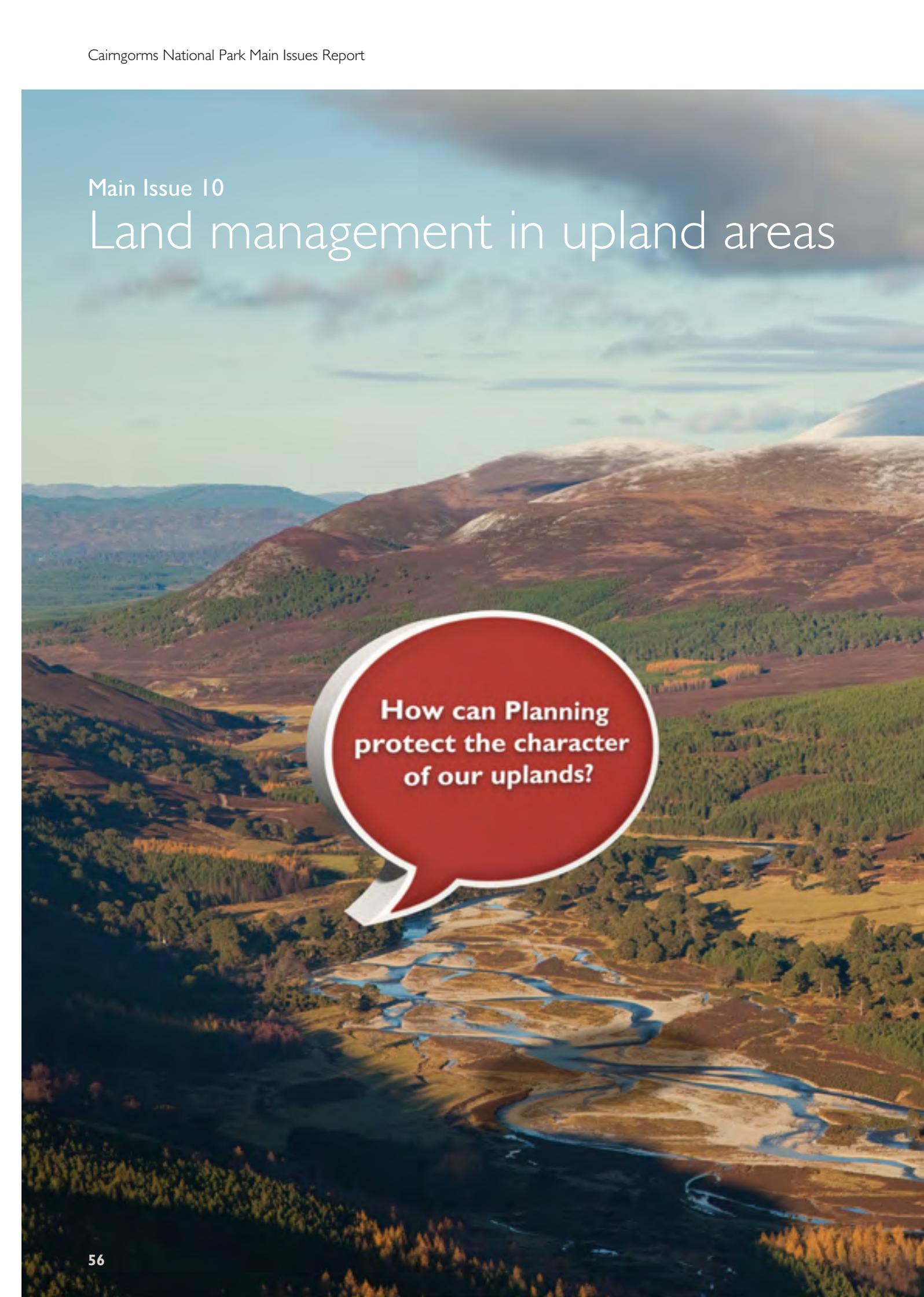


Main Issue 10

Land management in upland areas



**How can Planning
protect the character
of our uplands?**

Background

The open moorlands of the Cairngorms National Park are an integral part of the landscape character of the Park as well as a valuable habitat. Moorland is used for both field sports and farming, and its management is key to delivering several public interest priorities, including natural flood management, species conservation and landscape enhancement.

Many of the land management activities which take place in the uplands are outside the control of the planning system. However, some require planning permission and it is important that these are carefully controlled to ensure that they do not have an adverse impact on the National Park's unique landscape qualities.

Hill tracks are one form of development which sometimes falls under the control of the planning system. Whilst some tracks for agriculture and forestry purposes benefit from permitted development rights, all other new private tracks require planning permission before they can be developed.

Tracks are a necessary component of land management, providing access to remoter areas for important habitat and species management activities such as deer control. However, inappropriately sited or poorly constructed vehicle tracks can have detrimental impacts on sensitive habitats

and the visual landscape, in particular where tracks are located on higher ground or extend into remote areas of wild land.

Tracks are also sometimes required to enable other developments to take place. However, these can also have detrimental impacts on sensitive habitats and the landscape if they are not carefully considered. For example, there have been some issues with recent hydropower developments within the National Park where unauthorised works have taken place outside of approved planning application boundaries. This has identified the need for more careful control over proposed working corridors, access arrangements and reinstatement proposals in future hydropower schemes.

The scale of impact from tracks is influenced by a number of factors and Scottish Natural Heritage has produced good practice guidance on how these factors should be considered and addressed.

The Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022 recognises that hill track development in unsuitable locations and/or using poor construction standards can have significant adverse effects on the landscape qualities of the Park. It therefore states that there should be a presumption against new constructed tracks in open moorland areas.



Preferred Option

The existing Local Development Plan includes a specific policy on landscape. It outlines a presumption against any development that does not conserve the landscape character and special qualities of the National Park. This has been used effectively to control and mitigate the impacts of new hill tracks in cases where they require planning permission. We think the existing policy will continue to provide an appropriate means for controlling these forms of development in the future. However, we also think that we could give more clarity on the issue of hill tracks by amending the policy to reflect the National Park Partnership Plan's specific presumption against new tracks in areas of open moorland.



Questions

- Do you agree that the new Local Development Plan should include an amended policy to reflect the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan's presumption against new hill tracks in open moorland areas?



Reasonable Alternative Options

As an alternative to the preferred approach, we could continue to retain the existing Local Development Plan's landscape policy without including any specific reference to tracks. Whilst this would still enable us to deal with any future planning applications for new track developments, we do not think this approach would fully reflect the priorities of the National Park Partnership Plan.

