



Draft
Cairngorms National Park Plan
2012-2017
Strategic Environmental Assessment
Environmental Report



SEA Environmental Report - Cover Note

PART 1

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PART 2

An SEA Scoping Report is attached for the Plan, programme or strategy (PPS) entitled:

The Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

The Responsible Authority is:

The Cairngorms National Park Authority

PART 3

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PART 4

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Date

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1. Non-Technical Summary

1.1 This is a non-technical summary of the Environmental Report, part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 20012-17. It explains:

- What the SEA is;
- How it has been carried out;
- What effects the draft National Park Plan is likely to have on the environment;
- How the SEA has influenced the draft Plan;
- Next steps.

1.2 What is the SEA?

SEA is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of a proposed plan are carefully considered during its development. It is a formal part of the plan-making process and a legal obligation. The purpose is to ensure that the plan minimises negative effects on the environment and maximises positive effects, and to ensure that information on the likely effects is available to inform public consultation.

1.3 How has the SEA been carried out?

The National Park Plan seeks to deliver the four aims of the National Park:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
- To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

It is therefore clear that the Plan sets out to have an effect on the environment – a positive effect. Aspects of the Plan could also have a negative effect. An SEA is therefore required.

The assessment:

- Identifies the current state of the environment in the Park, key trends and issues;
- Considers how the environment might change without the Plan;
- Sets out environmental objectives relevant to the issues faced in the Park (associated with the topics SEA is required to consider);
- Frames questions derived from these objectives to assess the Plan;
- Tests the proposals in the Plan against these questions to predict its likely effects on these key aspects of the environment
- Records the results of this assessment and identifies mitigation that would reduce negative effects or enhance positive effects;
- Identifies indicators against which the effects of implementing the Plan can be monitored.

We have used the framework of ecosystems to identify the key aspects of the environment that the assessment considers. This has helped to ensure that the assessment questions and criteria are relevant to the issues in the Park, and that the relationships between physical assets, their use, value and functions are considered. The methodology shows how this approach can be mapped on to the standard categories of SEA topics we are required to consider.

1.4 What effect is the draft National Park Plan likely to have on the environment?

Overall the assessment shows that the likely effects of the Plan will be positive. The draft National Park Plan sets out objectives, outcomes and policy directions that are by nature strategic, therefore it is difficult to assess with certainty just how they will be implemented and what effect that may have in different places. The assessment is therefore limited to the intention set out by the objective, outcome or policy direction, in the context of the commentary and indications of how it might be delivered set out in the draft.

The vision is likely to result in a positive contribution towards all but two SEA objectives on which it has no effect. However, the vision is so general that its impact will depend almost entirely on how it is implemented.

The three strategic objectives together are also likely to have a positive effect on all of the SEA objectives, albeit that again, the effects will depend on how and where they are delivered.

The five-year outcomes together show a positive effect on all of the SEA objectives, though each outcome affects only a limited number of SEA objectives. There is significant uncertainty recorded about effects here. Two of the outcomes are about putting in place effective systems (for land management and community support) that do not in themselves determine what that support will deliver, so the assessment records uncertainty here. Several other outcomes could have both negative and positive effects on the SEA objectives depending on how they are implemented, so the result is recorded as uncertain.

The land use policy directions are together likely to have a positive effect on all of the SEA objectives, though each policy direction affects only some of the SEA objectives. Again there is a degree of uncertainty recorded.

1.5 How has the SEA influenced the draft Plan?

Given the aims of the Park, development of the Plan from the outset sought to deliver a positive effect on the environment, so many potential negative effects of individual policy proposals or directions are addressed through mitigation built into the outcomes and policy direction of the Plan. For example, the land use strategy sets a key principle that in delivering multiple benefits, the special qualities should always be conserved and where possible enhanced. Similarly, economic development is framed within the context of conserving the special qualities.

The Assessment has helped to test the integration of the Plan, ensuring that where elements of the Plan could have a negative effect, sufficient parameters are set within the Plan, or identified as needed in delivery, to ensure those elements of the Plan are delivered in such a way as to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts.

The Assessment has identified some specific mitigation which should be considered in developing the Plan further and in delivery:

- Ensure woodland expansion does not happen at the expense of best quality farmland;
- Ensure that woodland expansion maintains or increases timber and woodfuel production;
- Ensure woodland expansion does not increase carbon release over longer term (ie through disturbance of carbon-rich soils, especially peat);

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- Ensure the most productive agricultural land is not lost to other uses;
- Ensure economic development does not have negative effects on water quality and supply (through Local Development Plan).

1.6 **What are the next steps?**

The public consultation on the draft Plan and this Environmental Report runs from 19 September to 9 December 2011. On completion of the consultation the CNPA will use the responses to develop the final National Park Plan, changing the objectives, outcome and policy directions as appropriate and working with partners to further develop the programmes of work needed to deliver the outcomes.

During that process we will assess significant changes or additions that could have an effect on the environment using the same SEA methodology. The results of any further assessment will be recorded and published in a post-adoption statement. That statement will set out how the overall SEA process has influenced the final Plan.

2. Introduction

Purpose of this Environmental Report

2.1 As part of the preparation of the Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017, the Cairngorms National Park Authority is carrying out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). SEA is a systematic method for considering the likely environmental effects of certain plans, programmes and strategies (PPS). SEA aims to:

- Integrate environmental factors into PPS preparation and decision-making;
- Improve PPS and enhance environmental protection;
- Increase public participation in decision making; and
- Facilitate openness and transparency of decision-making.

2.2 SEA is required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. The key SEA stages are:

Screening Determining whether the PPS is likely to have significant environmental effects and whether an SEA is required.

Scoping Deciding on the scope and level of detail of the Environmental Report, and the consultation period for the report – this is done in consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage, The Scottish Ministers (Historic Scotland) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

Environmental Report Publishing an Environmental Report on the PPS and its environmental effects, and consulting on that report.

Adoption Providing information on the adopted PPS; how consultation comments have been taken into account; and methods for monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the PPS.

Monitoring Monitoring significant environmental effects in such a manner so as to also enable the responsible authority to identify any unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and undertake appropriate remedial action.

2.3 The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

- Provide information on the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017;
- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the PPS and its reasonable alternatives;
- Provide an early and effective opportunity for the consultation authorities and the public to offer views on any aspect of this Environmental Report.

Key Facts about the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

- 2.4 The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is required to prepare a National Park Plan for the Cairngorms National Park and to review it every five years under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. The Act requires the Plan to set out the National Park Authority's policy for:
- Managing the National Park;
 - Co-ordinating the exercise of:
 - i. the authority's functions in relation to the National Park, and
 - ii. the functions of other public bodies and office holders so far as affecting the National Park.
- 2.5 The general purpose of the National Park Authority set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 is to ensure that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in a co-ordinated way. The Park Authority is therefore an enabling organisation that must work with and through other bodies to bring added value to the management of the Park, to achieve the four aims.

The aims of the Cairngorms National Park:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage;
- To promote sustainable use of the natural resources;
- To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and
- To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

- 2.6 The first National Park Plan was approved by the Minister in 2007 and runs from 2007 to 2012. The CNPA is reviewing the National Park Plan so that a new version can be submitted to the Minister for approval in 2012. The Draft National Park Plan 2012-2017 and this Environmental Report are being consulted on between 19 September 2011 and 9 December 2011 in order to develop a revised National Park Plan for the period 2012-2017.
- 2.7 The National Park Plan falls under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. The Plan has potential to generate significant environmental effects and so a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is being undertaken.
- 2.8 The key facts relating to the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017 are set out in Table I on the following page.

