

Your Community ... Your Plan Community Statements



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Statement

The Angus area of the Cairngorm National Park covers the isolated upper parts of the Angus Glens. While the 'Angus Glens' are a distinct community, have a thriving website and a sense of cohesion, the Park boundary cuts this identified area in half. Only 50 people live in the CNP area, but while the responses in this research include comments about the CNP boundaries or feel it does not affect them, many people in the Glens feel ownership of the Park and want to engage with it. Some suggestions for this include strengthening links with Angus Council and relevant community councils.

Respondents value their landscape and its vistas of high hills, glens and forests both as a special feature of life here and as a resource for tourism, creative employment, and active forestry and estate activities. People want the landscape to remain open to local people, farmers and leisure users and some worry that not all local estates are willing to work with communities to achieve this.

People value traditional building styles and their community buildings such as the Retreat at Glen Esk. However, affordable housing for people living and working in the Glens is in short supply and is needed to bring people in/retain young people to support community groups and local employment and business initiatives. New homes should be energy efficient so as to be affordable. Local services, infrastructure and facilities are needed to support life in the Glens, with the local schools and community buildings seen as key centres of community life.

The Angus Glens have forward-looking community groups working to maximise the use of broadband, websites and mobile phone signal improvements to connect and market this rural community. The improved connectivity could be used "to allow people to work, study and receive health care" in the Glens. Opportunities for employment such as training in rural skills, development of existing businesses and creation of innovative new ones would all benefit, as could community involvement.

Statement

Aviemore is recognised internationally as a ski resort which now offers an increasingly large number and variety of sports and activities. Open for 52 weeks of the year, it is a village for all seasons with a year round programme of festivals and events. It has a strong record of conservation in terms of the care for the countryside and indeed has made a business out of conservation. Aviemore plays a vital part in the Scottish tourist industry and is the economic driver for the National Park.

The residents feel strongly that for a community of around 5000 people, Aviemore and Vicinity punches well above its weight, attracting more than a million visitors per year. Aviemore itself has come a long way since its beginnings as a railway junction in the 19th century and with the redevelopment of the resort over the last decade especially, it has seen residential and visitor numbers rising considerably with growth in both tourism and conservation activity.

The area is easily accessible by air, rail and road and due to the wide choice of accommodation provision, it plays host to an increasing number of international and high status conferences and events throughout the year.

Residents feel that there is a lack of appreciation by public agencies of the economic growth rate of the area and that an urgent review of the community infrastructure in the way of services, amenities and public facilities is now required, as it is struggling to keep pace.

Aviemore and Vicinity needs to continue to develop its tourist industry whilst recognising and understanding the requirements, wants and expectations of its visitors and residents. The Aviemore brand needs to be safeguarded and this requires recognition by public agencies. The community too must remain ambitious concerning the development of future projects. These new developments have been identified as a state of the art indoor sports centre, the new community primary school, the riverside park, a new Tesco and the An Camas Mòr housing development together with a fully integrated transport system and responsible open access on Cairngorm mountain.

A resolute effort is required to improve the look of the village, particularly by putting 'nature' back into its existing and new housing developments, through the use of green screening and planting as well as the more intelligent positioning of street lighting.

The above developments and environmental enhancements will significantly improve the quality of life for residents and enhance the experience for visitors to the area. These factors are inextricably bound together and future employment, with increased value placed on service industry jobs will particularly encourage Aviemore's young people to make a life in the area as lifestyle and opportunities continue to improve.

Statement

Ballater and Crathie Community Council undertook a consultation with their communities and people in the surrounding areas in September 2010. The consultation received a high number of responses and many residents took the opportunity to elaborate on the questions asked, providing the Community council with a valuable insight into the views of local people about living in their communities and their hopes for the future.

The Ballater and Crathie Communities are proud of their community spirit, their quality of life and their exceptional, unspoilt environment. The communities want to ensure that the same advantages they enjoy are passed on to future generations.

To make sure this happens, quality and affordable housing to meet local needs will be supported. This should be done using existing real estate and redevelopment where possible, to avoid harm to the visual and natural environment.

New varied and sustainable employment opportunities for all ages will be created, primarily the development of small business and tourism related employment, avoiding over development, which could undermine the attraction of the area to visitors.

Young people must be encouraged and given the help to take a more active part in their local community and local decision making; improvements to learning, leisure and employment opportunities must be provided with their involvement.

Ballater and Crathie local businesses will be supported to continue to provide quality services to residents and visitors. At the same time careful consideration must be given to the needs of local people for competitive prices and wider choice. This tension will be actively managed.

Road safety and delayed access to emergency medical treatment require attention and improvement through dialogue with relevant local agencies

The relationships between the communities and the organisations which serve them, such as the CNPA, Aberdeenshire Council and Ballater and Crathie Community Council will be strengthened to ensure the views of the communities are prioritised, their hopes for the future are realised, and their unique identities are preserved.

Statement

Blair Atholl incorporating Struan, Calvine and Bruar is unique in the National Park as here the countryside, economy and community are greatly influenced by Blair Castle and its related activities. This ancient seat of the Dukes and Earls of Atholl with its private army, is probably one of the best known of the Scottish castles and the magnificent building is an iconic centrepiece in the landscape. The characterful village of Blair Atholl sits in a traditional rural setting where hill farming is an ongoing occupation and this is echoed in its visitor attractions and architecture. The proximity of the acclaimed House of Bruar retail outlet, provides the area with a second major employer as well as an additional draw for tourists who are the cornerstone of the community's economy.

The river Garry flows through the heart of the area, linking the communities together and it is clear that this area has a rich military history, much of it central to Scotland's history. The community is keen to maintain its traditional character, evident in the look and layout of the main street, the village hall, the working mill and the Atholl Arms Hotel.

