

# PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

2020 - 2021





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**Cairngorms**  
 NATIONAL PARK  
 Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh

## OUR COMMITMENT

Our Planning Service is a key part of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) and is committed to the Vision\*, Mission and Values as set out in the Corporate Plan 2018 to 2022. The Planning Service plays a key part in creating the Park we all want by getting the right development in the right place, by promoting investment, by protecting and enhancing the natural/cultural environment and by creating places that we will value and enjoy.

Further information in our Planning Service Charter at <http://cairngorms.co.uk/>

\*The Vision for Cairngorms National Park is: "An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together. (Source: National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022)



# 2020 /2021 PERFORMANCE HEADLINES

## Development planning and land supply



**Local Development Plan adopted March 2021**



**354 new houses** built over last 5 yrs



**8.1 yrs** of effective housing land



**29.51 ha** marketable employment land available

## Enforcement



**37** enforcement cases taken up

**30** breaches resolved

## Development management and decision making



**95.5%** of applications approved



Pre-application advice given on **12%** of applications



**0 legacy applications** remaining at end of year



Processing agreements for **95.7%** of all applications



**13 wks** on average to determine planning applications for local developments





# Introduction

The Planning Performance Framework (PPF) was developed by Heads of Planning Scotland in conjunction with the Scottish Government. The framework involves a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures to provide a toolkit to report on and improve performance. All planning authorities prepare PPF reports annually.

This is the tenth annual Planning Performance Framework report for the CNPA Planning Service. Scottish Government feedback about our last report for 2019/20 was generally very positive and is available online. This report includes a summary of how we have performed in 2020/21 and looks ahead to 2020/22, highlighting the key areas where we want to improve our practice.

In the Cairngorms National Park, more than in any other part of Scotland, there is a partnership approach to planning – the National Park Authority and the five relevant local authorities all play a key role in making the planning system work efficiently. The CNPA sets the planning policy for the National Park through the development of the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) and the Local Development Plan (LDP). All planning applications in the National Park are determined with reference to this policy background. CNPA “calls in” and determines the most significant planning applications, generally around 7% of all applications, leaving the five local authorities to determine the remainder.







## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Quality of outcomes

The CNPA has:

1. Undertaken the final monitoring of the delivery of the previous Local Development Plan (LDP) and the associated suite of statutory and non-statutory Planning Guidance. Have carried out monitoring of the plan's implementation, producing annual reports and reporting them to Planning Committee (Monitoring Report 2019-20). This has helped build our understanding of how planning policies are being applied in practice. This, in turn, helps to ensure our new LDP and associated planning guidance is providing the policy framework and clarity necessary to secure high quality development on the ground. The monitoring work has been used to inform proposed policy changes incorporated in the newly adopted LDP.
2. Adopted the new LDP 2021 with the provision for 45% affordable housing in selected settlements to meet the increased need for affordable homes in those localities.
3. Successfully delivered an engagement project with the Cairngorms Youth Action Group to educate and engage young people in the planning process, and the special environment of the National Park. The exercise utilized the popular game Minecraft using a map of the National Park on which participants were set a series of tasks to create and manage the development of a hypothetical settlement.
4. Enabled the planning team to continue their work remotely, supporting them with increased technical assistance, utilising online sharing and virtual meeting platforms and supporting one to one walking outside meetings to promote wellbeing when regulations allowed.
5. Continued to support the delivery of a range of high-quality developments through the planning process. Selected highlights are identified within the Project Focus section of this report.



Image right: High-quality development, Nethy Bridge



## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Quality of service and engagement

The CNPA has:

1. Following the first national lockdown in March 2020, the CNPA quickly moved its Planning Committee meetings online by April 2020. Over the following three months we improved that service to allow the meeting to be streamed in public and to allow applicants and those making representations to attend and participate in the virtual meetings in almost the same way as our physical meetings.
2. Reviewed and continued to promote our Planning Service Charter to outline the overall purpose of the planning service and our commitments to the standards that customers can expect.
3. Continued to maintain our good working relationships and shared understanding of different customer's experiences of the planning service through our Developer's Forum.
4. Produced and distributed the CNPA newsletter updating the public and stakeholders on the progress of the adopted LDP, a review of the Covid-19 service delivery and updates on major projects. It reported that in 2020 (since restrictions began) overall attendance at online committee meetings by members was 97%.
5. Offered processing agreements on all applications that are "called in" by CNPA and continued to promote the availability of this service via the CNPA website. Uptake of processing agreements has remained high and improved in 2020/21, with 95.7% of the planning applications determined by CNPA during the reporting period having a processing agreement (this compares with the previous high of 73% during 2019/20).
6. Revised the suite of non-statutory guidance that supports LDP policies, to ensure they reflect the policies of the newly adopted LDP. This included public consultation on the draft versions.
7. Continued to maintain and review our suite of Planning Advice Notes which explain the way the planning system operates within the National Park and provide easy to read advice on matters that customers frequently ask about.
8. Began the preparation of the next Development Plan Scheme (DPS), to outline the timetable for producing the next LDP and set out our commitments for engaging the public and other stakeholders within its production. The DPS includes an overview of the project plan for the next LDP and demonstrates that robust project planning and management structures are in place to ensure the delivery of the new LDP. This edition will also outline the changes to the LDP process and the importance the NPPP will have as a potential Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).
9. Updated the (then) proposed LDP with the Reporters Recommendations following the examination and formally adopted the LDP in March 2021. The examination was delayed due to Covid-19 however was completed successfully with only minor changes required before adoption.