Table 1. Key Facts about the Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017	
Responsible Authority	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Title of PPS	Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017
Purpose of PPS	To deliver the collective and co-ordinated delivery of the four aims of the National Park.
What prompted the PPS	The National Park Plan is a requirement of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. The current National Park Plan runs from 2007-2012.
Subject (eg transport)	Management of the National Park and the collective and co-ordinated delivery of the National Park Aims.
Period covered by PPS	2012-2017 in detail, with a vision for 25 years and consideration of longer term issues.
Frequency of updates	5 years
Area covered by PPS	The Cairngorms National Park
Summary of nature and content of PPS	<p>The National Park Plan is a Plan for the Park and for the co-ordinated delivery of the four National Park aims. It is prepared by the National Park Authority and other public agencies must have regard to it. The potential scope of the Plan is almost unlimited – almost anything related to the Cairngorms National Park could be considered by it.</p> <p>However, it is limited by the resources available to deliver it, and an obvious need to focus those resources on the issues that are most pressing or where most change can be delivered. For the Park Plan to be effective at managing or creating change, both public agencies and other organisations and individuals from a range of sectors need to ‘buy in’ to what it seeks to achieve.</p> <p>The Plan does not deliver significant change in its own right. It is a strategic Plan within a hierarchy and sets the context for other plans programmes and strategies that actively deliver the changes it seeks. It provides an explicit context for the Local Development Plan and a land use strategy for the Park.</p> <p>The Draft Plan suggests ten Five-Year Outcomes to be achieved in the Park by 2017 together with indicators and targets for delivery and an indication of the projects that could deliver them. It also sets out a broad policy framework for the management of land in the Park.</p>
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SEA Activities to Date

2.9 SEA has been undertaken at different stages and levels of detail throughout the development of the Draft National Park 2012-2017. Many of the draft Plan's Five-Year Outcomes and the policy directions of the Land Use Strategy are intended to provide a framework for dealing with environmental problems and issues in the Cairngorms National Park as well as delivering the four aims of the National Park and other national objectives.

2.10 Table 2 summarises the SEA activities to date in relation to the draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

Table 2. SEA activity to date		
SEA Action/Activity	When carried out	Notes
Screening to determine whether the PPS is likely to have significant environmental effects	<i>Jul-Aug 2010</i>	
Scoping the consultation periods and the level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report	<i>Mar-Apr 2011</i>	Led to changes in assessment methodology
Outline and objectives of the PPS	<i>2010</i>	
Relationship with other PPS and environmental objectives	<i>2010-2011</i>	
Environmental baseline established	<i>2010-2011</i>	
Environmental problems identified	<i>2010-2011</i>	
Assessment of future of area without the PPS	<i>2010-2011</i>	
Alternatives considered	<i>2010-2011</i>	Alternatives have been considered throughout the process. Consultation on the Draft National Park Plan 2010-2017 may raise other alternatives.
Environmental assessment methods established	<i>Apr 2011</i>	
Selection of PPS alternatives to be included in the environmental assessment		No reasonable alternatives have been identified for assessment
Identification of environmental problems that may persist after implementation and measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects	<i>Mar-June 2011</i>	
Monitoring methods proposed	<i>Mar-June 2011</i>	
Consultation timescales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescale for Consultation Authorities • Timescale for public 	<i>July 2011</i>	
Notification/publicity action	<i>Sep-Dec 2011</i>	

3. Context

Outline and Objectives of the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

- 3.1 The Cairngorms National Park Plan is the statutory plan by which the Cairngorms National Park Authority delivers its role in ensuring the collective and co-ordinated delivery of the four National Park Aims. It is a strategic management plan for the National Park that is delivered by many public, private and voluntary organisations.
- 3.2 In order to make a plan that is effective and can be used by the many organisations involved, it needs to provide a clear framework for action and management, with flexibility in how it is delivered by different partners in different ways, places and times. This means that it necessarily leaves the detailed planning of programmes and projects to deliver it to the most appropriate organisations and partners.
- 3.3 The National Park Plan has a five-year time frame but includes a vision for the longer term. In the Draft National Park Plan 2012-2017, this is supported by three strategic objectives to provide a sense of direction for the five-year period; by ten five-year outcomes to focus delivery and action; and by eight broad policy directions about the use of land to deliver multiple benefits for the Park.
- 3.4 Tables 3 to 5 below outline the following from the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017:
 - Vision and Strategic Objectives;
 - Five-Year Outcomes; and
 - Policy Directions that support the delivery of the Plan and deliver multiple benefits for the Park.
- 3.5 All have been assessed through the SEA and have been informed by the environmental issues facing the Cairngorms National Park.

Table 3. The Plan’s Vision and Strategic Objectives

Vision	An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together
Strategic Objective 1	To ensure the Cairngorms National Park is a special place where the natural and cultural heritage is conserved and enhanced.
Strategic Objective 2	To develop a sustainable economy that supports thriving and resilient business and communities.
Strategic Objective 3	To ensure the Cairngorms National Park delivers an outstanding visitor experience and is an international benchmark for sustainable tourism.

Table 4. The Plan's Five-Year Outcomes

1	More people will learn about, enjoy, and help to conserve and enhance the special natural and cultural qualities of the Park.
2	The quality and connectivity of habitats will have improved, enhancing the landscape at a Park scale.
3	The species for which the Cairngorms National Park is most important will be in a better conservation status in the Park.
4	The qualities of wildness in the Park will be greater.
5	There will be a better targeted programme of advice and support for land managers in the Park that delivers the National Park Plan.
6	The economy of the Park will have grown and diversified, drawing on the Park's special qualities.
7	Settlements and built development will retain and enhance the distinct sense of place and identity within the landscapes of the Park.
8	Business and communities will be successfully adapting to a low-carbon economy.
9	The Park's communities will be more empowered and able to develop their own models of sustainability.
10	The Park's recreational opportunities will have improved the health and enjoyment of residents and visitors.

Table 5. The Plan's Key Principle for Land Use and Supporting Policies

Policy 1	Enhance the special landscape qualities.
Policy 2	Enhance biodiversity.
Policy 3	Expand and enhance woodland.
Policy 4	Enhance resilience of habitats and land use to climate change.
Policy 5	Contribute to a low-carbon economy.
Policy 6	Provide high-quality recreational opportunities.
Policy 7	Target proactive advice and public support to help land managers deliver multiple benefits.
Policy 8	Develop sustainable patterns of settlement growth, infrastructure and communications.

Relationship with other Plans, Programmes and Strategies (PPS) and Environmental Objectives

3.6 Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires that the Environmental Report includes an outline of the PPS relationships with other relevant PPS, and how environmental protection objectives have been taken into account in the PPS preparation. This section covers these issues and describes the policy context within which the PPS operates.