Blair Atholl residents and in particular those involved in tourist sector businesses, also recognise the need however for ongoing growth in housing, job opportunities for younger people and the strengthening of the trade sector involving service and tourist industries. These needs present a particular challenge due to the bounding nature of the local geography (River Tilt), the conservation status the whole village enjoys and the bounding nature of the Atholl Estate walls. The A9, Inverness to Perth railway line and the flood plane of the River Garry also restrict the availability of land for development.

Residents describe themselves as self reliant with a strong sense of community and a 'do it yourself' attitude, in no small part due to their feeling of being distant from other settlement.

To continue to prosper, the estate recognises that it needs to diversify and strengthen its commercial activity as land based employment undergoes change over the next 10-15 years. Local business people are eager to promote Blair Atholl through the development of a gateway centre to the National Park which they feel will increase its tourism potential significantly and they seek outside support to enable them to realise this.

In looking to the future, the residents wish to enjoy a balanced community life with an adequate number of families and facilities retained in the village. They would hope that their brand of tourism meets the needs and expectations of a competitive market, keeping the local economy buoyant and well maintained. This together with a continued strong connection with the land will in turn ensure that Blair Atholl continues to thrive as a viable community

Statement

Boat of Garten takes its name from the former ferry over the river Spey and is usually referred to as 'the Boat' by locals. It is also well known as 'the Osprey Village' due to the nearby RSPB Osprey Centre and the fact that these amazing birds can be spotted flying over the village regularly during the summer months.

Boat of Garten came into being with the arrival of the Highland Railway in the 19th century and still boasts a busy station with the Strathspey Steam Railway attracting large numbers of tourists throughout the year. Although the village is small in size, it is lucky to have a good range of facilities in its two shops, post office, fabulous restaurant, Victorian hotel, James Braid designed golf course, Milton Loch, primary school, church, newly built community hall with an excellent reputation throughout the area, large central village green, community garden, bike hire shop as well as the RSPB Osprey Centre and a sawmill on the edge of the village which employs a significant number of local people. As well as by farmland, the community is surrounded by heather moorland and stunning pine forests that house a wide variety of wildlife including capercaillie. There are lots of routes (signed and unsigned) for walking and cycling around Boat and on to neighbouring villages, all of which show how important tourism is for the wellbeing of this small community.

The residents of Boat are very active which is borne out by the large number of community groups and organisations that exist within the village, covering a wide range of activities from bowling to badminton, Showboaters and Virtually Famous (youth) drama groups, Mum & Tots to the weekly lunch club, all of which take place in the well used new community hall and are attended by all ages within the village.

Given this level of activity, the main concern therefore to residents is twofold - any potential loss of tourist business in the village and the inability to encourage young people and families in particular to stay and keep the village thriving.

Locals are very aware of how fortunate they are to have such facilities but equally understand how fragile this situation is, especially in the face of economic downturn. They would like to see business expand even further with the opportunity for small units to be available to encourage local crafts people and entrepreneurs - the old public hall has been suggested as one possible site for this. The maintenance of the railway station and its square as a means of encouraging visitors to leave the train and explore what the village has to offer is seen also as a great opportunity for Boat to retain its tourist activity.

Secondly the fabric of the community in its people, is seen to be fragile if young people and families are not able to settle here due to lack of appropriate sized housing in an affordable price bracket. The 'success' of the village in recent years has led to many houses being taken up as 2nd homes with the resulting loss to the upcoming community members to buy their own places. This in turn has already started to affect the social aspects of life here as well as threatening the loss of the primary school. As a consequence, there is a strong feeling in the village that such housing development is an absolute priority and would therefore be welcomed for Boat of Garten if all of the above positive aspects are still to be in place by the end of the next National Park Plan.

Statement

Braemar is a tight knit and vibrant community, of around 500 residents, that serves a wide area with small outlying settlements and a huge tract of wild and beautiful landscape that forms the heart of the Cairngorms National Park area. The village itself is steeped in tradition, with a history reaching back into the mists of time – from the ancient King of Scotland Malcolm Canmore who built his Hunting Lodge within the curtilage of the village and provided the first bridge across the Cluny, to the raising of the standard for the 1715 Jacobite rising. It has been thriving community for centuries and people are proud of their heritage and environment.

The desire within this community is to maintain itself as a vibrant viable community, into the future, which maintains its heritage within the context of the modern world.

The local economy relies almost entirely on tourism in its many forms and therefore visitors, and the servicing thereof, are the lifeblood of the community.

In order to support this vision and ensure the future of the community it will be imperative to address a range of interdependent factors. Critical elements identified include; housing for local people, support for local businesses, communications, and maintenance of local services. These issues, and their impact on the future, need to be understood by the statutory agencies (the CNPA, Aberdeenshire Council, the NHS and others) and addressed by working closely with the community. This will require a continuing dialogue and joint working to find, in some cases, new ways of delivering existing services to ensure sustainability. Indeed, it is clear that the sustainable economic and social development of communities in the Park is essential to achievement of its other statutory aims.

Housing for people to be able to live and work in the community is paramount to sustainability. This needs to be a mix of improved rented sector availability and more houses for sale that are genuinely affordable to attract and retain people working in the services of the village and the surrounding areas.

Communications are vital, as for all remote communities. Telecommunications, especially broadband, transport, fuel costs and even roads management (snow clearing) will need to be addressed and developed. All these not only support tourism, but allow employment to be developed, spread the local economic base and provide more opportunities to attract and retain local talent, families and young people.

Overall, a coordinated and community focussed approach to planning needs to be further developed; with the agencies listening to, and working with the community and supporting community groups to ensure a positive future for Braemar.

