



Local Development Plan Place Standard

Tool engagement with Badenoch and Strathspey Access Panel

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Introduction

The Place Standard tool is a way of assessing places and was utilised as part of the early stakeholder engagement process to inform the preparation of the next Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan.

The current Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan can be accessed here:

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

The Place Standard Tool provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place, based around fourteen questions. It allows participants to think about the physical elements of a place (such as the buildings, spaces, and transport) as well as the social aspects (for example whether people feel they have a say in decision making).

The tool provides prompts for discussions, allowing participants to consider all the elements of a place in a methodical way. The tool pinpoints the assets of a place as well as areas where a place could improve.

The Badenoch and Strathspey Access Panel session was conducted on 12 February 2025 with 6 participants. The group discussed each theme in turn as a group, facilitated and recorded by Cairngorm National Park Authority planning officers. The results are summarised in this report.



Respondent details

The group assessed the Badenoch and Strathspey area as one place. However, as the participants lived in either Aviemore or Boat-of-Garten, much of the discussion focussed on those settlements.

The Badenoch and Strathspey Access Panel is a group of disabled and non-disabled people who volunteer their time to improve physical access and social inclusion for disabled people in their local community. They do this by:

- Giving free advice on suitable disabled access to and within buildings, as well as the outdoor environment. This includes liaising with Highland Council's building control department to assess plans, ramps and access.
- Facilitating training events to increase disability awareness amongst those involved in catering for the public.
- Making detailed information available to disabled residents and visitors to the area.

In 2015 they published a colour guide with comprehensive information to help disabled people gain access to all areas around Badenoch and Strathspey. It is also available as an app for iPhone.

This engagement with the Panel aims to meet Section 16B(4)(a)(i) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, which requires planning authorities to seek the views of disabled persons during the preparation of their evidence report.



Badenoch and Strathspey Access Panel results

The results from each theme have been reported here under their respective theme headings with the questions included from the Place Standard tool.

Moving around

‘How easy is it to move around and get to where I want to go?’

‘What is good now?’

- Compared with living (previously) in more urban areas, it is easier to get out and about.
- Access to the woods is great, with all access paths, but they are difficult to get to with less public transport (than urban areas) and poorer pavements and few dropped curbs – rather than dropped curbs there should be raised roads.

‘How could we make it better in the future?’

- Better all access paths are needed in towns and villages (not just in amenity areas).
- While effort has been made to improve access, there is a lack of consistency. For example, Aviemore Orbital has poor access, even from new developments and the new hospital access is inconsistent in quality – a bad example despite input from an access forum.

Moving around score: 3 / 7.

Public transport

‘What is public transport like in my place?’

‘What is good now?’

- Children use the buses more now than they did in the last generation (bus travel is free for under 22s).
- Wheelchair access to buses is good (but not coaches).
- The Number 30 service (called the Aviemore Adventurer), which runs every hour from Aviemore to the Cairngorm Mountain is good.

‘How could we make it better in the future?’

- Buses need to continue into the evenings.



- The lack of buses during school drop-off and pick-up times is a real problem, resulting in big gaps between services. School specific buses are being provided in other parts of The Highland Council area (e.g. Inverness).
- Buses could be promoted better to visitors to encourage use and help to make services viable. The fact that in rural areas buses can stop anywhere – not only at bus stops – should also be promoted.
- An accessibility and awareness officer should be employed to champion bus services and encourage use.
- Smaller buses, or buses combining carrying passengers with deliveries (like the old post-bus), would be helpful.
- Bus routes are not always well thought out and don't take people where they want to go. Timetables also need to be co-ordinated with train services.
- The Cairngorms National Park Authority should establish a standard bus shelter design, required when shelters are replaced or new ones are required (there are often no shelters in rural areas and passengers are deposited on a grassy bank without a pavement).
- Community buses are at capacity for the funding available and are not wheelchair accessible.
- Aviemore Station has no level access for changing platforms (only a bridge with steps). If the train comes in on the wrong platform, it is not possible to cross and it has been known for passengers to be forced to continue to Inverness to change platforms.

Public transport score: 2 / 7.

Traffic and parking

'How do traffic and parking affect how I move around my place?'

'What is good now?'

- No positive comments made.

'How could we make it better in the future?'