- 3.7 The National Park Plan must have appropriate regard to a wide range of national and international laws, policy and strategy. For example, the Habitats and Birds Directives, Water Framework Directive, Scottish Climate Change Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, National Planning Framework and Scottish Land Use Strategy all provide a context and direction for the National Park Plan.
- 3.8 The National Park Plan provides the strategic context for the Local Development Plan in the Park, and can affect as well as be influenced by local housing strategies, local transport strategies, the Scottish Rural Development Plan (SRDP), and Cairngorms LEADER.
- 3.9 The CNPA has prepared plans and strategies that are intended to provide more detail on how parts of the Park Plan will be implemented. In the past these have included an Outdoor Access Strategy, Forest and Woodland Framework and Sustainable Tourism Strategy. It is anticipated that a revised Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Park, recently endorsed by the CNPA Board, will provide a way of delivering some of the outcomes in the next Park Plan. The CNPA expects to prepare a Landscape Framework to help manage landscape change in the Park as well as a revised Outdoor Access Strategy to help manage outdoor access, and these too will help deliver outcomes within the Park Plan.
- 3.10 The full range of relevant environmental objectives is extensive and often duplicated between PPS at the same level or different levels. Appendix I to this Environmental Report summarises the main PPS, environmental objectives and relationships with the National Park Plan in more detail. Table 6 below summarises the main points related to SEA issues.

Table 6. The points for the Park Plan from other PPSs	
SEA Issues	Main points for the Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017
Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance biodiversity, particularly the nationally and internationally rare and threatened species and habitats. • Help species and habitats adapt to the effects of climate change.
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve health (particularly through outdoor recreation and exercise). • Adapt to the effects of climate change and avoid hazards as a result of extreme weather events.
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain productive capacity of soils. • Prevent erosion of soils. • Maintain or improve carbon storage of soils and peat.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve water quality. • Encourage natural processes, particularly natural flood management and catchment processes. • Conserve water.
Air and Climatic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. • Adapt to the effects of climate change. • Increase sequestration of carbon.
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve landscapes of the Park (as one of the attractions for visitors). • Help settlements adapt to the effects of climate change.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and increase the supply of timber and woodfuel for local use. • Minimise energy use and encourage development of renewable energy. • Minimise waste.
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve, preserve and record architectural and archaeological heritage.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance the special and distinct landscape character and qualities of the Park.
Inter-relationships Between Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve the health of ecosystems and natural systems (which cut across all issues)

Relevant Aspects of the Current State of the Environment

- 3.11 Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires that the Environmental Report includes a description of ‘the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme’, and ‘the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected’. This section aims to describe the environmental context within which the PPS operates and the constraints and targets that this context imposes on the PPS.
- 3.12 The CNPA has adopted an ecosystems approach to the SEA of the National Park Plan (and also the Main Issues Report for the Local Development Plan). The ecosystems approach should provide a clearer strategic context for the SEA by focusing on the services that ecosystems provide, their importance to the health of the ecosystem (in the National Park and beyond), and the products or benefits that people get from them. The approach will draw on the work of the National Ecosystems Assessment (NEA)
<http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/Home/tabid/38/Default.aspx> .
- 3.13 The ecosystems approach is one that fits well with the National Park Plan as a tool for managing the National Park and for delivering the four National Park Aims. It also has potential to improve future Plans, Programmes and Strategies (and their SEAs) in the Park by providing a common understanding of the important issues and interactions between systems.

Building the Ecosystems Approach into SEA

- 3.14 Ecosystem services are one way of defining the things in the natural environment that benefit people. They range from things like the ways soils are formed, clean water to drink, air to breath, plants and animals we eat, to the pleasure we take from skiing on hills or looking at landscapes and wildlife. The Millenium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) identifies four broad categories of ecosystem services that were also used for the NEA and have become an accepted way of identifying and categorising them:
- **Provisioning Services** – the products we get from ecosystems such as food, fibre and water;
 - **Regulating Services** – the benefits we get from the regulation of ecosystem process such as the regulation of pollination, the climate, noise and water;

- **Cultural Services** – the non-material benefits we get from ecosystems such as spiritual enrichment, inspiration for art, recreation, cultural heritage, tourism and simple aesthetic experience. The way that people value nature can also be a cultural service, for example, iconic or rare species may not be critical to an ecosystem, yet are protected because people would like them to be a self-sustaining part of it;
- **Supporting Services** – functions of the ecosystem that are essential for the production of all other ecosystem services such as soil formation, the cycling of nutrients, water cycling, production of atmospheric oxygen and provision of habitat.

3.15 The ecosystem approach has been extended to place value on different ecosystems' services and to estimate the economic value of different services to human society. The argument for placing economic value on ecosystems services is that it can help policy makers take account of the costs and benefits of policy options on the natural environment. Although placing economic value on ecosystems' services from the Cairngorms National Park could be a useful extension of the concept, and may be explored through the life of the National Park Plan, it will not be done for the SEA. Instead, a simpler categorisation of the importance of different ecosystem services using a high to low scale will be used to indicate relative value.

Environmental Baseline

3.16 The NEA identifies eight broad habitats in the UK that can be associated with ecosystems:

- Enclosed farmlands
- Woodlands
- Semi-natural grasslands
- Open waters (rivers, lochs, wetlands and flood plains)
- Mountains, moor and heathland
- Coastal margins
- Marine
- Urban

3.17 Six of those broad habitats are significant in the Cairngorms National Park:

- **Enclosed farmlands** – mainly confined to the straths of the Park. Although very little of the farmland of the Park is classed as prime quality (the highest productive capacity), they are a local source of food for the population of the Park. The farmlands are close to many of the rivers and tributaries, and in some cases are part of the functional flood plains of the Park. They can affect the water quality and function of those water bodies, and are an important habitat for wading birds – both for breeding and feeding.
- **Woodlands** – the Cairngorms National Park has a wide variety of forests and woodland, including many rare or threatened woodland habitats and associated species. Many woodlands are designated for nature conservation. Many woodlands are important as a source of timber and woodfuel. Woodlands play an important role in the water cycling by slowing the discharge of water towards rivers, preventing erosion of soils and landslides. They are also important to local climates – riparian woodland can slow or prevent water temperature increases by shading, and woodland provides shelter from strong winds.
- **Open waters (rivers, lochs, wetlands and flood plains)** – the Cairngorms National Park has the headwaters of three of Scotland's major rivers as well as many smaller ones. Many are designated for nature conservation. It also has an intricate network of high-level

and lower-level wetlands and open water bodies, including valley flood plains. As well as providing water for the habitats and people in the National Park, rivers from the Park provide water to other parts of Scotland.

- **Mountains, moor and heathland** - much of the Cairngorms National Park falls into this broad habitat, and large areas are designated for habitat or species conservation. The Cairngorms National Park is internationally famous and valued for these habitats, and it would be appropriate to make a distinction between mountains and moorland as major habitats in their own rights in the Park. Moorlands in the Cairngorms National Park are also associated with Moorlands tend to be managed for grouse shooting but overlap with areas of upland wetland and blanket bog. The peat deposits of moorlands are a significant store of carbon.
- **Semi-natural grasslands** – mainly in the form of acid grassland are often associated with moorlands in the Park. Acid grasslands are not a dominant habitat in their own right in the Park and tend to occur where moorland is used for rough grazing by sheep or cattle, or are present where deer graze heavily. In some locations in the Park, both moorland and acid grassland habitats are used for grazing by sheep and cattle at the margins of farmland and as an integral part of upland farming – the semi-natural grasslands form a transition between farmland in valleys and lower slopes to moorland on the upper slopes and hill tops.
- **Urban** – only a small part of the land area of the Cairngorms National Park is urban (around 13.5 sq km or about a third of 1% per cent of the total land area of the Park). However, it's in urban areas where most of the Park's 17,500 residents live, and in and between urban areas where most human activity takes place.

