- Legend**
- National Park Boundary
 - Land greater than 1,000m
 - 600 to 1,000m
 - 300 to 600m
 - Land less than 300m
 - River
 - Loch
 - Woodland
 - Built up area
 - Main Road
 - Minor Road
 - Railway
 - Railway station

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Figure 2 Area covered by the PPS.

Policy Context

“A plan or programme may be influenced in various ways by other plans or programmes, or by external environmental protection objectives such as those laid down in policies or legislation. These relationships enable the Responsible Authority to take advantage of potential synergies and to deal with any inconsistencies and constraints.”

A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive
(ODPM, 2005)

The LDP must have appropriate regard to a wide range of national and international laws, policy and strategy. A review of Plans, Programmes and Strategies (PPS) has therefore been conducted in accordance with the Scottish Government’s SEA Guidance (2013) and the ODPM Guidance on SEA (2005). This is an important part of the SEA process as it ensures the work is consistent with up to date policy, is informed by robust information and also helps in the process of identifying environmental issues, which are discussed

further under the Baseline section of this report (p. 11).

Review Findings

A preliminary review of all the PPSs considered is presented in **Appendix I**. The PPSs are categorised according to their international, national and local scales and are accompanied by information on their purpose, relationship with the LDP and the SEA Issue they relate to.

The SEA Environmental Report will need to consider the PPSs that are active at the time of writing and therefore this aspect of the SEA process will be kept under continual review.

Baseline

“Baseline information provides the basis for predicting and monitoring environmental effects and helps to identify environmental problems and alternative ways of dealing with them.”

A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive
(ODPM, 2005)

The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires that information should be provided on the “relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme” and “the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected”. This section aims to describe the environmental context within which the LDP operates and the constraints and targets that this context imposes on the LDP.

Baseline information serves two purposes, it helps to identify the issues on which the SEA should focus, and provides a benchmark against which the performance

of the Plan (and the accuracy of any predictions) can be assessed. As well as showing the current situation the baseline data shows where possible the situation in the past and projections for the future, in order to indicate trends. It is important to recognise that where information on trends is available, the extrapolation of trends into the future can change in response to changes in legislation or other interventions.

An environmental baseline for the Cairngorms National Park is presented in **Appendix 2** of this report. The baseline is presented using a topic based approach, which reflects the Issues set out within Schedule 3 of the 2005 Act:

- Topic 1: Climatic Factors (p. 61);
- Topic 2: Air (p. 70);
- Topic 3: Water (p. 74);
- Topic 4: Soil (p. 91);
- Topic 5: Material Assets (p. 102);
- Topic 6: Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora (p. 121);

- Topic 7: Landscape and Cultural Heritage (p. 193); and
- Topic 8: Population and Human Health (p. 222).

While it is recognised that all topics will inter-relate to some degree, it is beyond the scope of this assessment to describe them all in full detail. However, the report does highlight important inter-relationships where they exist and describes their effects under the most relevant topic.

A summary of the baseline may be found in **Table 2**.

Summary of the Environmental Baseline and Main Issues

Table 2 Summary of baseline information and main issues; see Appendix 2 for full details.

SEA Topic	Summary of environmental baseline
<p>Climatic Factors</p> <p>Pages 61 - 69</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Historic trends show an increase in minimum and maximum temperatures and rainfall and a reduction in the number of days of frost. ➤ Climate change projections offer a central estimate of a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 2.4°C increase in mean annual temperature, ➤ 2.7°C increase in mean summer temperature, ➤ 2.1°C increase in mean winter temperature, ➤ 0.07% increase in mean annual precipitation, but with a ➤ 13.5% decrease in mean summer precipitation, and a ➤ 2% decrease in mean winter precipitation. ➤ Per capita carbon emissions in the form of CO₂ are estimated to have decreased from 10.8 tonnes in 2006 to 8.9 tonnes to 2012.
<p>Air</p> <p>Pages 70 - 73</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Air quality is relatively high within the National Park. ➤ No Air Quality Management Areas within National Park. ➤ Most air pollution associated with transport, with emissions of PM₁₀ and NO₂ highest along the National Park's main roads, with the A9 being the greatest contributor.
<p>Water</p> <p>Pages 74 - 90</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Water quality is relatively high within the National Park. ➤ In 2013 the overall status of waterbodies within and overlapping the Cairngorms National Park was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 8.5% High, ➤ 45.8% Good, ➤ 29.4% Moderate, ➤ 15% Poor, and ➤ 1.3% Bad. ➤ 2013 saw: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 11.1% of waterbodies improve in overall status,

