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Sent: 03 February 2018 15:32
To: Katie Crerar
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: CAIRNGORMS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN MAIN ISSUES REPORT CONSULTATION

STRATHDON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

The Strathdon Community Development Trust welcomes the opportunity to comment on the CNPA Local Development Plan 2020 Main Issues Report.

We are a newly created organisation established to foster local community development and enhance social, economic and environmental well-being. Our work is grounded in the Strathdon Community Action Plan 2016 which identified a number of issues relevant to this consultation and it is upon these issues that we base our response.

Much of the terrain in Strathdon is high moorland and offers limited development opportunities. There is an ageing population in line with the rest of the National Park. The working population in the glen is focused on estates, forestry, farming, tourism and retailing. There are four main retail businesses, hotel, shop/post office, gift shop/tea room and ski centre.

Existing trends do not bode well for the future. Forestry is capital intensive employing outside contractors and offers limited employment. Farming also offers limited opportunities and could face problems with changes to farming support. Retailing is dependent on a local catchment and passing trade and can benefit from seasonal tourism.

Action is required to attract and retain young people who can work locally and to foster economic sustainability. The key is to encourage the growth of existing businesses and to foster the creation of start ups.

We welcome the proposed objective for Strathdon to facilitate economic growth and support the local community. However, the creation of start up businesses on a significant scale can only happen when good broadband is available throughout the glen. At present many rural properties cannot obtain broadband or are forced into expensive and unreliable satellite connections. The Strathdon community action plan identified good broadband as the top priority for all properties in the glen. The next Local Development Plan should seek to support the provision of broadband infrastructure across the National Park but in a way that minimises the impact of such development on the landscape and wildlife.

The action plan also identified the availability of good quality affordable housing as a top priority. We therefore welcome the proposed objective of encouraging small scale new housing to meet identified local needs. This should be supported by a wider strategy to secure sufficient funding to make these aspirations a reality.

Finally, we note the proposed policy to establish a presumption against new hill tracks on open moorland. Estates are crucial to our community as they operate on high moorland which is of little or no use for other activities. The wages they pay to their staff and the investment they make in their businesses are a vital part of the local economy. Concerns have been expressed by many landowners of the potential negative impacts this policy could have on their businesses. We urge the Park Authority to find a way

forward that ensures the continuing viability of estates and ensures that any necessary development is of the highest quality and minimum environmental impact.

A community like Strathdon can only survive with the right policies and encouragement from public bodies.