- Car-parking on pavements needs to be prevented and enforced.
- The 20mph limit needs to be enforced (it is a known fact that the police do not have the resources to do this) or alternatives like raised crossing areas and chicanes introduced. Currently the average speed in 20mph areas is 25.6mph!



- Crossings in Aviemore are dangerous because of the range of speeds that cars travel at.
- No public carpark in Aviemore has disabled spaces. Disabled spaces could be provided outside Boots or Tesco.
- Park and ride, a lorry park and a motorhome park are necessary in Aviemore. This could be provided on land within the McDonalds Aviemore Resort.

Traffic and parking score: 1 / 7.

Streets and spaces

‘What are the buildings, streets and public spaces like in my place?’

‘What is good now?’

- The villages and landscape are pleasant and scenic. It is a great place to live.

‘How could we make it better in the future?’

- The entrance into Aviemore from the south is unwelcoming – both because of the vacant, cleared development site and vehicles queuing for the petrol station.

Streets and spaces core: 5 / 7.

Natural space

‘How easy is it to move around and get to where I want to go?’

‘What is good now?’

- The access to the Speyside Way is now accessible.
- It’s a wonderful place to live.

‘How could we make it better in the future?’

- Green spaces are being built on in Aviemore. For instance, where the hospital and school have been built both used to be open ground used for dog walking and playing football. The pitches on the school site now are enclosed and not accessible.
- An accessible green space is needed in Aviemore – you can’t rely on the open countryside beyond the village.
- Carparks are needed to provide easy access to the Speyside Way (where Route 7 café is) and to High Burnside Forest.
- Toilets are needed at natural green spaces and existing need better maintenance (with payment if necessary and rangers keeping an eye on things).



- Maintenance, not just installation, of all access paths is needed.
- Cycle route 7 is prone to flooding / could be improved.

Natural space score: 5 / 7.

Play and recreation

'How good are the spaces and opportunities for play and recreation in my place?'

'What is good now?'

- Boat-of-Garten community hall has great indoor and outdoor spaces, including a playing field.
- Village halls.

'How could we make it better in the future?'

- Aviemore has no dedicated village hall – the community room in the community centre must be paid for by the hour, limiting use compared to a purpose-built community or village hall.
- There needs to be a knock-about football space in Aviemore – the pitches are now fenced and locked up.
- Aviemore has no access to a swimming pool -the loss of access to the Aviemore Resort pool is shameful given the public money spent.
- Those wanting disabled sports, play or activities need to go to Inverness.

Play and Recreation score: 5 / 7.

Facilities and services

'How well do facilities and services in my place meet my needs?'

'What is good now?'

- There are supermarkets in Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey and a range of commercial shops and ventures etc.
- There are good support organisations.

'How could we make it better in the future?'

- Village shops are needed in more villages.
- There should be greater encouragement for the creation of food growing areas / allotments. Boat of Garten would benefit from a larger community growing space.
- Recycling points for non-wearable textiles are necessary at all recycling points.



- Facilities should be provided for campervans and motorhomes. This will help to ensure that they don't overload village facilities or deposit waste inappropriately.

Facilities and services score: 5 / 7.

Work and local economy

'How active is the local economy in my place and are there good opportunities for work, volunteering and training?'

'What is good now?'

- There are jobs for seasonal workers.
- Industries do take on apprenticeships.

'How could we make it better in the future?'

- Housing has limited availability and isn't affordable – affecting employers as well as employees.
- More young people need to live here for local jobs.
- The winter economy is struggling and needs rethinking.
- Business rates are too high.
- More small business spaces (nest units) are needed to encourage start-ups.
- Development of the old timber yard in Boat of Garten.
- Wages need to be higher to access local accommodation.

Work and local economy score: 5 / 7.

Housing and community

'How well do the homes in my place meet the needs of my community?'

'What is good now?'

- No comments made.

'How could we make it better in the future?'

- More social housing is required with a greater mix of house types and sizes.
- There is not enough accessible housing – and this needs to be flexible for changing needs.
- There are too many holiday lets and second homes, reducing the availability of homes for the community.



Housing and community score: 2 / 7.

Social interaction

‘How good is the range of opportunities which allow me to meet and spend time with other people?’

‘What is good now?’