SEA Topic	Summary of environmental baseline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 66.7% remain the same, and ➤ 22.2% degraded in overall status. ➤ Data from the Spey and Dee indicates a general trend for higher annual maximum instantaneous peak flows. ➤ There is insufficient capacity in the water and sewage treatment works that serve the National Park to meet the projected level of housing growth for the Plan period. ➤ Flood risk: there are nine Potentially Vulnerable Areas (PVAs) within the National Park. The estimated total average annual cost of damage in these areas is £1,071,000.
<p style="text-align: center;">Soil Pages 91 - 101</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Cairngorms National Park does not contain any mapped areas of Prime Agricultural Land. ➤ Around 1,700km² of peat soils within the National Park. ➤ Soil erosion represents a risk to soils with high organic content (such as peat) over large areas of the National Park.
<p style="text-align: center;">Material Assets Pages 102 - 120</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 39 GCR sites within or overlapping the National Park boundary. Combined they cover an area of around 592 km². ➤ CNPA has permitted around 4.2MW of renewable energy since 2010 although data gaps remain in the exact level of energy generated in the National Park. ➤ Household waste produced is reducing, while the recycling rate is increasing. ➤ In 2013, the Cairngorms National Park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Produced 9,779 tonnes of household waste, ➤ Recycled 4,326 tonnes of household waste (44.2%). ➤ Transport infrastructure, while good along the National Park's main corridors, is poor elsewhere in the National Park, resulting in long drive times and high levels of deprivation in SIMD domains relating to access. ➤ Rail use is on the increase, although the reliance on private transport remains high ➤ The National Park's internet infrastructure is currently being upgraded, although plans are yet to be confirmed for a third of the exchanges servicing the area.
<p style="text-align: center;">Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora Pages 121 - 191</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cairngorms National Park is home to 25% of the UK's rare animal, insect, lichen, fungi and insect species. ➤ There are around 1,200 species considered to be important for nature conservation within the National Park. ➤ National Park contains 11 National Nature Reserves (NNRs), covering an area of around 513 km². ➤ National Park contains 59 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), covering an area of around 1,128 km². Of these:

SEA Topic	Summary of environmental baseline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 40 are Biological SSSIs, covering around 449 km². ➤ 9 are Geological SSSIs, covering an area of around 9 km². ➤ 10 are Mixed SSSI's, covering an area of around 671 km². ➤ Of the 50 SSSIs with biological notifiable interests, 23 have at least one notifiable interest that is in unfavourable condition. ➤ 4 SSSIs, namely Aldclune and Invervack Meadows, Blair Atholl Meadow, Creag Dhubh and Garbh Choire, have no notifiable interests in favourable condition. ➤ National Park contains 39 sites within the Natura 2000 Network. Of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 23 are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), covering around 1,083 km². ➤ 16 are Special Protection Areas (SPAs), covering an area of around 2,536 km². ➤ 14 SACs have at least one qualifying feature that is in unfavourable condition. ➤ 3 SACs, namely Monadhliath, River South Esk and The Maim, have no qualifying features in favourable condition. ➤ 33 Annex I (Habitats Directive) habitats occur in the National Park. ➤ 10 Annex II (Habitats Directive) species or are native to, and normally resident in, the National Park. ➤ 11 SPAs have at least one qualifying feature that is in unfavourable condition. ➤ 4 SPAs, namely Anagach Woods, Craigmore Wood, Creag Meagaidh and Muir of Dinnet have no qualifying features in favourable condition. ➤ National Park contains one candidate SPA, namely Ladder Hills. ➤ 35 Annex I (Birds Directive) species can be found within the Cairngorms National Park. ➤ National Park contains 3 Ramsar Sites, covering an area of around 15 km². ➤ National Park contains one Biogenetic Reserve at Muir of Dinnet. ➤ National Park contains 2 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Reserves at Loch Garten and Insh Marshes. ➤ Cairngorms National Park contains the most extensive tracts of Caledonian forest in Britain. ➤ Native tree species comprise around 79% of the National Park's woodlands, representing a quarter of the entire Scottish native woodland resource. ➤ Aspen dominated woodland is unique to the Cairngorms National Park, the stands are small and total less than 350ha concentrated in Strathspey and Deeside. ➤ Around 340 km² of the National Park's woodlands are identified as being ancient according to SNH's Ancient Woodland Inventory.

SEA Topic	Summary of environmental baseline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Around 160 km² of this has also been identified as being semi-natural. ➤ Some of the UK's best ancient floodplain woodlands are located in the Cairngorms National Park. ➤ Caledonian Pinewood is at threat from habitat loss lack of regeneration, limited deadwood and poor structural diversity. ➤ Conifer plantations make up 50% of the woodland resource and are of limited value for biodiversity. ➤ Lack of regeneration, poor structural diversity and grazing pressure has reduced the biodiversity value of upland oak. ➤ Capercaillie populations in Scotland have declined significantly from an estimated 20,000 birds in 1970 to around 1,285 at the most recent national winter survey in 2009/10. ➤ The Cairngorms National Park holds a significant proportion of the national Capercaillie population – at least 75% of the national number of lekking males, with the majority in Strathspey. ➤ The Strathspey capercaillie population is crucial to the long-term survival of the species in the UK. ➤ The Cairngorms National Park is one of the last strongholds for red squirrel and Scottish Wildcat in the UK. ➤ The National Park is one of the most important sites for breeding waders due to the combination of wetlands, wet grassland and low-intensity mixed farming. ➤ Wetlands have historically been drained for agriculture, suffered water shortages as a result of over abstraction and impoundment and been subject to pollution pressure from diffuse and point sources. The remaining wetlands are now often small and fragmented. ➤ Wet grasslands are under threat from over-grazing and poaching by livestock, cutting for hay at critical wader breeding times and drainage to produce productive agricultural land. ➤ Rivers and lochs and the species they support have been affected by large scale impoundments which have a hydrological impact but also affect sediment dynamics, barriers to fish passage, diffuse and point source pollution and invasive species ➤ The freshwater pearl mussel is declining dramatically throughout its range. Mussel populations have been affected by multiple issues, including wildlife crime, habitat degradation and declining water quality. ➤ The Cairngorms Mountains support a rich arctic montane flora. ➤ Montane and moorland habitat under threat from climate change, trampling, erosion and disturbance. ➤ Upland heathland under threat from drainage issues. ➤ Blanket bog under threat from erosion, which is likely to be a significant cause of carbon emissions. ➤ Montaine scrub is under threat from overgrazing and burning.