3.18 So, for the Cairngorms National Park, seven broad habitats can identified:

- Enclosed farmlands
- Woodlands
- Open waters (rivers, lochs, wetlands and floodplains)
- Mountains
- Moor
- Semi-natural grasslands
- Urban

3.19 Each of those habitats has a range of ecosystems services. Appendix 3 of the Environmental Report provides a more detailed explanation of how and why ecosystems services are relevant to the National Park and to the SEA. It also provides a more detailed description of the environmental baseline by habitat types and ecosystems services.

3.20 A more conventional summary of the environmental baseline is shown in Table 7 (p17).

Table 7. Conventional Summary Description of Environmental Baseline	
Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% of UK's threatened species present and is the UK stronghold for many species. • 51% of Park area designated for natural heritage conservation (48% of international importance and 26% of national importance). 74.5% of the designated features of these sites are in favourable condition (at December 2010).
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of c17,500. • 25.8% of population over 60 (higher than Scottish average). • Average health index in top 25% of Scotland (based on deprivation indices). • Extensive core paths network. • 55 Munros including 5 summits over 4000 feet. • 3 ski centres. • National Cycle Network Route 7. • 1 Long-Distance Route (Speyside Way).
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with soils of international importance. • 12 SSSIs with soils of national importance. • High proportion of undisturbed soils (only 2% cultivated). • Podzols form 50% of soil cover including internationally significant alpine podzols on the plateau. • Peat forms 13% of soil cover. • Significant Scottish carbon store in soils and peat.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81% of streams classified as excellent (A1) or good (A2) (SEPA 2003). • 20 sq km standing waters. • Catchments of 6 major rivers.
Air and Climatic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively low atmospheric pollution. • Annual precipitation over 2250mm on summits and under 900mm in straths. • Average annual snow cover 200 days on summits and 50 days on low ground. • Prevailing winds from south west.
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding geological heritage . • High-quality timber from productive native woodlands. • Local woodfuel sources. • Potential for small-scale micro renewable.
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 designated Historic Gardens & Designed Landscapes. • 110 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. • 741 listed buildings. • 3 Conservation Areas. • Numerous records in National Monument Records Scotland (NMRS). • Large number of historic landscapes. • Potential for survival of many unknown remains in upland areas. • 3 Conservation Areas. • Distinctive local vernacular architecture. • Cultural landscapes and associations with landscapes and land uses.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 Geological Conservation Review (GCR) sites (of which some are part or all SSSI). • Granite massif and plateau. • Internationally important landform record. • Coherent identity of landscape across park from landform and land cover. • Extensive areas where the special quality of wildness can be experienced. • Understanding and appreciation of the special landscape qualities of the Park.

Environmental Problems

- 3.21 Schedule 3 paragraph 4 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires that the Environmental Report includes a description of existing environmental problems, especially those relating to any areas of particular environmental importance. The purpose of this section is to explain how existing environmental problems will affect or be affected by the Cairngorms National Park Plan and whether the PPS is likely to aggravate, reduce or otherwise affect existing environmental problems.
- 3.22 Table 8 below summarises the key trends and environmental issues associated with the broad habitats of the Park.

Likely Evolution of the Environment without the Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

- 3.23 The Cairngorms National Park Plan will not resolve any of the environmental problems in the Park in its own right. Its purpose is to deliver the aims of the Park in a collective and co-ordinated way, improving the overall management of the Park. Whilst it is a statutory plan, it does not lead to statutory requirements on people or organisations to do anything it proposes.
- 3.24 Without the Cairngorms National Park Plan, it is likely that fewer environmental issues in the Cairngorms National Park would be tackled as effectively because there would not be a co-ordinating plan to deal with them. However, many of the environmental problems would be tackled by other PPSs, and other statutory frameworks. The Cairngorms National Park Plan should improve the overall effectiveness of these mechanisms.
- 3.25 In short, without the Cairngorms National Park Plan, it is considered likely that more of the current environmental problems facing, and trends in, the Park would persist for longer or worsen, and that there would be less co-ordinated work to enhance the environment of the Park.

Table 8 Summary of Main Environmental Issues in the Habitats of the Cairngorms National Park		Key Environmental Objectives for this Habitat in the Cairngorms National Park		
Habitat	Ecosystems Services or benefits that this habitat is most important for	Main Drivers of Change	Threats/Problems	Opportunities
Enclosed Farmlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food • Soil quality • Storage of carbon in soils • Water quality • Pollination of crops • Landscape • Patterns of settlement • Sense of place, history and tradition • Living culture and identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural and environmental policy • Economic viability • Climate change effects • Planting of woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of productive land to other uses • Loss of edge habitats • Loss of iconic wild bird species • Effects of extreme weather events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting productive land from other uses • Potential diversification of produce in different climatic conditions • Enhancement of habitat networks • Build resilience to extreme weather events • Maximise carbon storage capacity
Woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timber as a material and as fuel • Rich and diverse habitats and species • Stability of soils • Storage of carbon • Shelter • Soil & water quality • Pollination of woodland species • Ecological knowledge • Recreation • Landscape • Patterns of settlement • Sense of place, Tradition • Living culture and identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forestry and environmental policy • Recreational uses • Economic viability • Climate change effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disease risks • Loss to other land uses • Fragmentation of native and ancient woodland sites • Recreational disturbance to key iconic species • Effects of extreme weather events and changes in climate • Disturbance of archaeological remains in existing or new woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of woodland networks including montane and riparian woodland • Increased use of locally grown timber for construction and fuel • Woodland creation and management to build resilience to extreme weather events • Increased recreational use of woodland • Management of recreational use to avoid disturbance to key species • Promoting responsible recreation and dog management

Table 8 Summary of Main Environmental Issues in the Habitats of the Cairngorms National Park					
Habitat	Ecosystems Services or benefits that this habitat is most important for	Main Drivers of Change	Threats/Problems	Opportunities	Key Environmental Objectives for this Habitat in the Cairngorms National Park
Open Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh water Important wild species and rich habitats Local climate regulation Regulation of flooding Water quality Ecological knowledge Recreation Landscape Patterns of settlement Sense of place Tradition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental policy Climate change effects Hydro energy schemes Invasive non-native species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point source and diffuse pollution Water abstraction Erosion and sediment Effects of extreme weather events and changes in climate to the physical processes, chemistry and distinctive habitats/species of open water systems Invasive non-native species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancement of functioning wetlands and floodplains Adoption and extension of natural flood management techniques Reduction in pollution sources Minimisation unnecessary water abstraction – reducing water loss following abstraction, more efficient use of water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve or enhance the value for distinctive wild species and habitats Maintain or improve water quality Minimise unnecessary use of water Maintain or increase ability to store water Increase resilience to climate change effects Maintain recreational value Maintain or enhance special landscape qualities Maintain capacity for learning and enjoyment of history and culture
Mountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rare and fragile species and habitats Climate regulation Soil quality Water quality Seed dispersal and pollination of mountain plant species Ecological and geological knowledge Recreation Landscape Sense of place, history & tradition Living culture and identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature conservation policy Climate change effects Grazing pressures and changes Disturbance to species and habitats from recreation The setting of and views from mountains due to renewable energy or other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change effects on marginal arctic-alpine habitats and species Inappropriate grazing by stock or wild mammals Erosion (natural process and human induced) and potential changes brought about by extreme weather events Reduced sense of wildness as a result of visual impact of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing the sense of wildness Manage changes in habitats – eg towards montane scrub Maintain patchwork of grazing densities for habitat resilience Promoting responsible recreation and dog management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve or enhance the value for distinctive wild species and habitats Increase resilience to climate change effects Maintain recreational value to maintain or improve the carbon storage capacity Maintain sense of wildness Maintain or enhance special landscape qualities Maintain capacity for learning and enjoyment of history and culture