- The area has a good community feel and cohesion. For instance, in Boat of Garten, around £100,000 was raised to build the new nursery at the local primary school after the need for local early years provision was identified. The community also came together to fund raise and deliver the Community Hall.

‘How could we make it better in the future?’

- Wheelchair accessibility could be better and this can limit the ability to meet other people or attend events.
- Need for better disability access at House of Bruar.

Social interaction score: 6 / 7.

Identity and belonging

‘To what extent does my place have a positive identify that supports a strong sense of belonging?’

‘What is good now?’

- The community is very welcoming to new people. There is no prejudice.
- Community action – such as litter picks and riverbank clearing - are good examples of this.

‘How could we make it better in the future?’

- No comments made.

Identity and belonging score: 6 / 7.



Feeling safe

'How safe does my place make me feel?'

'What is good now?'

- Badenoch and Strathspey is a very safe place to live.
- Those who live here are very lucky and do appreciate how safe it is compared to other places.

'How could we make it better in the future?'

- There can be criminal incidents at busy times such as Christmas and summer holidays, particularly where there are lots of visitors.
- It is difficult to contact a police officer. It would be better to have community police and traffic wardens to provide a presence and look after local issues.
- Traffic can be dangerous – with speed, aggressiveness and dangerous driving witnessed – particularly in Aviemore.
- Streetlights need to be maintained because if these are not working it can have a significant effect on feelings of safety.

Feeling safe score: 6 / 7.

Care and maintenance

'How well is my place looked after and cared for?'

'What is good now?'

- There is very limited vandalism (apart from the toilets in Kingussie and Carrbridge).

'How could we make it better in the future?'

- More bins are needed for litter – particularly from takeaways around schools.
- Waste, water and disposal facilities for campervans and motorhomes is necessary and would encourage visitors to care about our places.

Care and Maintenance score: 3 / 7.



Influence and sense of control

‘When things happen in my place how well am I listened to and included in decision-making?’

‘What is good now?’

- The Access panel reported that they feel they have a voice and people and authorities do listen. You do see results – such as at the war memorial and Aviemore Hospital.

‘How could we make it better in the future?’

- There is often too much consultation and not enough action. When action does happen, it is too slow.
- There needs to be more local empowerment.
- Park is nationally funded, and it feels very top-down.
- Badenoch and Strathspey is stuck between two authorities (Cairngorms National Park and The Highland Council). It is not always clear which does what and whether they talk to each other. Action should be co-ordinated, and both authorities should be open about what they do and how they support each other.
- Finally, they felt that more partners need to be involved at the early planning stage.

Influence and sense of control score: 4 / 7.



Conclusion

The group plotted the scores for each theme on the compass diagram (Figure 1). This highlighted that the themes with the highest and lowest scores were grouped into clusters of similar types.