SEA Topic	Summary of environmental baseline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Small fragmented areas of lowland and upland hay meadows, which are locally important for biodiversity and include many species of orchid and waxcap fungi, still exist in places.
<p>Landscape and Cultural Heritage</p> <p>Pages 196 - 221</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At 4,528 square kilometres, and comprising 6% of Scotland's land area, the Cairngorms National Park is the UK's largest protected landscape. ➤ Contains 3 National Scenic Areas (NSA), with two, namely the Cairngorm Mountains NSA and Deeside and Lochnagar NSA, located entirely within the National Park's boundary. ➤ Combined, the two main NSAs cover an area of around 1,072 km², which equates to just under 25% of the National Park's land area. ➤ Around 2,100 km² (46%) of the Cairngorms National Park has been identified as 'wild land'. ➤ There are 110 Scheduled Monuments recorded within the National Park. ➤ 'The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland' lists 11 gardens and designed landscapes within the National Park. ➤ There are 2 Inventory Battlefields within the National Park. ➤ There are 5 historic planned towns within the National Park. ➤ There are 6 Conservation Areas within the National Park. ➤ There are around 753 Listed buildings or structures within the National Park, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 56 in Category A, ➤ 341 in Category B, and ➤ 356 in Category C. ➤ There are 17 buildings on the Buildings at Risk Register within the National Park. ➤ There are around 370 Gaelic and 5,400 Scots speakers living in the National Park.
<p>Population and Human Health</p> <p>Pages 222 - 260</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In 2014, the population of the National population of the National Park was estimated to be 18,594, with 9,186 males and 9,408 females. ➤ The National Park has a relatively high proportion of people within the 10 to 29 and 55 to 74 age cohorts. ➤ National Park has a working age population of approximately 10,909 people (51.9% of total population), with 5,666 males and 5,243 females. ➤ Those of pensionable age numbered 4,539 (24.6% of total population) with 1,911 males and 2,628 females.

SEA Topic	Summary of environmental baseline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Since 2001, the National Park has experienced a significant net increase in its resident population, rising by approximately 2,087 persons (a growth of 12.8%). ➤ Greatest rate of population growth occurred in Aviemore, which increased by around 1,009 people since 2001. ➤ Population projections for the National Park estimate that between 2012 and 2037, the population is projected to rise from 17,540 to 17,660 (an increase of around 1%)². ➤ Over the projection period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of children aged under 16 are projected to decrease by 15% from 2012 to 2,460. ➤ The working age population is projected to decrease by 4% from 10,350 to 9,910. ➤ People of pensionable age are projected to rise by 23% from 4,300 to 5,290. ➤ Projections suggest that households are set to increase from 7,870 in 2012 to 8,780 in 2037, an increase of 12%. ➤ The average household size is projected to fall from 2.15 people in 2012 to 1.93 people in 2037. ➤ Around 76.8% of the 16+ Census population had NVQ1 level and above (Scotland 73.2%), and around 30.8% had NVQ4 and above (Scotland 26.1%). ➤ Around 95% of people classed as being economically active were in employment in 2011, which is slightly higher than the Scottish level of 91.9%. ➤ Of the economically inactive in 2011, who numbered 5,377 (around 33.9% of the 16+ population), 75.1% were inactive due to retirement. ➤ The level of full time (72.8%) and part time (27.2%) employee jobs (excludes self-employed, government, trainees and HM Forces) is generally consistent with Scotland as a whole. ➤ Unemployment levels are low, with only 225 people claiming Job Seekers Allowance in Q 4 of 2012. ➤ Gross median wage is relatively low in the National Park, but gross household income is above the Scottish median. ➤ Estimated life expectancy of the National Park is 79 for males and 82.3 for females. ➤ Low levels of people with long term health problems or disabilities and high levels of people with good health within the National Park. ➤ Low levels of overall deprivation within the National Park, with 3 data zones being in the 20% least deprived in Scotland. ➤ Extensive public footpath network, including 1,073km of Core Path.

² The difference between the estimated 2014 population and the 2012 estimated and 2037 projected populations is explained in Appendix 3.

Scoping of SEA Topics

Based on an understanding of the purpose of the LDP and an appraisal of the Policy Context (p. 10) and baseline information (p. 11), **Table 3** outlines why individual SEA topics have been scoped in (✓) or out (✗) of the assessment.

Table 3 Scope of the SEA.

SEA Topic	Scoped in?	Rationale for Decision
Climatic Factors	✓	The Plan could have a negative effect on the topic if policy decisions result in an unsustainable level and distribution of development or in allowing inappropriate land management practices to continue or increase. However, it also has the potential to make a contribution to climate change mitigation targets, as well as providing a platform for the implementation of long term adaptation measures.
Air	✓	The emission of particulates and other air pollutants from road transport has the potential to have negative effects; similarly there is also the potential to reduce emissions through reducing both the need to travel and the distances needed to be travelled to reach essential services.
Water	✓	The Plan has the potential to effect water quality and quantity, drainage, flooding and morphology. Opportunity exists to enhance water quality through spatial planning, infrastructure investment and land management.
Soil	✓	Possible effects dependent on the Plan's spatial strategy and land allocations, such as the loss of agricultural land, sealing as a result and of construction, and loss of biodiversity.
Material Assets	✓	The National Park's aim "to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area" means that the Plan should attempt to result in positive effects on this topic. Indeed, the Plan may have an influence on issues surrounding geodiversity, waste management and infrastructure provision, and as such the