Table 8 Summary of Main Environmental Issues in the Habitats of the Cairngorms National Park					
Habitat	Ecosystems Services or benefits that this habitat is most important for	Main Drivers of Change	Threats/Problems	Opportunities	Key Environmental Objectives for this Habitat in the Cairngorms National Park
Moorland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate regulation as stores of carbon Soil quality Water quality Pollination of moorland plant species Ecological and geological knowledge Recreation Landscape Sense of place, tradition and history Living culture and identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> large developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development recreational disturbance to sensitive birds Loss to other uses Inappropriate grazing by stock or wild mammals Disease and pest risks to iconic species (heather and grouse) Loss of stored carbon Illegal killing of protected species especially raptors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting and enhancing carbon storage capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve or enhance the value for distinctive wild species and habitats Conserve or enhance the distinctive wild species and habitats To maintain or improve the carbon storage capacity Increase resilience to climate change effects Maintain recreational value Maintain or enhance special landscape qualities Maintain sense of wildness Maintain capacity for learning and enjoyment of history and culture
Semi-natural grasslands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of food where used for livestock grazing Some distinctive wild species and habitats Soil quality and storage of carbon Knowledge Recreation Landscape Sense of place, tradition history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grazing regimes Succession to moorland, scrub, woodland, wetland Planting of woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss to other uses Changes in grazing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify most diverse semi-natural grasslands for management Identify areas for suitable for woodland expansion Use to promote cultural heritage of Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conserve or enhance the value for distinctive wild species and habitats Maintain productive capacity of soils To maintain or improve the carbon storage capacity Maintain or enhance landscape character Maintain capacity for learning and enjoyment of history and culture

Table 8 Summary of Main Environmental Issues in the Habitats of the Cairngorms National Park		Key Environmental Objectives for this Habitat in the Cairngorms National Park	
Habitat	Ecosystems Services or benefits that this habitat is most important for	Main Drivers of Change	Threats/Problems
		Opportunities	
Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to climate change through release of carbon • Sources of noise and air pollution • Introduction of invasive species • Recreation • Patterns of settlement, urban forms and landscape • Sense of place, tradition, history and identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic changes • Population changes • Climate change – the effects of it and public policy to minimise carbon emissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of urban green spaces • Fragmentation of green networks within towns and villages • Changes in character and setting of towns and villages through new development. • Dispersed rural settlements rely heavily on transport by private car • Flooding due to extreme weather events
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate and enhance character of settlements through design of new developments • Improve the energy efficiency of existing and new buildings • Conserve and enhance urban green spaces and networks, linking with wider habitat networks • Use urban areas to increase local food production • Support communities to develop more efficient rural transport links • Improve communications and IT infrastructure to reduce need to travel to work locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve or enhance the value for distinctive wild species and habitats • Maximise energy efficiency and minimise energy waste • Maintain or enhance landscape character • Maintain capacity for learning and enjoyment of history and culture

SEA Objectives

3.26 Table 9 sets out nine objectives, phrased as questions that are proposed as a basis for the SEA. They build on the environmental objectives identified in table 8 and have been formulated for the purpose of the SEA of the National Park Plan. They therefore necessarily cover a wide range of potential issues across all the habitats of the National Park. Because the National Park Plan is a strategic management plan – providing context and direction for other PPSs, it does not consider the detail of many issues. However, the future SEAs of other PPSs in the National Park could relate to a smaller set of ecosystems services applying to fewer habitats.

Table 9. SEA Objectives		
SEA Question	Rationale for Question	Environmental Objective
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?	Local food has the potential to be of high-quality and with a low-carbon footprint from transport. The nutritional values of local fresh food are likely to be greater than from food stored and transported from far away. Management of farmland affects native species; the management of soils; release of greenhouse gases; the quality of the water environment; the material cultural heritage and non-material cultural heritage of tradition and history; the appearance of the landscape; as well as the material value of farmland as a natural resource.	To maintain or improve the productive capacity of farmland
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?	Timber from woodland is an important material with many uses. Local wood as a source of fuel can be a low carbon alternative to fossil fuels. While many woodlands in the Park are managed for the conservation of distinctive species and habitats, many are also managed to provide economic benefits.	To maintain or increase timber and woodfuel production
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park’s ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?	<p>Water that falls in the Park makes its way through a range of habitats towards the streams and rivers that flow out of the Park. It is taken from ground water sources, rivers and lochs in the Park for use by the human population of the Park as well as providing an important habitat in its own right for a range of rare and distinctive species such as salmon, lamprey and freshwater pearl mussel. Waste water from humans is also returned to the main rivers of the Park, and other products such as fertilizers and pesticides, road salt and some industrial waste may enter water courses and affect water quality. The rivers that leave the Park provide water for other parts of Scotland and are a corridor for many species to use for travel.</p> <p>Rivers and wetlands store water, helping river catchments to cope with extreme weather events such as storms, sudden snow melt and drought. The ability of rivers to flood naturally along their length allows them to avoid sudden and unexpected flooding in other areas. It is likely that we will experience more frequent extreme weather events as our climate changes, so the ability of river systems and wetlands to behave naturally will affect how severely humans experience the events. The natural cycle of flooding also provides diverse habitats that support many important species. Other habitats (particularly woodland) in a river catchment also help to store water, slow its movement downstream, and help prevent erosion from water.</p>	<p>To maintain or improve water quality</p> <p>To minimise unnecessary use of water</p> <p>To maintain or increase ability to store water</p> <p>To increase the resilience to climate change effects</p>

Table 9. SEA Objectives		
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	The Cairngorms National Park has 25% of the UK's rare and threatened species and large areas of habitat that is rare or infrequent. 51% of the Park is designated for nature conservation and 48% is designated as being of European importance for nature conservation. The distinctive species and habitats recognised in these designations, and others in the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan, rely on both the designated sites as well as a wider network of habitats across the Park. The viability of many species is linked to the appropriate management of habitats and connections between them irrespective of whether the land is designated for them. As well as providing a range of habitats that are important in their own right, the diversity and extent of these habitats helps species adapt to changes or other pressures such as changes in climate.	<p>To conserve or enhance the value for distinctive wild species and habitats</p> <p>To increase the resilience to climate change effects</p>
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodlands in the Park.	The National Park stores carbon in peat, in soils and in plants, particularly woodland. Disturbance of peatland and carbon-rich soils can release carbon to the atmosphere. Conservation of these areas can secure long-term storage of carbon.	To maintain or improve the carbon storage capacity
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?	Living in or visiting a relatively remote part of Scotland requires more energy for day to day life, business and travel. Reducing the need to travel by car, improving the energy efficiency of buildings and processes will reduce the need for energy and the need to use fossil fuels.	<p>To maximise energy efficiency and minimise energy waste</p> <p>To increase the resilience to climate change effects</p>
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles?	There are many factors that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. The National Park provides particular opportunities for physical recreation that can benefit physical and mental health. It also provides less tangible opportunities to enjoy and appreciate the nature and landscapes of the Park that can help to contribute to mental health and wellbeing.	To maintain recreational value
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character, special landscape qualities and experience of the Park?	The landscapes of the National Park are distinctive and are valued by the people who live in and visit the Park. This is partly reflected in the categorization of the Park as an IUCN Category V Protected Landscape. The landscapes of the Park will all change subtly over time, and can change suddenly in extreme events or with major changes in the use of land. Managing changes in the landscape to maintain and enhance the distinctive character and the ways that people experience it are important to the long-term management of the Park.	<p>To maintain or enhance landscape character</p> <p>To maintain sense of wildness</p>
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.	The material cultural heritage of the Park – the buildings, archaeological remains, and landscapes, together with the knowledge they provide, are enhanced and enriched by the stories, history, traditions, and communities of the Park. Wherever possible, the built heritage and archaeological remains are preserved or recorded. However, they become a living part of our cultural heritage when they are linked to the lives of people today through shared stories, history and tradition.	To maintain capacity for learning and enjoyment of history and culture

3.27 Table 10 shows how each SEA question is relevant to a number of the SEA topics.

Table 10. SEA Questions and Relevant SEA Topics	Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	Population and Human Health	Soil	Climatic Factors	Water	Air	Cultural heritage	Landscape	Material Assets
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?									
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?									
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?									
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?									
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodlands in the Park.									
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?									
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles?									
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?									
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.									