Statement

Carr-Bridge is situated at the north-west entrance to the Cairngorms National Park, and has several defining landmarks and events that make it a special place for residents and visitors alike. As the first of the Scottish ski villages, the history of this small but lively community dates back over many hundreds of years with its past reflected in the arches of its ancient packhorse bridge - the oldest stone bridge in the Highlands. It is home to a number of activities enjoyed by both tourists and locals, such as pony trekking, golf, bowling, cycling and walking but most notably, Carr-Bridge is also the location for two international annual competitions: *The Golden Spurtle*™ World Porridge Making Championships and Carve Carr-Bridge, the Scottish Open Chainsaw Carving Competition. Both of these prestigious events are driven by extremely active and dedicated members of Carr-Bridge community organisations, and the numbers who flock to watch these events annually from all over the area not to mention the world, serve to show what energetic and committed residents can be found in this small traditional highland village.

Another attraction which has helped to put Carr-Bridge on the map is the highly acclaimed Landmark Forest Adventure Theme Park with its wild water slides, rollercoaster, steam powered saw mill and tree top trail set in an ancient pine forest. The fact that Carr-Bridge is also known for both its traditional and contemporary Celtic music and song, serves to underline that this is a very vibrant and outward looking community, who take pride in their achievements and also value their local facilities such as the Carr-Bridge Hotel, the local shop and garage, village pub and the primary school which are all well supported by locals.

Residents are keen to hold on to the community's strong identity which they feel could be at risk if the village grew much larger through the granting of inappropriate levels of housing development. Good neighbours and healthy businesses are recognised as essential for Carr-bridge to continue to prosper but it must be balanced very carefully against the feel of becoming 'suburban' where the community doesn't know itself any more, so natural and organic growth is seen as the way forward here. Concern has been raised that Carr-Bridge could easily become a 'natural old folks home' in the future, as the population will predominantly be made up of older people, so steps must be taken to support the younger generation to remain in the village.

Young people are at the heart of their concerns and play a big role in the future of the community. Residents recognise there are limited opportunities for its younger generation, primarily due to the limited employment options and affordable housing in the area. They have highlighted a wish to support growth in the number of local enterprises through provision of small business units, improve the current communication systems (more efficient broad band and improved and integrated transport network) and address the serious housing/2nd home situation that currently makes it virtually impossible for young people to buy or rent their own homes. If Carr-Bridge is to encourage its young people to remain in or return to the village, more housing will need to be built. However, residents are looking for sympathetic design on a small scale, with specifically no residential buildings taken above tree height - local housing for local people. They have also identified a need for increased and improved access to leisure and sports amenities within the village which will also enhance the quality of life for residents.

By addressing the displacement of young people, it is hoped Carr-Bridge will not change too much but instead will see a younger generation coming through to take over the community's successes.

Statement

The village of Cromdale and the hamlet of Advie are located just over five miles apart in the north of Badenoch & Strathspey between Grantown-on-Spey and Aberlour. Being once part of Inverness-shire then Morayshire, there is a long history of alliance with both the Highland and Grampian regions, but the villages are now served by the Highland Council with Cromdale situated within the Cairngorms National Park boundary and Advie lying just outside it http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/County_of_Moray.

Linked by one Community Council, Cromdale spans the A95 road where it crosses the Cromdale Burn with Advie to the north east. The area is known historically for the Battle of Cromdale, which took place at the Haugh of Cromdale about two miles east of the village in 1690 - a piece of history that has left a legacy up to the present day in attracting visitors to the area. To the south of Cromdale is the Balmenach Distillery and both Cromdale and Advie have their own well maintained traditional village halls which play host to a variety of clubs and well supported community events throughout the year.

Despite the small population, there is currently a strong network of locals who work hard to keep both of the villages socially active and attractive places, both to live in and welcome their visitors to. This sense of pride in the community is evident during the summer and winter seasons, with their planted barrels of flowers and Christmas lights making both Cromdale and Advie look inviting. The two halls are undoubtedly the main assets that the villages have in keeping the community together, so the upkeep and maintenance of them is high on the residents' agenda. The Speyside Way passes through the village and the Haugh Hotel situated in the middle of Cromdale is an opportunity for visitors to linger and explore the area further.

The residents consider that Cromdale and Advie are both quite fragile communities in terms of their social cohesion and fear that a future lack of involvement or interest by newer or younger members of the community, would lead to a loss of activity and slow decline in the quality of life here. People are now more mobile and are already looking to Grantown and further afield for their needs. This combined with a lack of availability of local village housing that the younger generation coming up can afford, means that although residents would not like to see too much change in Cromdale and Advie, they do want the area to progress in a positive direction and affordable housing for local young people to encourage and support them to stay in the area is top of their list of priorities.

They would also like to see new businesses opportunities established, attracting people to come and trade or work from home, with improvements in communication links, better integrated public transport, more activities that will attract visitors to the area e.g. a camp site on the Speyside Way and on the A95, create an opportunity for a stop-off/rest place for lorries. Sheltered housing for older residents who do not wish to move away from the villages and a local shop are also among the facilities which would enable these communities to continue to keep their sense of identity as special places.

Statement

Dalwhinnie is a small village situated at the southern end of Badenoch, at an altitude of 351m, near the foot of Ben Alder. It lies in a glen with the Monadhliath Mountains on one side and the Forest of Atholl, the Cairngorms and the Grampians on the other. Its wide, open wilderness provides a healthy environment that residents value highly and also encourages many visitors to return to the area year after year. Dalwhinnie is recognised as one of the coldest villages in the UK, having an average annual temperature of 6.5°C, which makes it ideally suited to winter walking and mountaineering. This special natural environment also allows for a wide variety of other recreational activities such as mountain biking, fishing and white water kayaking which serve to attract the many tourists that pass through the village.

Distinguished as having the highest working distillery in Scotland and the only one in the Cairngorms National Park, Dalwhinnie is steeped in a rich history created over many generations. The population of this settlement is small, yet actively committed to community life, maintaining a strong sense of independence partly owing to their 'bracing' geographic location.