SEA Topic	Scoped in?	Rationale for Decision
		SEA has a role to play in maximising positive effects.
Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora	✓	The National Park's aim "to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area," means that the Plan should attempt to result in positive effects on this topic. However, due to its concern with spatial planning, the Plan has the potential to cause significant negative effects.
Landscape and Cultural Heritage	✓	The National Park's aim "to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area," means that the Plan should attempt to result in positive effects on this topic. However, the Plan's concern over the scale and distribution of development means that there is potential for significant changes to the landscape to occur. The Plan also has the potential to generate both negative and positive effects on cultural heritage, depending on a number of factors.
Population and Human Health	✓	The National Park's aims to "promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities" and "promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public" means that the Plan should attempt to result in positive effects on this topic. By its nature, the Plan has the potential to generate both positive and negative effects on people and their health. Human health has a number of strong inter-relationships with other topics, not least due to the long term effects of climate change. Shorter term issues may include pollution from road traffic and deprivation as a result of distances from services.

Methodology

Proposed SEA Objectives

“The review of relevant environmental objectives can be used to construct a framework of objectives against which a plan can be assessed. This can identify whether a plan supports wider environmental objectives or whether there are any environmental gaps.”

SEA Guidance
(Scottish Government, 2013)

This section of the Scoping Report sets out the CNPA’s proposed approach to assessment of the LDP.

Proposed SEA Objectives have been developed as a result of the review of PPS (**Policy Context**, p. 10) and baseline information (**Baseline**, p. 11). Identifying objectives is an important part of the SEA process as these will be used as the primary tool for testing the emerging LDP to ensure it will not result in any significant environmental effects.

The proposed SEA Objectives are thematically based and are designed to cover the environmental assets that the Plan could potentially affect. It is important to recognise that environmental effects are rarely confined to a single a single issue, therefore it has been highlighted where significant inter-relationships occur. The SEA Objectives proposed here therefore represent the scope of the assessment that will be undertaken to identify potential environmental effects of the Cairngorms National Park LDP.

It is important that the assessment process is proportional, practical and manageable. Consequently, the assessment process will utilise the ‘main’ SEA Objectives, but take account of the SEA Sub-Objectives. This distinction is important to ensure the assessment work is practical and achievable. It should also be noted that not all SEA Sub-Objectives will not be relevant to every aspect of the Plan. Therefore, in the interest of proportionality, where they are

not relevant, they will not be considered as part of the assessment process.

The Objectives and their relationship with the SEA Issues identified for the National Park are outlined in **Table 4**, along with any associated sub objectives. The main objectives have been tested for their compatibility with one another, the findings of which can be found in the section on the **Compatibility of Objectives** (p. 27). The framework in which they will be utilised is set out on page 29.

Table 4 Proposed SEA Objectives.

SEA Topic	No.	SEA Objective	SEA Sub-Objectives	Inter-relationships
Climatic Factors	Ia	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases with particular focus on emissions from buildings, transport, energy generation and industry (especially CO₂). ➤ Encourage energy conservation and higher energy efficiency. ➤ Encourage investment in cleaner technologies. ➤ Support investment in suitable renewable energy sources. ➤ Decouple increase in GDP and greenhouse gas emissions ➤ Encourage the appropriate local sourcing of materials, resources and food produce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Air ➤ Water ➤ Soil ➤ Material Assets ➤ Population and Human health
	Ib	Increase resilience to the effects of climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that new development is appropriately located, having considered the potential effects of future climate conditions. ➤ Ensure infrastructure and buildings are designed to cope with future climate conditions. ➤ Encourage climate change adaptation through green infrastructure. ➤ Encourage existing infrastructure and buildings to adapt to cope with future climate conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Water ➤ Soil ➤ Landscape and Cultural Heritage ➤ Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora ➤ Population and Human health

SEA Topic	No.	SEA Objective	SEA Sub-Objectives	Inter-relationships
Air	2	Protect and enhance air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reduce levels of the UK National Air Quality pollutants (e.g. NO₂, PM₁₀, SO₂). ➤ Reduce levels of ground-level ozone (O₃). ➤ Reduce the need for travel, through appropriate siting of new developments and provision of public infrastructure. ➤ Reduce negative effects of power generation, industry and transport on local air quality. ➤ Contribute towards reducing levels of stratospheric ozone depletions. ➤ Encourage appropriate cleaner technology for power generation, industry and transport. ➤ Reduce levels of acid deposition. ➤ Reduce levels of ammonia deposition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Water ➤ Soil ➤ Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora ➤ Population and Human health
Water	3a	Reduce flood risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Safeguard the functional floodplain. ➤ Encourage the restoration of a natural flood regime. ➤ Promote land uses and habitat changes that will help to decrease run-off, stabilise slopes, and attenuate flows. ➤ Ensure new development is not located in areas of high or medium flood risk. ➤ Ensure new development does not increase flood risk on site or elsewhere. ➤ Increase the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in both new and refurbished developments. ➤ Avoid loss of soils to non-permeable surfaces. ➤ Reduce reliance on flood mitigation and hard engineered solutions. ➤ Increase provision to manage stormwater. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Climatic factors ➤ Soil ➤ Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora ➤ Landscape and Cultural Heritage ➤ Population and Human health
	3b	Maintain and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the water quality of rivers, lochs and ground-water is maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Climatic factors