3.28 Table 11 shows the SEA questions with appropriate SEA assessment criteria and potential indicators for each SEA question. The indicators are based on the availability of data, have been chosen to be consistent with other monitoring of the National Park Plan, and are intended to be relatively easily understood by the public.

Table 11. SEA Questions with Assessment Criteria and Potential Indicators		
SEA Question	Assessment Criteria	Potential Indicators
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect will the Plan have on the productive capacity of agricultural land? • What effect will the Plan have on the function and quality of agricultural soils? 	The annual economic value of agriculture in the Park. (Estimated at c £40 million p.a. between 2003-2006)
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect will the Plan have on the production of commercial timber? • What effect will the Plan have on the supply of wood for woodfuel? • Will the Plan affect the supply of any other timber products? 	The annual economic value of the forest sector in the Park. (Estimated at c £8.2 million p.a. in 2006)

Table 11. SEA Questions with Assessment Criteria and Potential Indicators

SEA Question	Assessment Criteria	Potential Indicators
<p>3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect will the Plan have on abstraction of water? • What effect will the Plan have on water quality as a result of waste waters and agricultural run-off? • What effect will the Plan have on sediment loading as a result of erosion. • What effect will the Plan have on the flow of water downstream – will it slow water through woodland planting, floodplain management or sustainable urban orange systems (SUDS)? 	<p>The ecological status of water bodies in the Park.</p> <p>Area of land given public subsidy for wetland and flood management.</p>
<p>4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect will the Plan have on the features of designated sites? • What effect will the Plan have on habitats and species in the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)? • What effect will the Plan have on the resilience of habitats and species to climate change, including the connectivity of habitats? • What effect will the Plan have on invasive non-native species? 	<p>The condition of the features of designated sites.</p> <p>The growth of the forest habitat network.</p>
<p>5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodlands in the Park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect will the Plan have on the ability of peatland to store carbon? • What effect will the Plan have on carbon-rich soils? • What effect will the Plan have on the total carbon stored in peat, soils and vegetation? 	<p>The land area given public subsidy for carbon management.</p>
<p>6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect will the Plan have on the need for oil-based energy? • What effect will the Plan have on the energy efficiency of new development and existing development? • What effect will the Plan have on patterns of travel? • What effect will the Plan have on modes of transport in and to the Park? • What effect will the Plan have on opportunities to travel by foot, cycle, horse etc? • What effect will the Plan have on the generation and management of waste? 	<p>Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the Park or sectors of activity in the Park.</p>
<p>7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect will the Plan have on opportunities for physical exercise? • What effect will the Plan have on the availability of high-quality local food? • What effect will the Plan have on people's understanding and interest in maintaining healthy lifestyles? 	<p>The numbers of people participating in 'Health Walks' programmes.</p>
<p>8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect will the Plan have on changes in landscape character in the Park? • What effect will the Plan have on the qualities of wildness that people experience in the Park? • What effect will the Plan have on the character and setting of towns and villages in the Park? • What effect will the Plan have on people's understanding of the historical and current processes and management of the Park that give it its distinctive character? 	<p>Areas of land with multiple wildness qualities.</p>
<p>9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect will the Plan have on designated archaeological sites and listed buildings? • What effect will the Plan have on wider archaeological remains and built heritage in the landscapes of the Park? • What effect will the Plan have on communities' and visitors' knowledge and appreciation of archaeological remains and built heritage? 	<p>The number of community heritage projects that celebrate local culture and tradition</p>

Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives

- 3.29 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires that reasonable alternatives to the Plan are considered as part of the SEA. This presents a challenge for the National Park Plan as it does not deliver changes itself, but is intended to co-ordinate and focus the delivery of a wide range of other PPSs and work that do deliver change. The process of developing the National Park Plan involves interpreting the National Park aims and other national policy objectives to the Park in order to make the most of those PPSs. On the one hand there are therefore potentially endless alternatives, but in practice there are few reasonable alternatives of substance that could reasonably be assessed.
- 3.30 The exception to this is where the National Park Plan sets the context for the Local Development Plan and in particular provides a context for the future development of land in the Park. However, there are a number of areas where hypothetical alternatives exist but where for practical reasons none are considered reasonable:
- The upgrading of both the A9 road that travels through the Park and the Perth to Inverness Rail line will be major projects that have a range of environmental impacts and will be controversial. However, both are stated policy objectives of the Scottish Government. The Draft National Park Plan notes that the planning of these projects would need to minimise and avoid negative environmental impacts.
 - There will be need for new housing in the Park in the future to meet the needs of communities and to accommodate any growth. The Local Development Plan considers the need and how to meet it in detail. Hypothetically, the National Park Plan could set a low target or constrain future growth. However, the National Park has a consented land supply that is likely to last around 20 years into the future. We must assume that those consented sites will be built so there is no reasonable alternative.
 - The National Park Plan supports the existing settlement hierarchy within the Park – using the existing larger settlements as the main service centres because they are the places where most people live and have the widest range of existing services. To adopt an alternative would lead to substantial changes in the character of other settlements, threaten the viability of others and increase the need for people to travel. It would not be a reasonable alternative.

4. Assessment of Environmental Effects and Measures Envisaged for Prevention, Reduction and Offsetting any Significant Adverse Effects

Assessment Methods

- 4.1 Because the National Park Plan is a strategic plan, mainly co-ordinating other subsidiary PPSs and projects across the National Park, its assessment is relatively simple. It sets desirable outcomes for other PPSs and projects to work towards, but is not prescriptive about how that should happen. In many cases those other PPS or projects require an appropriate level of assessment with their more detailed planning.
- 4.2 The assessment of the draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017 has been done by answering the nine questions identified in Tables 9-11 for each substantial component on the Plan. The assessment criteria shown in Table 11 were used as prompts in the assessment. The assessment methods, SEA objectives, questions and criteria were modified and simplified following the response of consultation authorities on the SEA scoping report.
- 4.3 The assessment was recorded in a similar form to the example shown in Table 12, using a simple visual 5-colour scale of effects will be used to provide a summary of effects. Where effects were predicted, the nature of those effects was explained in more detail and any mitigation measures required to avoid, reduce, or offset them were also recorded.