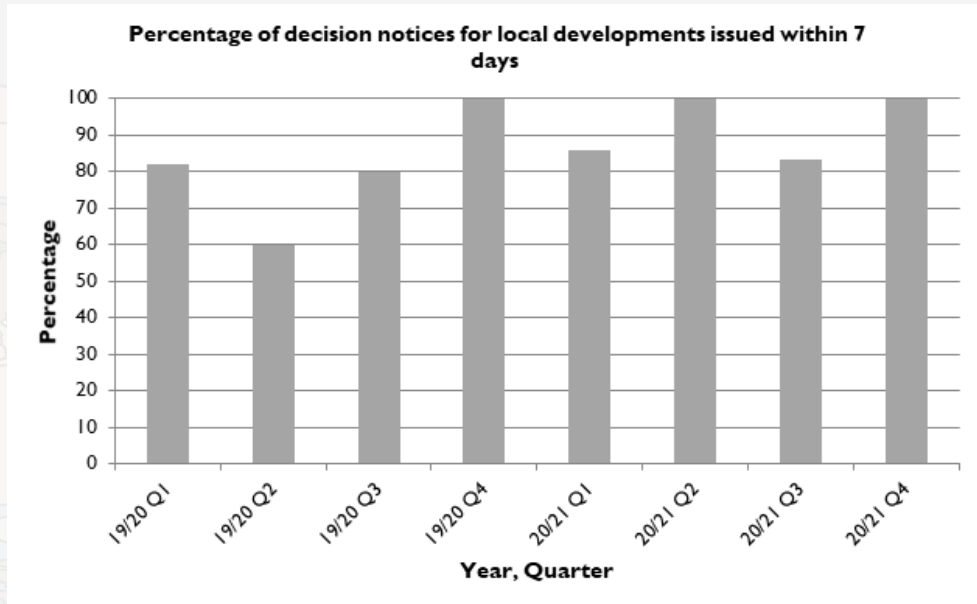


# Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

## Governance

The CNPA has:

1. Continued to apply the Cairngorms National Park Planning Service Protocol – the voluntary agreement between the CNPA and the five Local Authorities who all work together in the exercise of planning functions within and affecting the National Park.
2. Continued to implement our procedure for reviewing applications post-determination where outstanding s75 legal agreements have delayed the issue of decision notices.
3. Postponed member training sessions during 2020/2021 as the move to only online meetings for our Planning Committee reduced the time available for member training.
4. Elected a new Planning Committee convener, with Gaener Rodger taking over from the long-standing convener, Eleanor Mackintosh.
5. Maintained a pattern of issuing swift decision notices following planning committee meetings (where there are no requirements for s75 legal agreements to be concluded). The majority of decision notices were issued within 7 days of committee determination, comparing favourably to the previous year.







## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Culture of continuous improvement

The CNPA has:

1. Continued to undertake performance monitoring, with six monthly updates for Planning Committee.
2. Continued to participate in the Heads of Planning Scotland's Development Planning and Development Management Sub-Committees.
3. Continued to participate in the North of Scotland Development Plans Forum (NSDPF), which allows the sharing of experiences, best practice, skills and knowledge amongst peers.
4. Officers continue to be active participants within the Royal Town Planning Institute North of Scotland chapter, including assisting Highland Council RTPI in the provision of an online CPD event during 2020/21.
5. Regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of the Covid-19 working practices to ensure the widest possible engagement and effectiveness in delivering the planning service in line with national restrictions.
6. Review of the working knowledge of the committee members to identify gaps in knowledge and deliver appropriate training to improve the planning committee process, although delivery of training sessions was not possible during 2020/21.

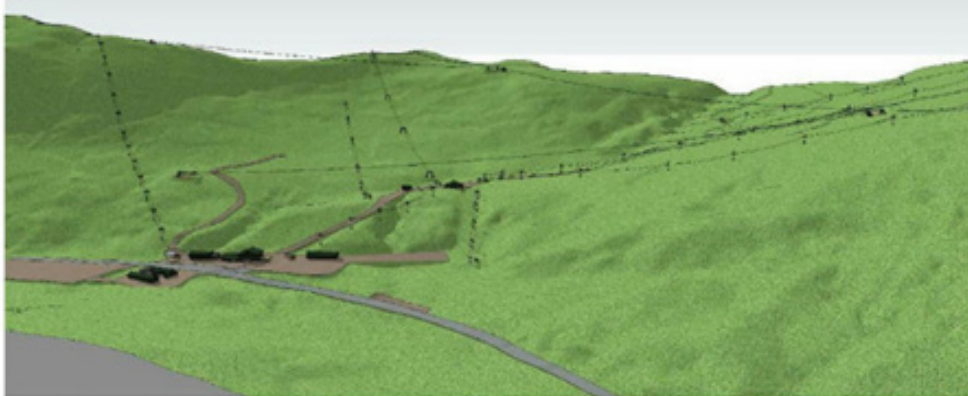


## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Case Study I Glenshee ski centre zip wire safari

#### Location and Dates:

Glenshee, Perthshire / October 2020 – February 2021



Project Visualisation - Technical Outdoor Solutions

#### Overview

Glenshee has a long history of snowsports related development, with the first ski tow built in 1957 by Dundee Ski Club. Subsequent developments have evolved into the present day ski centre, with a network of pistes, tows, fencing and associated buildings, as well as more recent operation of the chair lift for mountain bikers and hill walkers outside the winter snowsports season. Due to increasingly unreliable winter conditions, and a desire to move to year round income generation, an application for a series of zip wires was called in by CNPA in October 2020. The zip wires would add to other activities offered by the ski centre during the months without snow, increasing the appeal of the location as a year round destination.

#### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes

#### Key Markers:

- 2 Project management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and availability publicised on planning authority website
- 3 Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:
  - Availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications
  - Clear and proportionate requests for supporting information

#### Areas of Work:

- Economic Development

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Local Developers
- Planning Committee



Photo :Gwen and James Anderson - [www.geograph.org.uk/p/774920](http://www.geograph.org.uk/p/774920)





## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Goals

The proposed development was considered to support the ongoing viability and operation of the ski centre as a year round tourist site, as well as offering an opportunity to bring more visitors to the local area. This in turn should support local businesses providing tourism related services in the vicinity, building the opportunities for employment and supporting the sustainability of the wider ski centre business. It should also benefit other communities along the Snow Roads promoted tourist route, encouraging visitors to stop and spend time (and money) in the area rather than just passing through.

### Outcomes

The CNPA Planning Committee approved the application in February 2021, recognising the socio-economic benefit of the proposal as part of a wider tourist offering in the area. One committee member summed up their support for the development as “The project is a great fit with what the business is already offering and would certainly attract more visitors, supporting the local economy.”

**Key officer:** Stephanie Wade, Planning Officer – Development Management





## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Case Study 2: Development Management Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) process

**Location and Dates:** CNPA, 2020/21 and ongoing



Winter sunrise over the River Spey Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a European site connected to many developments through watercourses flowing into the river

#### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement
- Governance
- Culture of continuous improvement

#### Key Markers:

- 12** Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (eg protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice)

#### Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Interdisciplinary Working

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

#### Overview

During 2020, the CNPA worked with NatureScot and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority to update our casework agreement that sets out the roles and responsibilities between the National Park Authorities and NatureScot when dealing with casework. (<https://www.nature.scot/doc/agreement-roles-advisory-casework-between-naturescot-and-scottish-national-park-authorities>)

As part of this updating to improve the efficiency of working between both National Park Authorities and NatureScot, the CNPA revised some of its internal procedures to improve its own efficiency and make use of staff expertise in undertaking Habitats Regulations Appraisals (HRAs) for development affecting European sites.

The revised internal procedures include an interdisciplinary casework meeting soon after an application has been called in, ensuring the planning case officer fully understands the relevant issues in relation to ecology, protected sites and landscape at the outset of the process. This improves their ability to manage the case and explain issues or implications to an applicant. It also allows the case officer to query the advice and the team to collectively consider potential solutions to address the issues, actively seeking resolution of issues.



## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Goals

The revised approach

- Upskills the case officers so that they are better able to identify potential European site issues at earlier stages in the planning process.
- Frees up time in specialist advice teams so that they can focus on significant ecological issues for each case and other project work.
- Makes use of existing skill sets and experience to deliver a more effective and focussed service.
- Makes more effective use of key agency time, reducing the time NatureScot would otherwise spend on draft HRAs.

### Outcomes

This is an ongoing process of upskilling, so the benefits to case officers of learning a new skill set are yet to be fully realised, but planning case officers have already demonstrated a greater understanding of the HRA process as a result of their direct involvement in it.

CNPA teams and customers are benefiting from early interdisciplinary working: issues are being identified earlier in the determination process so that applicants can be asked for relevant information or survey work earlier, resulting in fewer unexpected delays in the determination process. NatureScot staff are spending less time writing HRAs and can now review HRA's prepared by the CNPA as the competent authority.

**Key officer:** Nina Caudrey, Planning Officer - Development Planning





## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Case Study 3: Conversion of Ballater Old School to affordable housing

#### Location and Dates:

Ballater Old School, Abergeldie Road, Ballater, November 2020 and ongoing



Proposed design

#### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes

#### Key Markers:

- 3 Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:
  - availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications
  - clear and proportionate requests for supporting information

#### Areas of Work:

- Regeneration
- Housing Supply

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff

#### Overview

Applications for planning permission and listed building consent for the restoration and new build housing development at the site of the old school in Ballater were granted consent by the CNPA Planning Committee in May 2019. Works started in 2020.

#### Goals & Outcomes

The Ballater Old School closed in the 1960s and was then used as an outdoor education centre until the 1990s. It is located close to the centre of Ballater and since the listed buildings have been vacant they had fallen into disrepair, with the school being listed on the Buildings at Risk Register. Bringing the site back into use was a priority in the Local Development Plan, with the site allocated for uses that benefited the community, including affordable housing.

All the 23 units created will be affordable housing provided by Grampian Housing Association and the development makes use of a redundant brownfield site, bringing buildings of architectural and historical importance to the settlement back into use and greater value to the community.

**Key officer:** Stephanie Wade, Planning Officer – Development Management





## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Case Study 4: New road bridge on the A939 at Gairnshiel

#### Location and Dates:

Gairnshiel bridge on the A939 between Ballater (Aberdeenshire) and Tomintoul (Moray) April 2020 to ongoing



Artists impression of proposed new bridge, from the Design Statement

#### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

#### Key Markers:

- 3** Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:
- availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications
  - clear and proportionate requests for supporting information
- 12** Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice)

#### Areas of Work:

- Environment
- Transport

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Other -Local Authority
- Structures dept.



Tourist coach stuck on the existing bridge  
(credit <https://mapio.net/pic/p-24613719/>)

#### Overview

The existing, single carriageway, Category A listed Gairnshiel bridge was built around 1749 for foot traffic, horses and carriages. Since then, the volume, speed and weight of traffic has increased substantially. The hump back shape of the bridge, narrow width, lack of pedestrian space and sharp approach/exit on the north side of the bridge creates difficulty for many drivers, resulting in regular vehicular damage to the bridge causing structural issues. An 18 tonne weight restriction was put in place in 2018 to try and alleviate some of these issues, however the collision issues remain. The weight limit has also impacted on tourism along the route, as many coaches are now unable to use the road between Ballater and Tomintoul.