SEA Topic	No.	SEA Objective	SEA Sub-Objectives	Inter-relationships
		improve the quality of water resources	<p>or improved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain and improve the ability of river catchments to store water. ➤ Conserve public water supply. ➤ Reduce demand for water and minimise unnecessary water use. ➤ Reduce diffuse pollution from urban and rural areas. ➤ Limit land use related pollution (particularly nitrates) on water resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Soil ➤ Material Assets ➤ Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora ➤ Population and Human health
Soil	4	Minimise contamination and safeguard and improve soil and peat quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain or improve the productive capacity of soils. ➤ Maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to sustainably produce high quality local and seasonal food. ➤ Avoid increased diffuse pollution, particularly SO₂ and NO₂ emissions and nitrate pollution from agriculture and other economic activities. ➤ Protect and enhance soil quantity (including non-chemical soil functions and processes such as permeability) and quantity, especially of carbon rich soils. ➤ Maintain, restore or improve the carbon storage capacity of peat and soils. ➤ Minimise carbon emissions from land use (e.g. muirburn). ➤ Avoid and reduce contamination of soils. ➤ Promote the regeneration and redevelopment of brownfield and contaminated land. ➤ Take account of soil function. ➤ Minimise soil erosion. ➤ Minimise soil sealing. ➤ Minimise soil compaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Climatic factors ➤ Water ➤ Material Assets ➤ Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora ➤ Landscape and Cultural Heritage ➤ Population and Human health

SEA Topic	No.	SEA Objective	SEA Sub-Objectives	Inter-relationships
Material Assets	5	Encourage the sustainable use and reuse of material assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote decoupling of resource use from economic prosperity. ➤ Encourage sustainable use of natural resources e.g. water, timber, aggregates. ➤ Minimise the use of finite resources and promote higher resource efficiency and the use of secondary and recycled materials. ➤ Promote the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse and recycle. ➤ Value, conserve and enhance geodiversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Climatic factors ➤ Air ➤ Water ➤ Soil ➤ Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora ➤ Landscape and Cultural Heritage ➤ Population and Human Health
	6a	Value, conserve and enhance biodiversity, distinctive native species and habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Protect the integrity of European sites, proposed European sites and listed Ramsar sites, and to conserve or, where not at a favourable conservation status, enhance their qualifying features. ➤ Avoid damage or fragmentation of designated sites, habitats and protected species and encourage their enhancement and connection. ➤ Conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats and their connectivity. ➤ Avoid the introduction and spread of invasive non-native species and tree diseases. ➤ Conserve, enhance and create appropriate natural habitats and wider biodiversity within and outwith settlements. ➤ Encourage innovative methods of producing biodiversity gain for both new and existing developments. ➤ Reduce the ecological footprint of the Cairngorms National Park. ➤ Enable people to access and appreciate the Cairngorms National Park's natural heritage more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Climatic factors ➤ Air ➤ Water ➤ Soil ➤ Material Assets ➤ Landscape and Cultural Heritage ➤ Population and Human Health
	6b	Maintain and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain or improve the capacity of woodland to sequester and store 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Climatic factors

SEA Topic	No.	SEA Objective	SEA Sub-Objectives	Inter-relationships
		improve the sustainable management of woodland for multiple benefits	<p>carbon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enhance the ecological functioning of woodland at a landscape scale. ➤ Avoid the loss of ancient woodland and veteran trees. ➤ Protect and enhance the ecosystem services woodland provide (e.g. flood alleviation and pollution mitigation). ➤ Protect and promote the recreational, cultural, landscape and economic value of woodland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Air ➤ Water ➤ Soil ➤ Material Assets ➤ Landscape and Cultural Heritage ➤ Population and Human Health
Landscape and Cultural Heritage	7	Protect and enhance the character, diversity and special qualities of the National Park's landscape and cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Protect and enhance the National Park's special landscape qualities. ➤ Work towards creating landscapes that are ecologically functional. ➤ Minimise the loss of wildness. ➤ Reduce light pollution. ➤ Value, protect and enhance the historic and cultural environment and its assets. ➤ To promote high quality design based on a comprehensive understanding of landscape character and distinctiveness. ➤ Protect and enhance townscape and respect the existing pattern, form and setting of settlements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Climatic Factors ➤ Material Assets ➤ Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora ➤ Population and Human health

SEA Topic	No.	SEA Objective	SEA Sub-Objectives	Inter-relationships
Population and Human Health	8a	Promote opportunities that maximise the health and wellbeing of local people, visitors and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain the recreational value of the Cairngorms National Park. ➤ Promote and maintain opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and lead healthy lifestyles. ➤ Encourage walking or cycling as an alternative means of transportation. ➤ Empower people to experience, learn about and share the Cairngorms National Park's historic, cultural and natural heritage. ➤ Promote the improvement and maintenance of social and physical environments / facilities that provide opportunities to enhance health and wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Landscape and Cultural Heritage ➤ Population and Human Health
	8b	Support vibrant, safe and healthy communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the population and household growth is accommodated in appropriate locations. ➤ Ensure a suitable affordable housing stock is available to meet needs. ➤ Promote the design of settlements that improve social fabric by removing barriers and creating opportunities for positive interactions. ➤ Promote the inclusion of disadvantaged and minority groups. ➤ Redress imbalances of inequality, deprivation and exclusion. ➤ Provide easy access to high quality facilities and services. ➤ Ensure that adequate healthcare premises are provided throughout the National Park. ➤ Reduce burden of ill-health in the population. ➤ Reduce the causes of accidents. ➤ Ensure the quality of the built environment complements the high quality natural environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Climatic factors ➤ Air ➤ Water ➤ Soil ➤ Material Assets ➤ Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora ➤ Landscape and Cultural Heritage ➤ Population and Human Health