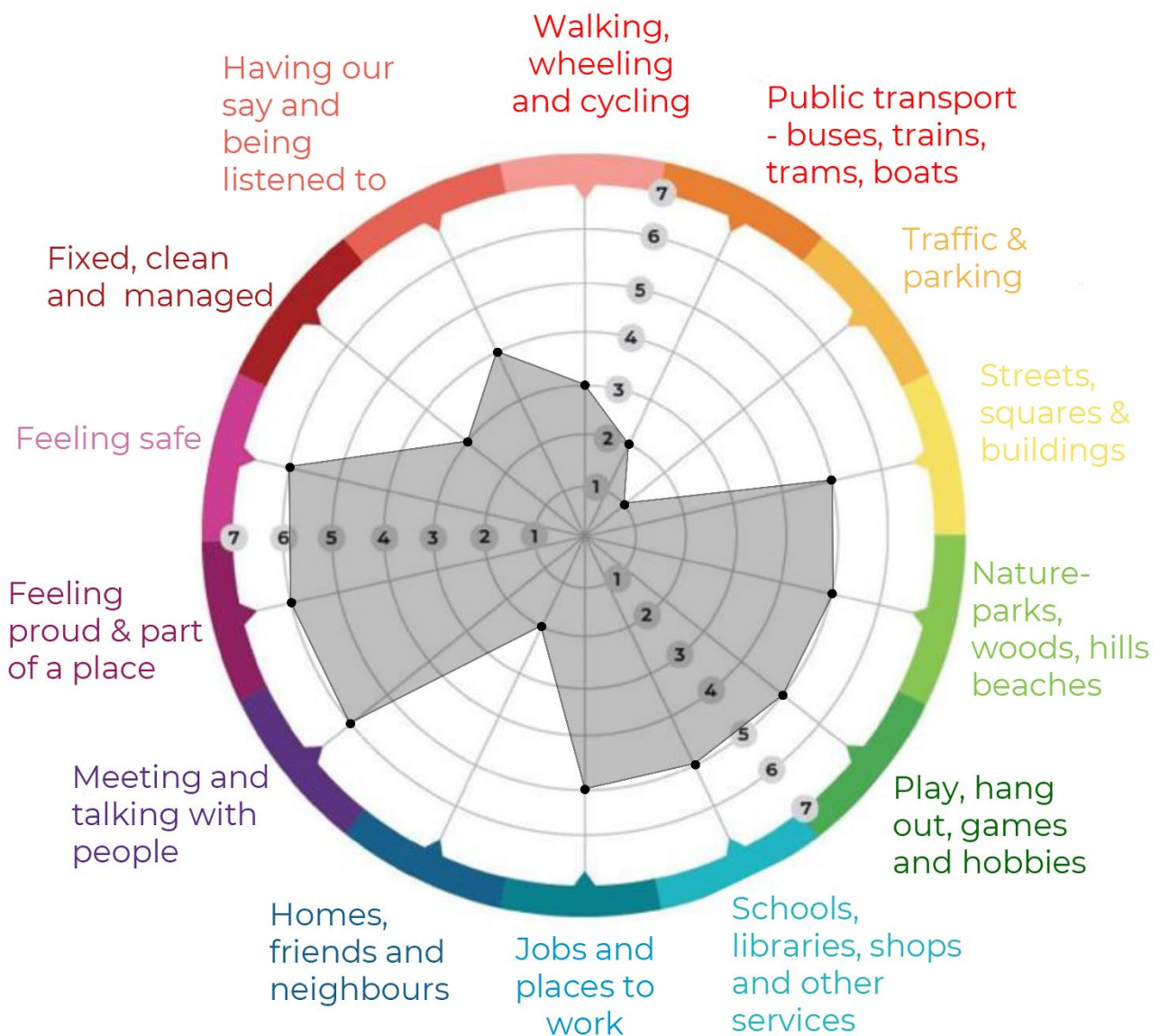


Figure 1 Compass Diagram showing the results for the Place Standard Tool scoring for Badenoch and Strathspey Access Panel, 2025.

The group plotted the scores for each theme on the compass diagram. This highlighted that the themes with the highest scores and the themes with the lowest scores were each clustered together.



Social interaction; Identity and belonging; and Feeling safe all scored high (6 / 7), while Moving around; Public transport; and Traffic and parking all scored low. The group noted that they had spent the most time talking about these three movement and transport themes – not surprisingly for an Access Panel. The groups views were often very strong and highlighted deep frustrations with these issues – inclusive access is essential for successful places.

Themes relating to indoor and outside spaces (Streets and spaces; Natural spaces; Play and recreation; Facilities and services; and Work and Local Economy) all scored well (5 / 7 each). This reflected the benefits of living in Badenoch and Strathspey where there is plentiful open space and facilities catering for tourists as well as local residents. However, similar themes relating to access to these facilities, as well as the lack of disabled parking and toilets to serve them came up in the discussions and noted as issues where improvements were needed.

Finally, Housing and community; and Traffic and parking scored lowest with scores of 1 / 7. On both themes, the group found no aspects which were 'good now'. In relation to housing there were strong concerns that housing did not meet the needs of local people, particularly those with access needs, on local wages and younger people. This was felt to be exacerbated by the number of dwellings used as holiday lets or second homes.

Similarly, there was significant concern regarding the dangers caused by the amount of traffic in the area and the lack of parking for those with accessibility issues as well as for lorries and motorhomes, and the lack of enforcement of both traffic speed and dangerous parking. These issues needed to be tackled – particularly in Aviemore.

The group agreed that the compass diagram represented the discussion and the group's view on the quality of the place in which they live and campaign.

References

- Place Standard Tool
<https://www.ourplace.scot/tool>