Dalwhinnie enjoys close links with the surrounding estates who provide a mainstay of employment for the area and the estates' sustainable approach to managing the surrounding landscape is highly regarded by the local population. The primary school plays a strong and vitally cohesive role in community life, although its declining school roll is a source of much concern. Equally residents are aware that their local amenities are limited and vulnerable and in response to these particular issues, Dalwhinnie would like to see new housing initiatives introduced, which will allow young families to move into and remain in the area long term. Better transport links to other communities both north and south of the village, are seen as additionally necessary to improve Dalwhinnie's chances of remaining a viable 'lived in' community, providing work and leisure opportunities to help it thrive as a location of choice.

New initiatives are continually being taken forward by committed community members, such as the provision of village interpretative plans, the publication of books such as 'Dalwhinnie Past and Present' and the creation of nature walks and trails. These are just some of the ways in which the residents themselves feel they can help to support the fragile tourist trade and consequently the ongoing future wellbeing of the village.

Statement

Dulnain Bridge and vicinity is a friendly, quiet village situated to the west of Grantown on Spey and north of the busy A95. Although small in population it has a post office, shop, garage, well used village hall and particular well equipped play park. Proud of their heritage, the crofting community stretches just over a mile to the south terminating at the famous Speyside Heather Centre. Curr Wood on the south and east of the village has the country's largest population of Twinflower known by the botanical name of *linnea borealis* which shares the forest floor with a tiny orchid called Creeping Ladies Tresses.

Dulnain Bridge and vicinity with a population of just less than 500 has a strong sense of community, where people really know and support each other in their day to day lives. Filled with local characters and familiar faces, Dulnain Bridge is proudly known by residents as having a real 'do it ourselves' attitude to community living.

The village currently contains buildings of diverse design, which blend well into the surrounding landscape. Residents are keen to ensure that any future development evolves sympathetically, so allowing for the growth necessary to sustain the village whilst guarding against intrusive or extreme architecture.

Residents appreciate the visitor attractions the community boasts, particularly the unique glaciated rocks known as 'Roches Moutonnes' and the wide selection of restored crofting machinery which is displayed at the northern end of the village. Access to the nearby forest, open spaces and the quiet pace of life partly due to the limited traffic volume and pollution are greatly valued and considered important to retain. Whilst residents appreciate of the value of their community assets they are aware of the lack of public facilities in the village. There are no public toilets and residents realise the absolute necessity to address this issue.

Notably within Dulnain Bridge and vicinity, crofting continues as a distinct way of life for a number of people. Residents are proud of this heritage and would like to see this traditional way of life preserved in an increasingly changing time in agriculture. Complimenting this unique way of life, residents in Dulnain Bridge & vicinity have enjoyed the creation of allotments in Skye of Curr. This successful initiative has approximately 20 allotment spaces and sees people travel from throughout the valley to plant and harvest their own fruit and vegetable. The village hall also boasts success indicated by the number and variety of community groups using it throughout the year. Residents are aware the hall is in need to some refurbishment which is a priority for the sustainability of this pivotal resource in the community.

Whilst Dulnain Bridge would like to keep hold of its safe 'country feel' by not changing greatly in the coming years, residents recognise they would benefit from having better links with other communities such as creating a permanent cycle path to local villages.

It is recognised that young people, especially of school age need to be given the opportunity to travel safely to and from other nearby communities to visit friends, cycle to school and to access local amenities. The creation of a new cycle path to Grantown would provide a safe route for Dulnain's youth, subsequently enhancing their quality of life and encouraging independence and fostering a sense of belonging. Residents would also value this link for their overall health and personal wellbeing.

Statement

Glenlivet is a scattered, traditional, rural community providing 'a low level introduction to the Cairngorms' with community halls and a thriving community association. An e-mail bulletin 'Thistledown' keeps residents informed and in touch with one another. A major community event is the Glenlivet Tea in the Park during August. There are a variety of other community groups and community spirit is strong and recognised.

Glenlivet residents value their traditional community, its beautiful scenery and wildlife, its history and culture and its remote feel: "Despite its scattered nature there is a real sense of belonging to a community". They realise the challenges of maintaining this lifestyle and way of life into the future: keeping young people in the glen, accessing public services and the challenges of dealing with winter weather. Some mentioned the employment possibilities of home working and rural skills, but are concerned about how poor transport links and increased mechanisation of traditional industries like farming and distilling may impact.

While there is a feeling of wanting to be left to get on with life and self-sufficiency within the community, respondents want support to maintain and improve services and infrastructure. There will be an increasing need for dialogue between agencies and Glenlivet after the proposed local authority cuts to services (announced two weeks after this consultation). Glenlivet doctor's surgery/health services, library services and school are greatly valued, as is the local shop at Tomnavoulin (people would like it to be even bigger). The Dial-a-bus service needs improving as do broadband services and mobile phone signals.

Transport links and services, road maintenance and snow clearing are vital. As well as delivery of services, employment and tourism opportunities, road infrastructure and bus services connect Glenlivet with the rest of Moray and present lack of links into the Cairngorms National Park area, make residents here feel more isolated from the National Park. Reliance on personal transport is also threatened by rising petrol costs, and some respondents suggest a rural fuel subsidy.

Statement

Glenshee is situated in a remote and expansive landscape, yet it is still very accessible to other regions of Scotland. Its community is proud of its strategic location at one of the southern entrances to the Cairngorms National Park, forming as it does a gateway to the Highlands, Royal Deeside, the largest ski area in the UK and the Grampian and Cairngorm mountain ranges. The dwellings are largely scattered along the Glen, and community gatherings are often centred on the Spittal of Glenshee Hotel, which provides a much needed focal point.

Owing to Glenshee's remoteness, residents are acutely aware of the fragility of their local economy and the consequent need to improve communication infrastructures such as transport and broadband internet access. The community's main economy is based around tourism and therefore residents fully appreciate the importance of providing better facilities, information and opportunities to encourage visitors to stay and enjoy the beauty that Glenshee offers. If the area is to thrive and continue to welcome visitors, there is a recognisable need for the working estates in particular, to support any local and tourism developments that may take place in the coming years, particularly with regard to any small-scale housing development.