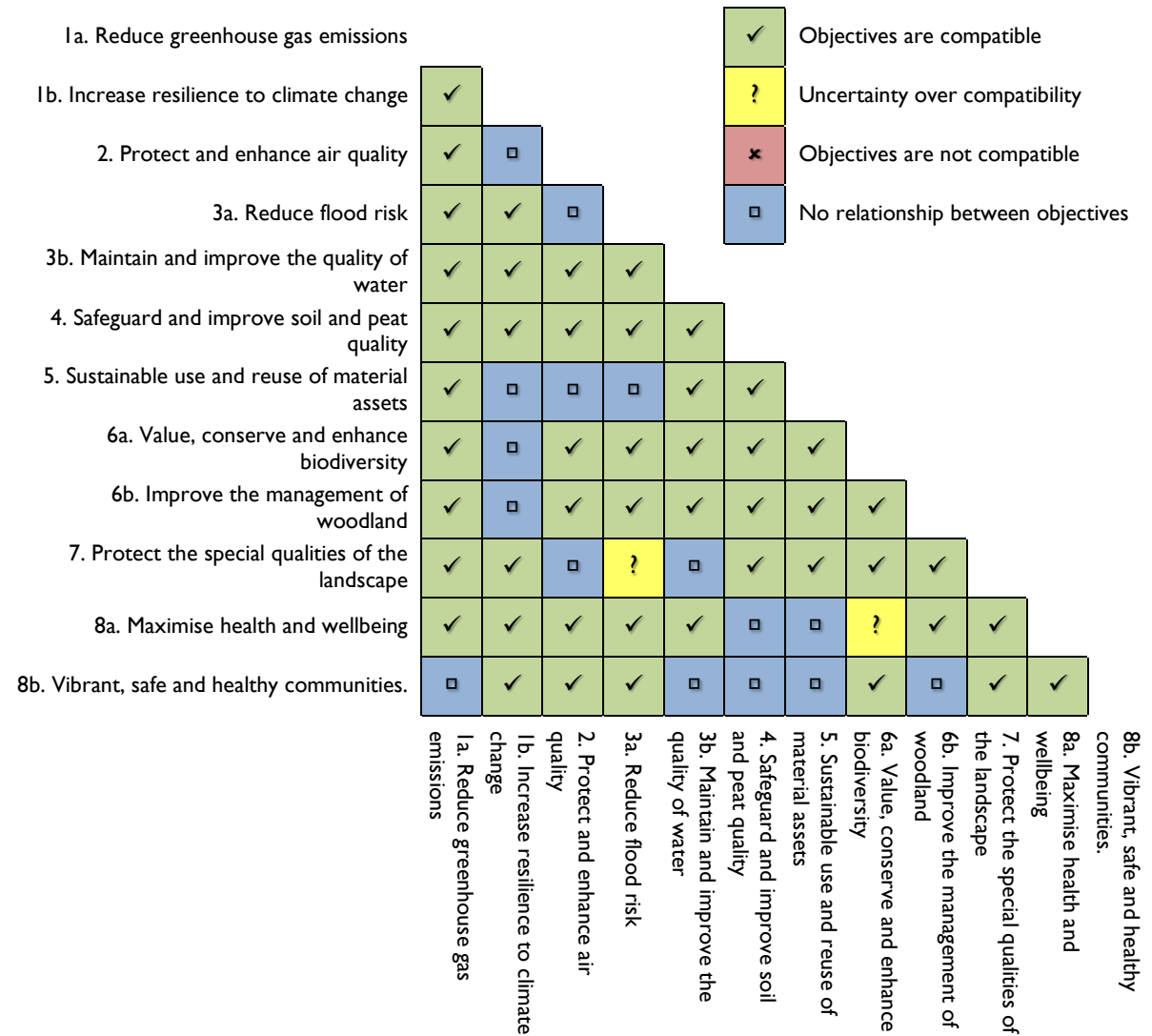
Compatibility of SEA Objectives

“It may be useful to test the internal compatibility of the SEA objectives... There may be tensions between objectives that cannot be resolved: the compatibility assessment will clarify these so that subsequent decisions are well based, and mitigation or alternatives can be considered.”

A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive (ODPM, 2005)

The SEA Objectives identified in **Table 3** have been tested for compatibility in accordance with the guidance as set out by the ODPM. A matrix approach has been used which is consistent with this guidance. The results of the compatibility assessment are summarised in **Figure 3**. Only the ‘main’ objectives have been considered as part of the compatibility test, since the sub-objectives effectively feed into these.

Figure 3 Compatibility assessment of SEA objectives (abridged).



As can be seen from **Figure 3**, a large number of the SEA objectives are either compatible with each other, or there is no relationship between them. Where there is no relationship between objectives this means they can be achieved simultaneously without conflict. However, there is uncertainty between the compatibility of some objectives, for example the objectives 3a and 7. This uncertainty will be considered in greater detail in the Environmental Report on the Main Issues Report (MIR). Some refining of objectives may be required in the future, for example changes may be required to reflect the views of the Consultation Authorities.