As a result, a replacement bridge downstream of the existing bridge was proposed, with associated road realignment and creation for access. The site and surrounding area is of cultural, historic and landscape significance, with the Category A listed Gairnshiel Bridge approximately 165m upstream and the Category B listed Dalphuill residence found in the vicinity of the development. The replacement bridge would also cross the River Dee Special Area of Conservation designated for Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel and otter, all species highly sensitive to pollution and disturbance.



## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

Due to the sensitivity of the location, pre-application advice was given to the applicant by CNPA and Aberdeenshire transport planning teams, to ensure all the relevant issues were addressed during options appraisal. The approach taken to the pre-application advice by the applicant was an options appraisal. This meant that while a wider potential development zone was assessed at a high level for all the potential options.

### Goals

The main aim was to ensure that an appropriate scheme was developed (and planning application submitted), which took account of the sensitivities of the location while meeting the needs of road users (both vehicular and pedestrian) and affected land owners/managers whose land the new road section would cross. If permitted, the new bridge would support the socio-economic needs of communities along the A939 between Ballater and Tomintoul, by enabling tourist coach use of the A939. It would also avoid communities and other users of the road being inconvenienced each time the road has to be closed for repairs to the existing bridge.

### Outcomes

An appropriate design was submitted that took account of the sensitivities of the location and was approved by the CNPA Planning Committee in December 2020. While the site specific detail was lacking for some issues, consultees and planning committee members were satisfied that the principle of the design and location of the bridge were appropriate, and that full site specific detail on matters such as flood risk and construction methods could be approved by condition post-permission.

**Key officer:** Stephanie Wade, Planning Officer – Development Management





## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Case Study 6: Minecraft Engagement

#### Location and Dates:

Delivered Virtually, January – March 2021



Ballater within the Minecraft Map, created by Dan Harris

#### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of service and engagement

#### Key Markers:

- 6** Continuous improvements:
- progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report

#### Areas of Work:

- Placemaking
- Other – Youth engagement and training

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Hard to reach groups (engagement in planning process)

Video courtesy of STV : [https://youtu.be/9ya1IH\\_zlts](https://youtu.be/9ya1IH_zlts)

#### Overview

The Cairngorms National Park Authority has a planning service improvement priority focused on engaging young people in the planning system:

*“Develop and deliver a youth engagement / involvement programme – Roll out a program of work to engage young people, including the involvement of the Cairngorms Youth Action Group, in the planning system.”*

The COVID-19 restrictions of the last twelve months and uncertainty around future social distancing measures have made engagement difficult, particularly with young people. In spring 2020 officers identified a need to explore options that did not rely on meeting face to face but would be engaging activities in their own right.

Minecraft was chosen as a potential mechanism for engagement as it is a popular game for many ages of player, and is recognised as a potential learning platform as well as being fun. It was hoped that if it could be tailored to the Cairngorms National Park, Minecraft could be used to engage young people in the Park’s environment and built form and give them an introduction into the world of plan and policy making.





## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

A map of the Cairngorms National Park for Minecraft was created as an interactive tool to encourage people to think about place, the planning system and the different parties involved. Members of the Cairngorms Youth Action Team were 'dropped' into the Cairngorms National Park Minecraft environment and asked to work as a team to collaboratively create a community that represents the sort of place they would like to live in. They were supported by CNPA planning staff and held regular discussions to consider their choices and what they had learnt from their experiences.

At the end of the project the youth group presented their experiences to the CNPA Planning Committee, setting out their decisions within the National Park policy framework and giving the committee members an insight to their lessons learned as would-be planners developing a space in the National Park.

### Goals

- To get the group to think about the relationship between the National Park's landscape / environment, development and land use.
- To raise awareness and understanding of how planning policy is made and implemented by creating development themselves.
- To learn about how actions affect others and, how sometimes development can cause conflict amongst different individuals and interest groups.

### Outcomes

The project was fun and engaging for the participants from the Cairngorms Youth Action Team and made them consider real issues of resource use and impacts of development in a virtual environment. The minecraft map of the Cairngorms National Park captured their imagination and that of many other young and older people who heard about it.



The beginnings of a new settlement in the Park

Although the project was designed to focus the participants on planning-related issues, the map itself could be used to engage people in many other management decisions related the National Park as place or its unique characteristics. The team members also gained insight into the working of the planning system and the real choices for planning committee members through attending a planning committee.

The map is now available for the public to download (<https://cairngorms.co.uk/caring-future/education/learning/minecraft/>) so anyone can explore the National Park or create engagement projects based on it.

**Key officer:** Dan Harris, Planning Manager – Forward Planning





## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Case Study 7: Saving Wildcats Breeding Programme Compound

#### Location and Dates:

Highland Wildlife Park, Kincaig, July - September 2020



Photo: SJ Plowman, Highland Wildlife Park, 2021

#### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes

#### Key Markers:

- 2 Project management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and availability publicised on planning authority website

#### Areas of Work:

- Conservation
- Planning Applications

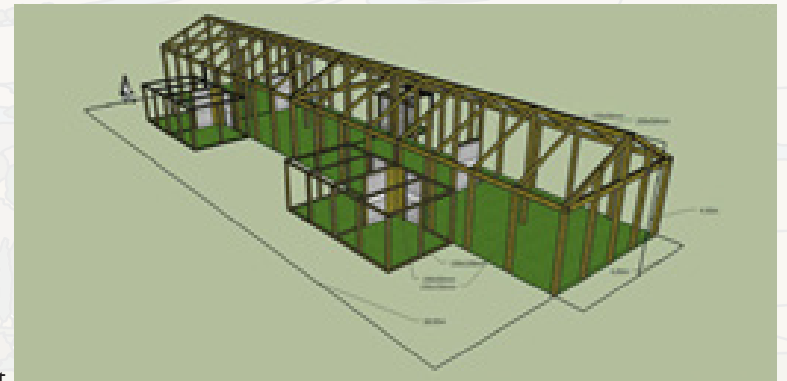
#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Planning Committee
- Other (Highland Wildlife Park / RZSS)