The Glenshee community is aware of the potential positive and negative effects of change, and the conflict that could arise from this. An aging population, combined with limited employment and housing opportunities for young people in the area, are real issues that are likely to become more acute if Glenshee is to thrive, prosper and grow in the years to come.

Despite not having a central focal hub, Glenshee has a strongly-felt sense of community, commitment and enthusiasm permeating through it. The brooding, remote landscape steeped in history, makes this a special place to its residents, which they are eager to attract visitors into, by having an impressive and welcoming presence at the entrance to the National Park.

Statement

Grantown-on-Spey was designed as a planned town with a distinctive layout, resulting in a wide, central square with leafy avenues leading off it and a traditional Victorian feel to the architecture of the high street and the main roads and houses surrounding it. The town lies on the river Spey and is approached in all directions by scenic woodland roads, which residents feel add to the impression of entering a special place. It has a strong association for 'GRANTS' from all over the world, who often visit to investigate their family links with the area.

The flat, easily accessed high street is unusual in that it contains many small individual shops selling a wide range of goods, which visitors and locals appreciate. The town is considered by residents to be a good place in which to bring up a family, as it has a good primary and secondary school, is clean and well kept with a strong sense of civic pride. Its busy hotels, sports centre with swimming pool, cottage hospital, care home, dental suite and health centre, museum with its bell tower, Strathspey Thistle football club and well run caravan park are just some of the many facilities which the community enjoys. The community-owned Anagach Woods which come right into the residential area of the town provide a wonderful resource for recreation and conservation as does the Spey with its opportunities for fishing and wildlife watching.

Grantown has three industrial estates which are full of small and medium businesses providing a much needed source of employment for the local population. There is a good mix of business and community in the town, creating a positive ambience and resulting in a large number of active local organisations which support a wide range of interests and age groups, including notably many younger members.

Being a town with a relatively large population, Grantown residents are aware that a thriving high street is the key to its future prosperity and its ability to take advantage of the number of visitors to nearby Aviemore, by drawing them on to visit Grantown and its tourist facilities as well. The successful extension of the Strathspey Steam Railway from Broomhill to Grantown on Spey is seen as playing an essential part as it too will fulfil a vital role in attracting visitors and providing locals with a further transport link so hopefully enabling more people to live in Grantown and access job opportunities in other parts of the area such as Aviemore. The factor causing the greatest concern however is the continuing rise in the number of empty shops and the potential for the resulting decline in the footfall on the high street. The need for a robust marketing plan is considered to be crucial by the Business Association, to reinforce the message regarding Grantown's special character – the relaunch of the town's major retail outlet in the spring of 2011 is seen as a vital component in this.

The other serious threat to the town's future wellbeing is if Grantown's young people move away through reduced work and housing prospects. Whereas the town is unwilling to accept a large scale housing development, the residents do feel that a compromise needs to be reached, so that youngsters are not leaving because they can't get accommodation. This would result in a detrimental imbalance in the population, turning Grantown into a 'retirement town', with a loss of vitality of young people in schools and community organisations. A low impact, small scale mix of accommodation is therefore called for.

Grantown residents are hopeful that the next 10 to 15 years will see a town that continues to be busy, safe and confident in its ability to provide a special place for locals and visitors. It will have retained its attractive appearance, with all of its current assets intact, well maintained and supporting the community. It is hoped that during this period, there will be a new community centre built, more top quality hotels and restaurants established, full schools with a balanced population, lots of successful businesses and that Grantown will still be recognised as a wildlife capital.

Statement

Killiecrankie is a small village in Highland Perthshire lying on the river Garry at the Pass of Killiecrankie and marking the southernmost entrance to the Cairngorms National Park. It is well known for several reasons: the famous Battle of Killiecrankie fought at the northern end of the village during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1689; for its historical connections with Robert the Bruce and Mary Queen of Scots; as well as for its natural beauty and breathtaking landscape.

The Pass of Killiecrankie which is dominated by the Garry and ancient mixed woodland, is owned and managed by the National Trust for Scotland and has one of the best loved views in Perthshire, looking northwards through the Pass from the Garry Bridge. Surrounded by such beautiful countryside which supports an abundance of wildlife, Killiecrankie attracts visitors throughout the year for walking, cycling and horse riding, but particularly in autumn when the hillsides are ablaze with spectacular colour.

Killiecrankie residents place great value on the tremendous community spirit within their village, with annual events such as Burns Night and Hogmanay celebrations well attended by locals and people from the surrounding vicinity. These events are held in their well used village hall that is integral to the community way of life and a focal point for a wide variety of activities.

The unique beauty of the area and the increasing numbers of visitors that it attracts potentially comes with a price however. Residents are particularly concerned about the continuing rise in wild camping in the area and the impact it has on the environment and would like to see this issue better managed. Similarly whilst welcoming new tourist developments and activities such as bungee jumping (Highland Fling) and other events, they are aware that such introductions need to be managed carefully, so as not to create an imbalance in the locals' interests. There is a well understood need for maintaining a vital and thriving tourist trade, but this needs to be balanced with local housing being available not only for the valued holiday letting businesses but for young people and families who wish to stay and work in the area. With this in mind, any opportunity for future housing developments must be targeted for residential use primarily, sympathetic in design, to redress the imbalance of a small but significant 2nd home population that currently exists.

The inevitable continuing rise in oil prices will underline the requirement for the introduction of a local infrastructure that supports energy efficient sources as well as leading to the pressing need for a properly integrated transport system for both locals and visitors to access the area satisfactorily whilst reducing the carbon footprint. The NTS Visitor Centre to the south of the village is a valuable resource to the community but is not easily accessed from the village. A link to the Visitor Centre through provision of better signage and installation of an off-road path is therefore also a high priority for the community.