Proposed Assessment Framework

“The use of matrices is well established with SEA, offering a reliable approach to undertaking an assessment. Assessment matrices are normally based on objectives, questions or environmental criteria. Scoring systems can be used in matrices to distinguish between the effects of different alternatives.”

SEA Guidance
(Scottish Government, 2013)

The proposed assessment framework will test the environmental effects of the LDP in relation to options and alternatives. This stage of the SEA will involve:

- Predicting the effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives;
- Evaluating the effects of the draft plan or programme, including alternatives;
- Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects; and
- Proposing measures to monitor the environmental and sustainability effects of plan or programme implementation.

Some of the main components of this stage will utilise a judgement system which is both transparent and auditable. This also provides a more scientific approach to the SEA methodology and helps improve objectivity. An assessment matrix has been designed which utilises the following significance criteria in terms of potential effects:

- temporal scale of effects (short term, medium term or long term);
- permanence (permanent or temporary);
- spatial scale (local, regional, national or international).

An assessment matrix will be generated from the proposed SEA Objectives and used to identify and assess the effects of the LDP and alternative options. An example assessment matrix is shown by **Table 5**.

The assessment of each element of the LDP will be reported using symbols denoting positive, neutral, uncertain or negative effects, supported by evidence and justification on the nature of the effect

(Table 6). Any uncertainties or assumptions made as part of this process should also be highlighted, along with the need for monitoring, mitigation and enhancement. Summary tables will also be used to present the overall assessment of the plan, to allow the CNPA, Consultation Authorities and other interested parties to understand the effects of proposed measures against all of the SEA Objectives.

It should be stressed that assessment is an iterative and ongoing process. As future stages of the LDP are developed beyond its MIR, so the SEA should be updated and continued to be used to inform the process.

Table 5 The proposed assessment matrix for use in the SEA of the Cairngorms National Park LDP.

<p>SEA Issue / Topic <i>Insert Issue / Topic title here</i></p> <p>SEA Objective(s): <i>Insert SEA Objective(s) here</i></p> <p>Significant Interrelationships <i>Insert significant relationships with other SEA Issues / Topic here.</i></p> <p>Assessor(s): <i>Insert assessor(s)'s name here.</i></p> <p>Date of Assessment: <i>Insert date(s) of assessment here.</i></p>							
Option	Nature of Effect	Scale	Permanence	Significance			Mitigation and Enhancement
				Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	
<i>Insert Option title here</i>	<i>Insert a description of the nature of the potential effect the Option will have on the issue against the criteria set out by the SEA Objective, Link to baseline information as necessary.</i>						<i>Insert information on how any potential negative effects will be mitigated or how enhancements will be used to create positive effects.</i>
<p>Conclusions: <i>Insert a summary of the assessment's findings.</i></p>							

Table 6 SEA Assessment Key.

Significance of Effect		Scale and Permanence of Effect	
Option would have a major positive effect in its current form as it would resolve an existing issue or maximise opportunities. SIGNIFICANT.	++	Local (e.g. settlement or community council level)	L
Option would have a minor positive effect.	+	Regional (e.g. National Park or neighbouring LA level)	R
Effect of Option is uncertain.	?	National (i.e. Scotland)	N
Option would have no predicted effects or no site specific effects.	□	International (i.e. trans-national boundary effects)	I
Option would have a minor adverse effect.	-	Permanent	P
The Option would have a major adverse effect as it would create significant new problems or substantially exacerbate existing problems. Consider exclusion of option. SIGNIFICANT.	--	Temporary	T

Alternative Plan Scenarios

“Only reasonable, realistic and relevant alternatives need to be put forward. It is helpful if they are sufficiently distinct to enable meaningful comparisons to be made of the environmental implications of each.”

A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive
(ODPM, 2005)

Part 2 Section 14(2)(b) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires the Environmental Report to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan and reasonable alternatives to the plan, taking into account its objectives and geographical scope. Alternatives considered must be realistic and capable of being implemented. During the development of the MIR, alternative options will be considered; however, at this stage in the process the LDP’s strategy, policies and proposals, as well as any possible alternatives have not yet been fully

identified, but once options and alternatives start to come forward they will be assessed against the SEA Objectives using the methodology outlined in this report.

Selecting the Preferred Alternative

It is most likely that the preferred alternative to come out of the environmental assessment will be the one that has the potential to achieve the best balance between environmental, social and economic considerations. This option will then undergo a more detailed assessment and evaluation in the Environmental Report.

Proposed Scope and Level of Detail

“Proportionate reporting improves transparency, by helping to ensure SEA has a better focus on relevant environmental information and the significant environmental effects.”

SEA Guidance
(Scottish Government, 2013)

The SEA will take a proportional approach

to assessing the LDP and will aim to provide the right level of relevant environmental information at the right time. The ‘Spatial Scope’ for the SEA is defined as all of the land within the Cairngorms National Park area, and neighbouring areas that share the same landscape character and/or same habitat type. Therefore cognisance will be paid to the strategies, landscape character and habitats of the local authority areas that neighbour the National Park. Some effects may be of national or international significance and this will be highlighted where it is the case. The assessment will also consider the temporal nature of an effect, as distinguishing between permanent and temporary effects is a useful when considering the overall impact of a scenario.

The timeframe for this SEA is approximately 20 years, in line with the scope of the LDP. However, there will be a focus on the 10 years immediately following the adoption of the Plan (estimated as 2020-2030). The legislation requires that LDP’s are reviewed at least every 5 years.