Table 12. Example of Assessment Recording Form

Plan Objective/Outcome			
Summary of effect at scale of:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
SEA Question1			
SEA Question2			
SEA Question3			
SEA Question4			
SEA Question5			
SEA Question6			
SEA Question7			
SEA Question8			
SEA Question9			
Mitigation measures:	•		
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

Assessment of the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

4.4 The Plan was assessed using the framework described earlier. A summary of the assessment findings is shown in Table 13 and the full findings are shown in Appendix 2.

Table 13. Summary Matrix of Potential Effects									
SEA Objectives:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Cumulative Effects	SML	SML	SML	SML	SML	SML	SML	SML	SML
Synergistic Effects									
Vision	L	L	L	L			L	L	L
Strategic Objective 1	SML	SML	SML	SML	L			SML	SML
Strategic Objective 2	SML	SML			SML	SML			
Strategic Objective 3				SML			SML	SML	SML
Five-Year Outcome 1				S			SML	SML	SML
Five-Year Outcome 2			ML	ML					
Five-Year Outcome 3				SML				SML	
Five-Year Outcome 4				ML				ML	
Five-Year Outcome 5									
Five-Year Outcome 6									
Five-Year Outcome 7						ML	ML	ML	ML
Five-Year Outcome 8	M	M	ML		ML	M	SML		
Five-Year Outcome 9									
Five-Year Outcome 10							SML		SML
PD1				ML				ML	ML
PD2				ML				ML	
PD3		ML	ML	ML	ML			ML	
PD4	ML		ML	ML	ML			ML	
PD5		ML			ML	ML			
PD6				ML			ML		ML
PD7									
PD8						ML			
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term									
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect			negative effect			not applicable		
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects									

4.5 A summary of the effects of the draft National Park Plan on the SEA objectives is as follows:

Vision: Overall the vision sets a positive contribution towards all but two SEA objectives on which it has no effect. However, the vision is so general that its impact will depend almost entirely on how it is implemented.

Strategic Objective 1: Strategic objective one sets out an explicit objective to have a positive impact on the natural and cultural heritage of the Park, and is therefore likely to have a positive effect on SEA objectives with the exception of 6 and 7. The effects on recreation are uncertain, but could be positive due to the close connection in the Park between quality of environmental and recreational opportunities.

Strategic Objective 2: Strategic objective two, through its approach of drawing on the special qualities is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objectives 1, 2, 5 and 6.

Strategic Objective 3: Strategic Objective three is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objectives 4, 7, 8 and 9 due to the close relationship between the management and appreciation of the special qualities and recreation opportunities.

Five-Year Outcomes:

1: A positive effect is likely on SEA objectives 4, 7, 8 and 9 due to the focus of increased learning, care for and enjoyment of the special qualities.

2: A positive effect is likely on SEA objectives 3 and 4, due to the particular focus of habitat improvement and collaboration at a landscape scale. There are uncertain effects on objectives 1, 2, 5 and 8 as habitat objectives in themselves may conflict with these objectives, or they may have a positive effect, depending on how and where they are delivered.

3: A positive effect is likely on SEA objectives 4 and 8, given the particular focus of the outcome on species conservation and the likely habitat management accompanying it.

4: A positive effect is likely on SEA objectives 4 and 8 given the focus of the outcome on enhancing wildness, one of the key special qualities of the Park. It may also have benefits for SEA objective 2 through increased woodland cover although this is uncertain.

5: This outcome is about putting in place an effective process through which to target land management support. The purpose of that support is to be directed at delivering other National Park Plan priorities but for the purposes of assessment, as the purposes are not specified in detail, the likely effects are deemed uncertain.

6: This outcome has uncertain effects which could be either positive or negative on SEA objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8. The effects will depend on how and where the outcome is delivered. While appropriate safeguards should exist through the National Park Plan and Local Development Plan, nonetheless it is not possible at this stage to predict the effects.

7: This outcome is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objective 6, 7, 8 and 9 by improving the quality of design and ensuring that settlements contribute to the sense of place, conserving the special qualities.

8: This outcome is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 by action to shift to a low-carbon economy including reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to help conserve the special qualities. There is an uncertain effect on SEA objective 8 because low-carbon energy infrastructure and design could have a negative impact on the landscape of the Park if poorly designed or inappropriately sited.

9: This outcome is about putting in place an effective process through which support for community development is directed. The purposes of that support or community development is not expressly identified here therefore for the purposes of assessment, the effects are considered uncertain.

10: This outcome is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objectives 7 and 9 through its focus on providing recreation opportunities, benefiting active lifestyles and opportunities to enjoy and understand the special qualities.

Land Use Policy Directions:

1: Policy Direction 1 (enhance the special qualities) is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objectives 4, 8 and 9 due to its positive direction of enhancing the special landscape qualities.

2: Policy Direction 2 (enhance biodiversity) is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objectives 4 and 8 due to its positive direction to enhance biodiversity.

3: Policy Direction 3 (expand and enhance woodland) is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objectives 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8 due to the multiple benefits resulting from expanding and enhancing woodland cover for biodiversity, landscape, timber and recreation.

4: Policy Direction 4 (enhance resilience of habitats and land use to climate change) is likely to have a positive benefits on SEA objectives 1, 3, 4, 5 and 8 due to the benefits of resilience to climate change to the robustness of biodiversity and the landscape, as well as the storage and sequestration of carbon.

5: Policy Direction 5 (contribute to a low-carbon economy) is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objectives 2, 5 and 6 due to the benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the benefits for renewable fuel sources.

6: Policy Direction 6 (provide high-quality recreation) is likely to have a positive impact on SEA objectives 4, 7 and 9 due to the direction to provide high-quality recreation opportunities that will enable people to enjoy the special qualities.

7: Policy Direction 7 (target proactive advice and public support to help land managers deliver multiple objectives) is focused on the process through which support is directed to achieve the other policy directions. While the intention is to focus that support towards achieving the potential positive benefits of other policy directions, as the purposes are not explicitly detailed, for the purposes of assessment the effects are considered uncertain.

8: Policy Direction 8 (develop sustainable patterns of settlement growth, infrastructure and communications) is likely to have a positive effect on SEA objective 6, through its focus on good-quality and sustainable design for settlements. The effects of such development on water supply and quality are uncertain.

Cumulative and synergistic effects

- 4.6 The cumulative effects across the SEA objectives are found to be positive, due to the mitigation already built into the Plan. The outcomes and land use policy direction are intended to be delivered in a co-ordinated way, and the proposals for their delivery already set out parameters and ways in which this integration should occur. For example, delivery of the land use strategy is based on the explicit principle that in considering the mix of objectives, the special qualities should be conserved and where possible enhanced. Other synergistic effects resulting from the interaction of the Plan's objectives have not been identified by the assessment.

5 Mitigation

5.1 Mitigation has been built into the development of the Plan, given the need to integrate the four aims and comply with section 9(6) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act. In this way a number of potentially negative effects are avoided through parameters set on how outcomes should be delivered. The following specific mitigation measures have been identified by the assessment as being required in further developing and implementing the National Park Plan:

- Ensure woodland expansion does not happen at the expense of best quality farmland;
- Ensure that woodland expansion maintains or increases timber and woodfuel production;
- Ensure woodland expansion does not increase carbon release over longer term (ie through disturbance of carbon-rich soils, especially peat);
- Ensure the most productive agricultural land is not lost to other uses;
- Ensure economic development does not have negative effects on water quality and supply (through Local Development Plan).