Finally, the community hopes to gain support for the building and promotion of an indoor equestrian centre, in particular to help develop their vaulting training for local youngsters. They have achieved notable success in this field to date, despite having to travel significant distances to practice and compete. For this small community this is a big wish but one they are determined to pursue.

Statement

The community of Kincaig is located approximately halfway between Aviemore and Kingussie and, as well as the village itself, the outlying hamlets of Drumguish, Insh, Lynchat, Lynwilg, Alvie, Feshiebridge and Dalnavert are also sited within the community council area.

In spite of this geographical spread, a strong connection exists between all of these settlements and Kincaig village. Although residents of the outlying areas often look to their larger neighbours, Aviemore and Kingussie for amenities and services, they remain connected with the village due to the strong bonds with the land and the presence of the local primary school, shop, church, village hall and pub which play a pivotal role in the social cohesion of this scattered community.

Working the land is still a major way of life and source of employment in this part of the National Park and therefore needs to be supported, although tourism is the major driver in the local economy. Kincaig's location lends itself very well to drawing visitors to the area. For a small sized community, it offers high-end tourist attractions, specifically the Highland Wildlife Park and Loch Insh Watersports which bring in visitors all year round. Residents acknowledge that the magnificent views in addition to the numerous and varied recreational and sporting opportunities, are an important reason why people come to visit and stay here and therefore these too must be protected.

For the future, 'connections' are regarded as the essential key to the continued prosperity of this community: through social cohesion (retained amenities, appropriate scale and affordability of housing in keeping with local needs and character), excellent communications (broadband) and an effective, well maintained transport system (bus, rail and road).

The livelihood of many local people is dependent on visitors who support the local economy and the employment opportunities which are created through the service industry. However this area also attracts a lot of 2nd home owners whose properties are often left lying empty for a good proportion of the year and which it is felt make only a limited contribution to village life or the area but has the undesirable consequence of helping to raise house prices beyond the reach of local people. Although tourism is vital, diversification of the local economy is now considered essential, with farming, forestry, renewables such as a wind farm and local home working suggested as examples of furthering possible enterprise.

Whilst accepting that this will bring change, residents would like such developments to be organic in their growth, with planned housing still allowing Kincaig village in particular to retain its rural feel with design in keeping with the area's aesthetic appearance and small housing developments which do not impact on the views, or dominate the traditional heart of the village which they are determined to preserve for the future.

Regarding the 'Vicinity' element, the Park Plan needs to give greater attention to the importance of the land-based industries, in particular seeking to protect the limited arable (ploughable) areas from development as these will be needed for food production in the not too distant future.

Statement

The oldest settlement in Badenoch, Kingussie is a traditional Highland town situated by the River Spey, 3 miles north of Newtonmore and 15 miles south of Aviemore. Located across the river, is the iconic Ruthven Barracks, a significant landmark as you approach the town. Served well by public transport, Kingussie is a popular destination for visitors who find it a friendly, attractive, well kept town with a welcoming atmosphere and thriving High Street set in an unbeatable and unspoilt mountain landscape and adjacent to the internationally Insh Marshes National Nature reserve renowned for its special wildlife.

Kingussie has a number of important assets that make it special: a very successful shinty team; St Vincent's community hospital; Am Fasgadh site; the Iona Art Gallery (the only public art gallery in the Cairngorms National Park and now run by a community based art society); the Court House; several independently owned shops on the high street as well as a mainline railway station.

The unique backbone to Kingussie is its shinty team, which is vitally important to the social fabric of the town, its achievement being well known throughout the strath and beyond. Proudly valued by the community is St Vincent's Hospital – an important facility providing care for the elderly throughout the strath, which needs to be maintained and enhanced as the average age of the area's population increases.

Residents appreciate the way the town has not changed significantly over time and would like to protect its physical appearance and atmosphere. Kingussie is an attractive destination for visitors that provides high quality hotels, B&B and guest houses, although there are a limited number of visitor attractions that currently remain to keep tourists in the town.

However aspirations are high and the proposed community buyout of the Am Fasgadh site for tourist development is an ambitious and exciting project that will meet this need, create space for local artisans, generate local employment, and provide an archive of genealogy. This significant project will potentially transform the community, provide visitors with a 'high end' experience and create an artistic hub at the southern end of the strath. In order to increase tourism numbers, this is a real opportunity to be harnessed and one that residents are ready to embrace.

Whilst this initiative is very exciting, residents are however increasingly disturbed and frustrated about what they perceive as the allowing of 'over development' particularly with regard to the impact a proposed new housing development will have on the community. Of particular concern are the issues around inadequate infrastructure provision, limited employment opportunities and a population increase which will have an irreversible affect on the physical appearance and sense of this traditional highland town that provides the core appeal to locals and visitors alike.

STATEMENT

Laggan lies in the most western part of the Cairngorms National Park, surrounded by the Monadhliath and Grampian mountain ranges. It is notably the second-largest parish in Scotland with nearly the smallest a population, yet it welcomes over 30,000 visitors a year. The community enjoys the legacy of the hit BBC drama series 'Monarch of the Glen' much of which was filmed in and around the village and this together with Wolftrax - the all year round, 18km mountain bike trail, the Laggan Community Forest, the Corrieyairack Pass and a rich cultural heritage going right back to Pictish times, makes you realise why this is such a popular place to visit.

Laggan has a long history and a recognised reputation for community activism. Over the years, dynamic and forward looking residents have formed groundbreaking community organisations which have resulted in the community ownership of a number of local assets: 5 community houses for local residents; the village hall; and one of the first Community Forests in Scotland. The village also has its own village store, primary school, active church, resource centre and doctor's surgery and nothing seems too big for this aspirational community to take on.