Predicting the Effects of Implementation

“The level of significance of environmental effects can be difficult to define, and can be a matter of professional judgement.”

SEA Guidance
(Scottish Government, 2013)

Stage B (see **Figure I**) of the SEA process requires the prediction of the future effects of implementing the LDP. The purpose of carrying out SEA is to allow the decision maker to make ‘good decisions’ based on effective predictions, and predicting environmental conditions is a good method of testing our assumptions and guiding decisions. However, predicting future events and environmental conditions will always be difficult and faced with a range of uncertainties, such as those in relation to the delivery and effectiveness of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, or in the accuracy of the environmental baseline. For this reason decision makers require information that is

sufficiently accurate to allow them to assess the preferred course of action.

In order to avoid or reduce error, it is proposed to follow a range of techniques including:

- Early engagement of key stakeholders and interested parties to help ensure that the right baseline data is collected, and to inform what alternatives and mitigation and enhancement measures are considered;
- Interdisciplinary working to help challenge assumptions and suggest possible solutions;
- Ensure the consideration of all significant impacts;
- Ensure the assessment is carried out by people who have knowledge of the area, the plan, and sustainability issues;
- Apply the precautionary principle i.e. assume that adverse effects will happen and put in place mitigation and enhancement measures to prevent, reduce or offset those potential impacts; and
- Consider cumulative, indirect and long term impacts and carry out a

regular review of the data necessary to help identify these impacts.

Cumulative Effects

“Many environmental problems result from the accumulation of multiple small and often indirect effects, rather than a few large and obvious ones.”

A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive
(ODPM, 2005)

The assessment of cumulative effects is an important part of the SEA process, as the combined impact of various plans and policies can have significant environmental effects. Due to the geographical scales at which cumulative effects can occur it is considered most appropriate to assess them at the strategic level; however, it should be noted that even at the strategic level it is not always possible to fully measure such effects due to the interdependent and cross boundary nature of some of the impacts.

It is considered that the most appropriate way of testing and assessing the cumulative

effects of the Plan is by using the impacts that are arising from the emerging LDP, along with the impacts identified in the Environmental Reports of those PPS which are applicable to the Cairngorms National Park area and those of neighbouring local authority areas. This approach will assess whether any potential negative environmental effects of the LDP will be offset by improvements in other areas, and also whether opportunities exist to enhance positive environmental effects through similar actions in other areas.

Mitigation and Enhancement

“The 2005 Act states practitioners have to outline ‘the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme’ within the Environmental Report.”

SEA Guidance
(Scottish Government, 2013)

The Environmental Report will propose recommendations for mitigation and enhancement measures to prevent, reduce or offset adverse impacts, and to enhance positive effects that are predicted to arise from the implementation of the LDP.

Monitoring

“...focusing monitoring on the significant environmental effects identified in the assessment is likely to encourage the creation of new monitoring regimes. It is therefore practical to make a clear link between the significant effects predicted within an assessment and the indicators selected to monitor the likely environmental effects.”

SEA Guidance
(Scottish Government, 2013)

It is a requirement of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that the significant environmental effects of implementing a plan or program are monitored. This environmental monitoring may in turn form part of the monitoring framework for the LDP itself.

SEA monitoring should be undertaken for the following reasons:

- to identify whether the SEA’s predictions of environmental effects were accurate;
- to identify unforeseen adverse effects and to enable appropriate remedial action to be taken;
- to identify whether the plan is contributing to the achievement of SEA Objectives;
- to identify whether mitigation measures are performing as well as expected;
- to identify whether any adverse effects are within acceptable limits or whether remedial action is required;
- to fill help compile a baseline for future plans and programmes; and
- to provide information for the EIAs of projects.

Ultimately, monitoring should lead to more informed decision-making.

Since SEA monitoring should be based around the significant environmental effects identified during the assessment, it is not possible to produce a monitoring framework at the Scoping stage. Therefore,

proposals for monitoring indicators will be developed iteratively during the assessment of the MIR and Proposed Plan and confirmed in the final Environmental Report.

Consultation / Next Steps

“Consultation with the Consultation Authorities at screening and scoping stages has a statutory duration period of 28 days and five weeks respectively.”

SEA of Development Plans
(Scottish Government, 2010)

The SEA Scoping Report will be submitted to the SEA Gateway and consulted on with the CAs for a period of 6 weeks between 26th September and 4th November 2016. Following consultation on the Scoping Report, the CNPA will consider any comments received and will amend the SEA work where appropriate. This will take place in the late part of 2016.

The development of the MIR and its environmental assessment will take place between November 2016 and February 2017.

All documents will be available for inspection in the CNPA’s main office in Grantown-on-Spey and in on its website.

The MIR and its Environmental Report will be submitted to the SEA Gateway for consultation with the CAs between February and April 2017 for a period of six weeks. Following the consultation period, the Proposed LDP will be produced, building on the feedback from the previous consultation. This process will also be the subject of environmental assessment.

The Proposed LDP and its Environmental Report will be published for consultation in winter 2018.

Once the LDP has been adopted an Adoption Statement will be published. The Adoption Statement will summarise how the CNPA took the findings of the SEA process into account and how environmental considerations more generally have been integrated into the LDP. It will also be stated within the Post-adoption Statement if any changes have been made to the LD{ as a result of the SEA process and following responses to

consultation. If changes have been rejected this will also be explained.

It will also be necessary for the CNPA to monitor significant effects following the adoption of the LDP in accordance with the Scottish Government’s SEA Guidance (2013).

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