#### Overview

An application for the construction of a Scottish wildcat breeding compound at the Highland Wildlife Park near Kincaig was approved by the CNPA Planning Committee in September 2020, following call-in in July 2020. The compound was required to establish a breeding programme (The Saving Wildcats Project) to prevent the extinction of the critically endangered species by breeding and releasing Scottish wildcats into the wild.

The timing of the application was critical in ensuring the breeding compound could be constructed in time to enable kittens reared in 2020 to enter the breeding programme at the Wildlife Park in the winter of 2020 and support the delivery of the Saving Wildcats project as quickly as possible.



Right: Breeding Unit





## Part I: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

### Goals

The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's Highland Wildlife Park is a recognised centre of excellence for native species breeding programmes for conservation. The Saving Wildcats Project aims to prevent the extinction of Scottish wildcats in Scotland and establish Britain's first large-scale dedicated conservation 'breeding for release' centre for wildcats. This would be done by 'bringing together wildcat experts, a dedicated veterinary unit and a specialised pre-release training programme to help develop the necessary life skills needed for life in the wild'. This development would play a critical role in the project by providing the breeding spaces.

### Outcomes

The CNPA Planning Committee approved the planning application in September 2020 and the requisite conditions were quickly discharged to allow work to begin on the first breeding units in October 2020. The units were quickly completed and occupied and are currently home to 5 wildcats, with further breeding and pre-release enclosures to be created in this year.

The swift processing of the planning application and delivery of the facility on the ground has made a direct contribution to the conservation of this critically endangered species during 2020/21 that will be used for years to come.

**Key officer:** Katie Crerar, Planning Officer



## Part 2: Supporting Evidence

Part 1 of this report was compiled drawing on evidence from the following sources:

### Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan, associated policy guidance documents and Planning Advice Notes

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/planning-development/ldp-2021/>

### Cairngorms Design Advice

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/planning/good-design/>

### Cairngorms Planning Service Charter

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/publications/30042015/CNPA.Paper.1966.Planning%20Service%20Charter.pdf>

### Cairngorms Planning Enforcement Charter

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/180629PlanningEnforcementCharter.pdf>

### Planning Service Performance Update Reports to Planning Committee

1. May 2017

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/26052017/Item7PlanningServicePerformance.pdf>

2. December 2017

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/15122017/Item9PlanningServicePerformanceUpdateV1.0.pdf>

3. May 2018

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/25052018/Item7PlanningServicePerformanceUpdate.pdf>

4. June 2019

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/28062019/Item-10PlanningServicePerformanceUpdate.pdf>

5. December 2020

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/11122020/Item-7PlanningServicePerformanceUpdate.pdf>





## Part 2: Checklist

### Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies

CASE STUDY TOPICS	ISSUE COVERED IN PPF	CASE STUDY TOPICS	ISSUE COVERED IN PPF
Design		Interdisciplinary Working	Y
Conservation	Y	Collaborative Working	
Regeneration	Y	Community Engagement	
Environment	Y	Placemaking	Y
Greenspace		Charettes	
Town Centres		Place Standard	
Masterplanning		Performance Monitoring	
LDP & Supplementary Guidance		Process Improvement	Y
Housing Supply	Y	Project Management	
Affordable Housing	Y	Skills Sharing	Y
Economic Development	Y	Staff Training	
Enforcement		Online Systems	
Development Management Processes	Y	Transport	Y
Planning Applications	Y	Active Travel	
Other (Youth Engagement)			Y



## Part 3: Service Improvements 2021-22

*In the coming year the CNPA will:*

- **Continue to simplify mechanisms for securing planning obligations and reduce the need for planning agreements.**
- **Plan for the third Cairngorms National Park Design Awards.**
- **Continue to make the planning process more accessible** – enhancing our use of technology to increase accessibility and engagement in the planning process. We will also be trialling the use of the new software (commonplace) to increase engagement in public consultations by making the material more accessible to a wider audience.
- **Continue our monitoring of hill tracks development and increase awareness of policy amongst estates and land managers** - Our monitoring and enforcement of unauthorised hill tracks has increased in recent years. During 2021/2022 we will continue work on completing a monitoring project using aerial photography and to provide further guidance for estates and land managers.
- **Prepare the next National Park Partnership Plan** incorporating the Regional Spatial Strategy for the National Park.
- **Deliver specialist training to committee members on landscape in relation to wind farm developments** – and continue to monitor gaps in members knowledge to deliver suitable additional training as required.
- **Consolidate past improvements and procedures** – embedding changes and improvements.

The identified service improvements aim to respond to feedback received from stakeholders, including from Community Councils and Associations and from our Developers Forum. The priorities will build upon progress that has been made in previous years.