Laggan has bred many generations of farming/crofting families and now is home to others who have moved into the area wishing to make it their way of life too, resulting in a significant increase in the population over the last decade. This mix is regarded as an important asset to the community, as it combines the rich knowledge of a crofting and farming tradition together with a wealth of new ideas and energy, creating a community which is greatly strengthened by these qualities.

Consequently any significant reversal of this trend with people moving away, would impact severely on the ability of the community organisations to pursue their desired aims with the energy and success they have had up to now. It could lead to a one-teacher or even closure of the primary school, doctors surgery, village stores and create a community that is no longer able to attract inward investment. Laggan is a very nice place to live, but residents are aware that they are on the edge of many boundaries, such as the National Park and public service agencies, and even over the edge in the case of public transport. An appreciation of this by decision-makers is vital to the future wellbeing of the community

The landscape and way of life in Laggan has not changed much over time, and although the community doesn't want to see any dramatic change in the landscape, they are acutely aware they have some responsibility for the future social and economic development of the area. Local businesses feel there are a number of constraints currently preventing them from being able to expand, and these issues must be urgently addressed. Trunk road restrictions, planning legislation and affordable accommodation for seasonal employees amongst others are some examples of where future challenges lie.

A strong broadband connection, all year round tourist trade, an appropriate public transport system, the maximisation of benefits from community assets (eg its forest; tourism) and a variety of profitable businesses including farming and community businesses, are seen as the important priorities to ensure the future livelihoods of Laggan residents. This it is hoped, will encourage the community's young people to stay or return to the area, where they have a reasonable prospect of getting a job and somewhere affordable to live, maybe in housing that is sympathetic and innovative to match Laggan's outlook.

Statement

Situated in the heart of Strathspey, the village of Nethy Bridge often affectionately referred to simply as "Nethy" has been a holiday destination since Victorian times, yet it remains unspoilt with the majority of its buildings hidden away in quiet locations next to the ancient Caledonian pine forest of Abernethy. Set against the backdrop of the Cairngorm mountains and hundreds of acres of Abernethy Forest (RSPB owned), the village spans the lower reaches of the River Nethy.

Nethy Bridge also known as the 'Forest Village' has many historical landmarks and qualities making it an attractive place for residents and visitors. Abernethy Old Kirk, Castle Roy, four Thomas Telford bridges and industrial archaeology sites, all complement the farming landscape, iconic wildlife, Speyside Way and stunning forest environment. In addition the village has a shop and post office, busy community centre, primary school, Abernethy Outdoor Centre, an active parish Church (Church of Scotland), local butcher and a ranger service (Explore Abernethy), in addition to the river Nethy which is easily accessed via the community created riverside walks.

A great asset to the surrounding area is the iconic wildlife in the area, namely the Ospreys at Loch Garten. These birds of prey have been a magnet for attracting wildlife tourism for decades. With this in mind, Nethy Bridge residents would like to explore ways of creating greater communication and consultation links with the RSPB as there are several mutual benefits to be gained from an enhanced relationship.

At the heart of the village is a resourceful community who are committed to improving the quality of life and opportunities for the current and future generations of Nethy residents. This is reflected in the number and variety of community groups that exist, which look to work together and are well supported. The community's website (Nethybridge.com) and quarterly newsletter (The Nethy) help to keep residents informed of events, activities and village news, whilst also encouraging visitors to stay. The Abernethy Games are a good example of this community's successful cooperation, as the annual event goes from strength to strength attracting thousands of spectators each year from home and abroad.

Nethy Bridge's concern for the future lies in what it sees as the risk of unsympathetic housing developments in scale and design. Residents are keen for any building development that does occur, to be done using local trade and skills and in keeping with the existing dwellings, - scattered within woodland and avoiding the hard landscaping that seems to be packaged in with new development today, eg soft verges not hard edges next to the roadside.

The continuation of traditional businesses such as farming, building and landscaping will hopefully all continue to provide employment opportunities for the younger generation, but this can't happen if there is an accommodation shortage due to lack of access to land for building, low wages, high cost of living and an affordable housing shortage due to the current level of 2nd homes being taken up in the community. The ability to expand small business opportunities to support local tradesmen is also one of the key factors that will determine the future sustainability of the village.

Nethy Bridge Community Development Company are hopeful that within the next decade, they will have realised their ambition of getting a successful wind energy scheme going in the community, supporting local amenities including the community centre.

Residents would not like Nethy Bridge to be very different from the peaceful yet attractive, socially active village it currently is. It is hoped that in future, people will still enjoy fishing on the Spey, the forest area will be well managed, it may be darker due to less street lighting, the stunning views will still be appreciated and it may even have a tea room for all to enjoy.

Statement

Newtonmore, situated above the flood plain of the River Spey, is at the heart of the Scottish Highlands set against the backdrop of the Monadhliath Mountains. Larch, pine, birch and alder woodlands, which are a feature of this rural environment, provide a glorious tapestry of colour during the autumn. The area is one of the last strongholds of the native red squirrel and is home to the elusive Scottish wildcat. The Newtonmore Wildcat Centre, on the main street, provides a fund of information on local outdoor activities.

Lying close to its neighbour Kingussie, with whom it enjoys a fierce rivalry on the shinty pitch, Newtonmore and surrounding area is popular with outdoor and field sports enthusiasts. With easy access to hills and rivers, the area is perfect for walkers, climbers, ornithologists, cyclists, anglers and pony-trekking. Outdoor highlights include the "Wildcat Trail" which is a 10km orbital walk around the edge of the village, taking in the River Spey and its tributary the Calder and local archaeological sites. In addition, nearby 'Munros', the Calder Falls, the scenic 18 hole Newtonmore golf course, fishing on the Spey and beautiful Glen Banchor provide something for everyone.