## Part 3: Delivery of CNPA Service Improvement Actions in 2020-21

Committed Improvements and Actions	Complete
Simplify mechanisms for securing planning obligations and reduce the need for planning agreements – Establishing simpler, cheaper and faster ways of securing necessary planning obligations.	Partially - ongoing
Improve Monitoring of Planning Applications - Improve data on existing consents to aid with monitoring and delivery of LDP.	Yes
Develop and deliver a youth engagement / involvement programme – Roll out a program of work to engage young people, including the involvement of the Cairngorms Youth Action Group, in the planning system.	Yes
Make the planning process more accessible – Use digital technology to provide better access to planning committee enabling more people to engage with the decision making process.	Yes
Undertake a monitoring scheme on holiday and second home ownership, changes of use from residential property and impacts on communities – The development of the LDP has increased awareness of the changes in use of residential property to short term holiday letting property. The data available through council tax and non-domestic rates records requires some ground trothing for accuracy and the CNPA will undertake some additional monitoring of newly completed housing developments. We will also publish a Planning Advice Note to explain the rules on use and changes of use.	Partially
Increase our monitoring of hill tracks development and awareness of policy amongst estates and land managers.	Yes
Consolidate past improvements and procedures – Over the past few years, the planning team has set ambitious service improvement priorities. At a time when we have also recruited a number of new staff, embedding changes requires consistent work and effort.	Yes



## Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI's)

Key outcomes	2020-2021	2019-2020
<b>Development Planning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age of local development plan (years and months) at end of reporting period. <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i></li> <li>Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Y/N)</li> <li>Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? (Y-earlier/Y-later/N)</li> <li>Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year? (Y/N)</li> </ul>	0yr 0m Y N Y	4y 0m N N Y
<b>Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established housing land supply</li> <li>5-year effective housing land supply programming</li> <li>5-year effective land supply total capacity</li> <li>5-year housing supply target</li> <li>5-year effective housing land supply</li> <li>Housing approvals</li> <li>Housing completions over the last 5 years</li> <li>Marketable employment land supply</li> <li>Employment land take-up during reporting year</li> </ul>	2953 units 715 units 2785 units 439 units 8.1 years 131 units 354 units 29.5 ha Not available	3180 units 830 units 2919 units 588 units 7.4 years 1691 units 350 units 24 ha Not available
<b>Development Management</b> <p><b>Project Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice</li> <li>Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement</li> </ul> <p><b>Decision-making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application approval rate</li> <li>Delegation rate</li> <li>Percentage of applications valid upon first receipt</li> </ul>	12% (3) N/A 95.5% 0% N/A <sup>1</sup>	22% (8) 100% (1) 89% 0% N/A <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Planning applications within the National Park are initially submitted to and validated by local authorities.

<sup>2</sup> Planning applications within the National Park are initially submitted to and validated by local authorities.





## Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI's)

Key outcomes	2020-2021	2019-2020
<b>Decision-Making Timescales</b> <b>Average number of weeks to decision:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major developments</li> <li>Local developments (non-householder)</li> </ul>	N/A 13	N/A 16
<b>Householder developments</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Legacy Cases</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number cleared during reporting period</li> <li>Number remaining</li> </ul>	0 0	1 0
<b>Enforcement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed (months) <i>Requirement: review every 2 years</i></li> <li>Complaints lodged and investigated</li> <li>Breaches identified – no further action taken</li> <li>Cases closed</li> <li>Notices served</li> <li>Direct action</li> <li>Reports to Procurator Fiscal</li> <li>Prosecutions</li> </ul>	1 year 9 months 37 30 30 0 0 0 0	9 months 49 25 25 2 0 0 0



## Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI's)

### Context Statement

#### Development Planning

The main focus of the development planning team in 2020/21 was on taking the proposed LDP to adoption. Delays in the examination process due to Covid-19 meant it was adopted a year later than originally planned. The adopted plan was formally adopted on the 26th March 2021 and a suite of non-statutory guidance that supports the delivery of the LDP is now in the process of being consulted upon and adopted.

The adoption of the LDP demonstrates the National Park Authority's commitment to delivering an increase in the number of affordable homes supplied by developers in the communities with the greatest need. In Aviemore, Ballater, Braemar and Blair Atholl new housing developments are now required to deliver 45% affordable homes, up from 25%, to ensure there is sufficient supply going forward.

Following public consultation, the planning committee approved the following non-statutory guidance to accompany the new LDP:

- Supporting Economic Growth
- Natural Heritage
- Landscape
- Renewable Energy
- Resources
- Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- Cultural Heritage

Work is now underway to get three further pieces of non-statutory guidance consulted on and adopted in 2021/2022: Developer Contributions, Housing, Design and Placemaking.

Also in March 2021 the National Park Authority committed to tackling the climate emergency with three clear objectives;

- The Park Authority will achieve net zero emissions by 2025
- The Park Authority aims to achieve zero direct emissions by 2030
- The Cairngorms National Park aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2045

These targets align with the Climate Change (Emission Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, which outlines Scotland's commitment for net-zero by 2045. Encouraging statements by the former Environment and Climate Change Secretary, Roseanna Cunningham, acknowledged the Park Authority's commitment to addressing the climate emergency:

*"I commend the strong and ambitious leadership shown by Cairngorms National Park Authority as it commits to meeting net zero emissions targets, which are central to our green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic."*

To supplement planning policy on private ways and vehicle hill tracks, the CNPA partnered with the Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group to produce a helpful guide addressing the effect of all-terrain vehicles (ATV's) on open hill ground, aimed at reducing the damage to sensitive habitats that can be caused by ATV's (available via <https://cairngorms.co.uk/working-together/land-management/support/>).





## Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI's)

The CNPA undertook an innovative engagement project with the Cairngorm Youth Action group (case study 5). Explaining the inspiration behind the idea, the planning manager responsible for the project said:

*“We know young people care passionately about the environment and we felt that by using a platform such as Minecraft, we could demonstrate how Planning & Development Management has a hugely important role in tackling the climate emergency and caring for our environment. Using an online platform also means that we can deliver this youth engagement programme without having to worry about Covid-19 restrictions.”*

The LDP Action Programme reported on the final year of the LDP 2015. Produced annually, it continued to improve our understanding of site effectiveness and expected delivery rates. This supports CNPA's focus on maintaining an appropriate supply of effective housing land throughout the lifetime of each LDP. This year work has begun on a comprehensive Economic Land Audit to inform the next Action Program, identifying changes in use and available economic land supply data.

Having adopted its most recent LDP in 2020/21, the CNPA is now preparing its next Development Plan Scheme (DPS) that will set out the timescales for preparing the following LDP from 2026 and highlighting the changes to the LDP process for interested parties.



## Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI's)

### Development Management

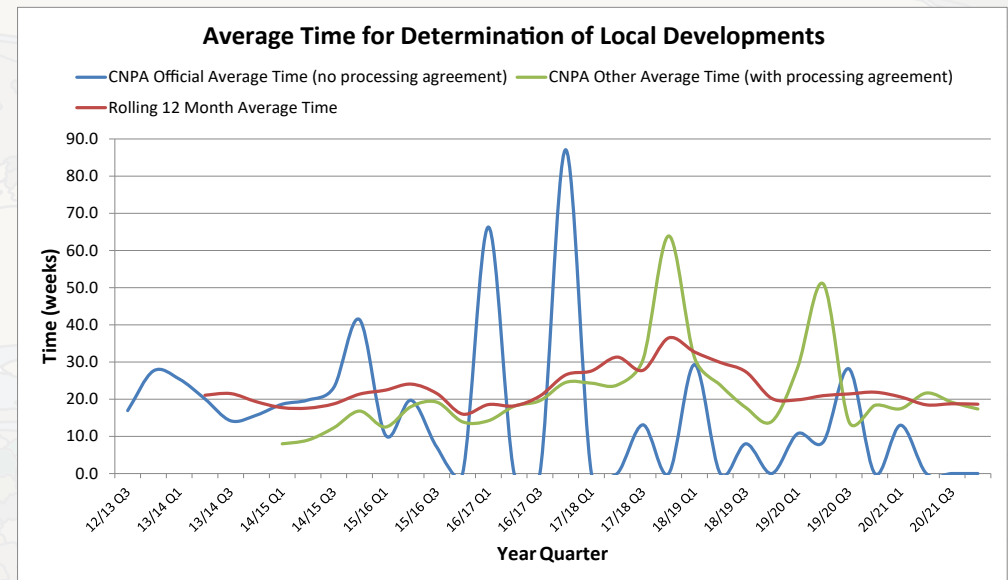
In 2020/21 CNPA called in 21 planning applications during the reporting period and determined 22 applications (0 being withdrawn). This is considerably lower than in 2019/20 when 37 planning applications were called in reflecting the effects of Covid-19 on the construction industry during the last year. As a result fewer were determined than in 2019/20 (when were 30 determined) and none were withdrawn (8 withdrawn in 2019/20).

CNPA's comprehensive use of processing agreements continues to be a good way to provide certainty for applicants and CNPA officers. Processing agreements are offered on all applications that CNPA calls in, and their availability is promoted via the CNPA website. The number of processing agreements on applications has increased from 73% in 2019/20 to 95.7% in 2020/21. (The comparatively lower figure for 2019/20 can be explained by the number of minor Matters Specified in Conditions applications approved during 2019/20, which do not tend to require processing agreements, compared to 2020/21).

Overall processing timescales for applications determined by CNPA tend to be longer than the national average for a number of reasons. In particular, as CNPA only calls in applications that raise issues of significance to the overall aims of the National Park, and does not deal with the simpler cases such as the majority of householder applications. The National Park has a large proportion of internationally and nationally important nature conservation and landscape areas, and many rare, threatened and protected species. This requires sufficient information to be submitted with applications to enable assessment against policy and legislation. When applications lack sufficient information, applicants have to seek extensions to their processing agreements to allow them to gather the necessary information. In addition, all planning applications called in by the CNPA are determined by the CNPA Planning Committee which meets monthly over 10 months of the year, adding 2-3 weeks to the determination process of most applications.

These issues are acknowledged in the national publication of statistics, which notes that:

*"It should be expected that Cairngorms has a longer average decision time as they have no householder applications in their case mix. Also Cairngorms do not receive planning applications directly but are notified of applications which have been made to those planning authorities within the national park boundaries. Cairngorms may then decide to call applications in for their determination. Planning applications are likely to have already been in the system for a number of weeks before being transferred to Cairngorms. Due to these reasons average times for Cairngorms applications can be expected to be higher than those of the other planning authorities."*





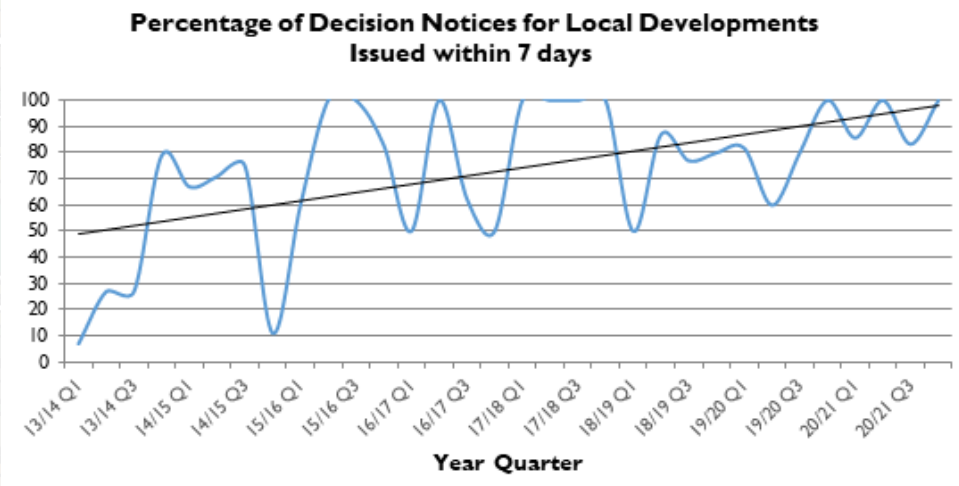


## Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI's)

The proportion of applications subject to pre-application advice decreased from 22% in 2019/20 to 12% in 2020/21. However this figure relies on applicants seeking advice, and the availability and promotion of the services through the five local authorities that are part of the National Park. We consider this is likely to have been influenced by Covid-19 in 2020/21.