Popular attractions in Newtonmore are the highly acclaimed Highland Folk Museum, the Wildcat Experience, Waltzing Waters Light and Water Theatre and, for those hunting their Highland ancestry, the Clan MacPherson Museum. Numerous locations in and around Newtonmore were part of the fictional 'Glenbogle' which featured in the hit BBC TV series *Monarch of the Glen*. Visitors to Newtonmore continue to find delight in spotting sites made familiar by the series.

A healthy tourist trade is a major source of employment for the village and the community works hard to promote this aspect of village life. Residents, the Newtonmore & Vicinity Community Council and the Newtonmore Business Association are united in their recognition that over development of the built environment or further losses of amenities and services, will impact negatively on the community's ability to encourage visitors to remain in the village for an extended period of time. All share deep concerns that the current unspoilt nature of the place, with its balance of tourism and traditional working environment, is at risk.

There is anxiety, too, over the continued movement of young people away from the area and the trend towards an aging population. This drift of younger people from the area stems from limited employment opportunities and an inability to access local housing because of high cost, lack of rental properties and increasing numbers of second homes. Keeping young people in Newtonmore is regarded as a priority, as they are vital to the sustainability of the quality of community life that characterises this traditional village. Retention of the individual character and appeal of Newtonmore will depend on appropriate housing development. Sensitive location of small groupings of mixed size dwellings and less insistence on a standard 1.5 storey house are essential. The proposed 'estate'-type block developments are out of character and will, ultimately, undermine the attractiveness and appeal of Newtonmore.

The residents are clear in their determination to retain and enhance the features that make Newtonmore distinct. Important amongst these are:

- Development and expansion of the award winning Folk Museum
- Refurbishment of the village hall with its fine façade
- Protection of native wildlife
- Creation of opportunities for small businesses to thrive, including streamlining of strong communication links
- Continuation and promotion of the Newtonmore Games
- Reinforcement of the sense of strong community spirit

Statement

The area of Upper Donside within the National Park includes all the small communities of Strathdon up to Corgarff and the Lecht. The total population is around 500 and widely dispersed over more than 15 miles of Donside plus adjoining small glens.

The River Don and the cultural influence of the Lonach heritage are common links between these mainly agricultural settlements and glens where people value the rural way of life, natural beauty and abundance of wildlife and rare species. Farming, sporting estates and increasingly small businesses, including tourism, play an important part economically. The remoteness and dispersal of residences has created self-reliance but also a dependency on transport, energy supplies, communication, and the services that are available. Apart from that, the friendly and supportive social network plays an important part, especially when dealing with problems.

Financial cuts that affect services and community groups would seriously threaten the welfare and wellbeing of people here. The increasing cost of fuel, energy and therefore, transport and heating, is hitting people here harder than in more populated areas. A shortage of houses to rent or buy and a lack of services and jobs can cause younger people to move away and elderly locals to become increasingly isolated. Without a more focused approach or plan, tourism in Upper Donside will remain underdeveloped compared to Speyside and Royal Deeside.

In an ideal future, Upper Donside will still have the rural, unspoilt, unpolluted, crime-free character that it has today but estates, residents, farmers, businesses, services and community groups will work more closely together to share resources and find creative ways to exploit the area's natural resources and beauty, and enable it to remain a great place to live.

This will involve an overall improvement with regard to housing, employment, community and recreational activities, outdoor access and creative solutions to transport needs. Success will mean even better relations between all parties involved, and strengthen the social fabric and willingness to co-ordinate and enable new initiatives.

Better broadband available throughout all the glens would have a huge positive effect for: business opportunities for even the remotest locations, the ability to work from home, facilitating easier and quicker ways of working together in general, providing more information, access to online resources and enabling distance-learning, preventing social isolation of vulnerable groups and promoting the area much more effectively as a tourist destination.

Statement

Tomintoul village sees itself as the gateway to the Cairngorms in the North, but can also feel isolated – ‘out on a limb’ - both from the Aviemore corridor (Cairngorm National Park) and Elgin (The Moray Council area). Tomintoul itself is a centre for outlying settlements the Braes of Glenlivet, Tomnavoulin, Chapelton of Glenlivet and other isolated settlements, though these areas also look to Grantown, Elgin and other Speyside towns for services and facilities. It has a good sense of community, with lively community groups.

Tomintoul values its beautiful scenery and wildlife and sees this as a privilege for people living here, but also as an asset for tourism. However, people are worried about the threats to tourism from unoccupied or derelict buildings in the village. Particularly, a closed hotel and some shop closures raise concerns about accommodation and facilities to offer tourists. Two weeks after this consultation, the Moray Council budget proposals included plans to close some services including Tomintoul Museum and Tourist Information Centre which had a footfall of 12,000 this year which would reduce the incentive for tourists to stop in Tomintoul even further. New facilities using existing buildings such as a gym/ leisure facilities and a campsite are among suggested solutions, as well as making the most of assets such as local walks.

Isolation and distance from main centres concerns people in Tomintoul. Rising fuel costs and drive times to shops and facilities like swimming pools & training facilities for young people, plus limited employment opportunities could mean an increase in the ageing of the population. There are concerns about the affordability of housing for young people and families and a desire to see the council points system for housing allocation including a method for targeting local people. New affordable housing could utilise derelict buildings and/or be in keeping with traditional styles

Tomintoul greatly values the services it currently has itself. The doctor’s surgery, library, primary school, emergency services, Dial-a-Bus, village shop and museum are all mentioned in the consultation. The proposed council cuts could impact very heavily on these services. 78% of people consulted about the effects of public service cuts thought that these would be ‘severe’ in Tomintoul, and there is great concern in the village about the effects that closure of the library, museum and car share scheme would have on the village. The many comments about the minimal bus services available must raise concerns about how local people could get to hospital appointments, how children and locals unable to drive or with limited access to a car could access library services etc. Some expressed a wish for the community to work with agencies such as the Crown Estate, Moray Council and the Park to improve things in Tomintoul in the future.