To encourage greater early engagement and use of pre-application advice, CNPA has produced an advice note on Pre-Application Advice in the Cairngorms National Park, which helps to provide clarity on the pre-application advice service, shared with the five constituent local authorities. Our newly adopted suite of statutory and non-statutory planning guidance also encourage early engagement and provides clarity on the information required to be submitted in support of planning applications.

The percentage of decision notices issued for local developments issued within 7 days has continued to rise in 2020/21, representing an increase in efficiency in the planning team as seen by the graph below:



Despite the restrictions and difficulties faced by Covid-19, enforcement activity has continued where restrictions allowed, with 30 breaches being resolved during 2020/21

### Covid-19 Service Delivery

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that the entire CNPA staff had to work from their homes during 2020/21. The delivery of the planning service has continued with little change, but Planning Committee meetings have been undertaken entirely online and meetings between staff or customers mostly online or outside where restrictions allowed and there was a strong business case.

Our Planning Committee meetings are now streamed in public, resulting in an increase in public viewings of around 20-40 people, compared to the handful of people who attended previous meetings in public. There has been 98% attendance by our members at committee during the reporting period.



## Part 5: Official Statistics

### A: Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Category	Total number of decisions 2020-2021	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2020-2021	2019-2020
Major developments	0	-	-
Local developments (non-householder)	1	13	16
• Local: less than 2 months	-	-	6.7
• Local: more than 2 months	1 (100%)	13	20.7
Householder developments	0	-	-
• Local: less than 2 months	0 (0%)	-	-
• Local: more than 2 months	0 (0%)	-	-
Housing developments	-	-	-
Major	0	-	-
Local housing developments	0 (0%)	-	-
• Local: less than 2 months	0 (0%)	-	-
• Local: more than 2 months	0 (0%)	-	-
Business and industry	-	-	-
Major	0	-	-
Local business and industry	0	-	-
• Local: less than 2 months	0 (0%)	-	-
• Local: more than 2 months	0 (0%)	-	-
EIA developments	0	-	-
Other consents*	1	13	0
Planning/legal agreements**	-	-	-
• Major: average time	-	-	-
• Local: average time	-	-	-
<b>Local reviews</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A

\*Consents and certificates: Listed buildings and Conservation area consents, Control of Advertisement consents, Hazardous Substances consents, Established Use Certificates, certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development, notification on overhead electricity lines, notifications and directions under GPDO Parts 6 & 8 relating to agricultural and forestry development and applications for prior approval by Coal Authority or licensed operator under classes 60 & 62 of the GPDO.

\*\* Legal obligations associated with a planning permission; concluded under section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 or section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973





## Part 5: Official Statistics

### B: Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

Type	Total number of decisions	Original decision upheld			
		2020-2021		2019-2020	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	2	1	50%	3	100%

### C: Enforcement activity

	2020-2021	2019-2020
Cases taken up	37	49
Breaches identified	30	25
Cases resolved	30	25
Notices served***	0	2
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

\*\*\* Enforcement notices; breach of condition notices; planning contravention notices; stop notices; temporary stop notices; fixed penalty notices, and Section 33 notices.

### D: Context

The official decision-making timescales during 2020/21 (13 weeks on average) are slightly lower than the 16 weeks reported in 2019/20. The longer decision-making timescales last year may reflect skewed statistics as a result of the low numbers of applications in CNPA's overall case mix meaning that a single complex and lengthy case can significantly affect the overall figures.



## Part 6: Workforce and Financial Information

The workforce information below represents a snapshot of the position within CNPA's planning service at 31 March 2020. The financial information relates to the full financial year 2020/21.

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
<b>Head of Planning Service</b>			✓	

Note: Tier 1 = Chief Executive, Tier 2 = Directors, Tier 3 = Heads of Service, Tier 4 = Managers

<b>RTPI Qualified Staff</b>	<b>Headcount</b>	<b>FTE</b>
Development Management	4	3.6
Development Planning	4	3.6
Enforcement	1	1
Specialists	0	0
Other (including staff not RTPI eligible)	2	2

<b>Staff Age Profile</b>	<b>Headcount</b>
Under 30	0
30-39	5
40-49	2
50 and over	4





## Part 7: Planning Committee Information

<b>Committee and Site Visits*</b>	<b>Number per year</b>
Full Board Meetings	9
Planning Committees	10
Area Committees (where relevant)	N/A
Committee Site Visits	0
LRB**	N/A
LRB site visits	N/A

### Notes:

\* References to committees also include National Park Authority Boards. Number of site visits is those cases where visits were carried out by committees/boards.

\*\* CNPA does not have a Local Review Body, with all appeals against CNPA planning decisions going straight to DPEA.



# Cairngorms

NATIONAL PARK

Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh

This document is available in large print and other formats, on request. Please contact the Cairngorms National Park Authority on 01479 873535. It is also available to view at [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)

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