6 Next Steps in Developing the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

- 6.1 The draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017, together with this Environmental Report is subject to public consultation from 19 September to 9 December 2011.
- 6.2 On completion of the consultation the National Park Authority will work with partners to develop further and complete the National Park Plan for submission to Ministers by summer 2012. This will include:
- Refinement and development of the vision and strategic objectives;
 - Review and refinement of the five-year outcomes;
 - Development of the programmes for action to deliver the five year outcomes;
 - Development of the land use strategy;
 - Assessing the further development of the Plan against the SEA objectives;
 - Agreeing monitoring and delivery arrangements;
 - Preparing a post-adoption SEA statement showing how the SEA process has informed the completed National Park Plan;
 - Submission of the National Park Plan and supporting documents to Ministers for approval.
- 6.3 The draft National Park Plan is intended to develop substantially, using the responses from partners and others during the consultation period to develop the final Plan. Opportunities for mitigation, and comments on this Environmental Report, will therefore be used in developing the final Plan, alongside assessment of new elements where appropriate.

Appendix I

Other PPSs and Environmental Objectives

Relevant PPS	Relevant Objectives/Purpose	SEA Issue	Relationship between the policy and the Draft National Park Plan 2012-2017 and subsequent finalised National Park Plan
International Directives			
SEA Directive 2001/42/EC (European Union, 2001)	Requires Strategic Environmental Assessments to be undertaken for plans, programmes and strategies with significant environmental effects.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.	Enables significant environmental effects of the Park Plan to be identified and addressed.
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance 1971	Requires conservation and wise use of wetlands.	Biodiversity Water Landscape	Park Plan can require the protection and enhancement of wetlands through policies and targets.
Directive 79/409/EC: the Conservation of Wild Birds 1979	Requires member states to sustain populations of naturally occurring wild birds by sustaining areas of habitats to maintain ecologically and scientifically sound levels.	Biodiversity Water Landscape Woodlands and Forests	Park Plan should support protection and enhancement of bird habitat through policies and targets.
Directive 92/42/EC: The Conservation of Natural Habitats of Wild Fauna and Flora 1992	Requires member states to sustain populations of naturally occurring flora and fauna by sustaining areas of habitats to maintain ecologically and scientifically sound levels.	Biodiversity Water Landscape Woodlands and Forests	Park Plan must ensure protection and enhancement of Natura Sites.
EU Flood Risk Directive 2007/60/EC	Aims to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity.	Water Climatic factors	Park Plan should reduce and manage flood risk encouraging natural flood management approaches.
Directive 2000/60/EC: The Water Framework Directive	Requires member states to achieve good ecological status of inland water bodies, and develop integrated catchment management and river basin management plans.	Water Biodiversity Landscape	Park Plan should support protection and enhancement of the water environment.
Directive 1996/62/EC: Ambient Air Quality and Management	Establishes standards for air quality and sets limits for various pollutants.	Air Human Health	Park Plan should support measures that would improve air quality.
EU Common Agricultural Policy	Sets policy for agricultural support with increased emphasis on rural development support.	Land Landscape Population	Park Plan should recognise and provide for rural diversification of economic activities.
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (the Rio Earth Summit) 1992	Treaty aimed at reducing global emissions of greenhouse gases to combat global warming.	Climatic factors Air	Park Plan should aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC, 1997)	Protocol to the international Framework Convention on Climate Change Framework with the objective of reducing greenhouse gases which cause climate change.	Climatic factors Air	Park Plan should support measures that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
Taking Sustainable Use of Resources Forward: A thematic Strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste (EU, 2005)	A sector based strategy produced under the Environmental Action Programme.	Climatic factors Air	Park Plan can minimise waste.
National Legislation			
Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	Requires Strategic Environmental Assessments to be completed for plans, programmes and strategies likely to have significant environmental effects.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	Enables significant environmental effects of the Park Plan to be identified and addressed.
Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003	Transposes the Water Framework Directive into Scots law.	Water Biodiversity Landscape	Park Plan should encourage improvements to the water environment and support measures for more efficient use of water.
Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999	Requires environmental impact assessment of site specific projects and specifically requires consideration of Sensitive Areas including National Parks.	Climatic factors Soils Air Biodiversity Water Landscape Human Health Cultural heritage	The Park Plan can be a material consideration for planning applications requiring Environmental Impact Assessments.
Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (Scotland) Regulations 1999	Requires environmental impact assessments for certain forestry projects.	Climatic factors Soils Air Biodiversity Water Landscape Human Health Cultural heritage	Park Plan can be a material consideration for planning applications requiring Environmental Impact Assessments.
Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003	Establishes right of responsible access to land and water.	Biodiversity Water Land Human Health	Park Plan can provide for and support responsible access.
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Requires certain species to be protected.	Biodiversity	Park Plan should support protected species.

Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) 2004	Act places duties on public bodies for conserving biodiversity, increases protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), amends legislation on Nature Conservation Orders, provides for Land Management Orders for SSSIs and associated land, strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation, and requires the preparation of a Scottish Fossil Code.	Biodiversity Land Water	Park Plan should support conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.
National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000	Specifies what a Park Authority can do and how it should be run, including a requirement to produce a National Park Plan.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	Establishes the Aims of National Parks. Provides direction on the functions and role of the National Park Authority.
Flood Risk Management Act (Scotland) Act 2009	Establishes roles, responsibilities and requirements for sustainable flood management.	Water Climatic factors	Park Plan should support flood management, particularly natural flood management.
Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009	Outlines emission reduction targets, adaptation measures, and establishes duties on public bodies.	Climatic factors Soil Water Biodiversity Human health Population	Park Plan should support climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.
Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill 2011	Amends Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and seeks to modernise game law; abolish the designation 'areas of special protection'; improve snaring practice; regulate invasive non-native species; change the licensing system for protected species; amend current arrangements for deer management and deer stalking; strengthen protection of badgers; change how muirburn can be practised; and make operational changes to the management of Sites of Scientific Interest; game law, use of shores, and invasive species legislation.	Climatic factors Soil Water Biodiversity	Park Plan should support provisions of the Act.

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National Policy			
Scottish Government Purpose	The Scottish Government's purpose is to secure sustainable economic growth for Scotland. All the public sector should be working to the purpose.	Air Soil Water Population Human Health Biodiversity Climatic factors Material Assets Cultural Heritage Landscape	The Park Plan should support the delivery of sustainable economic growth in the context of the Park and its special qualities and management needs.
Scottish Government National Outcomes	The Scottish Government has 15 National Outcomes that the public sector must collectively deliver.	Air Soil Water Population Human Health Biodiversity Climatic factors Material Assets Cultural Heritage Landscape	The Park Plan should identify and contribute to delivery of the outcomes that are most appropriate in the Park.
National Planning Framework for Scotland until 2025 (2004)	National framework to guide spatial development.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	Provides strategic context for future regional change around the Park.
Scottish Planning Policy Guidance	SPP covering a range of topics relevant to the Local Development Plan.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	Provides guidance for developing policies to address specific issues in the Local Development Plan, an implementation Plan for the Park Plan.
Planning Advice Notes (including PAN 42)	Scottish Executive good practice advice.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.	Provides guidance for developing policies to address specific issues in the Local Development Plan – an implementation Plan for the Park Plan.
Scotland River Basin Management Plan	Fulfils a requirement under the EU Water Framework Directive.	Water Biodiversity Soil	Includes management objectives for water bodies in the National Park which the Park Plan must take account of.
Land Use Strategy for Scotland	Outlines strategy for achieving sustainable land use across Scotland and getting the best from the land of Scotland.	Soil Water Biodiversity Landscape Population	Park Plan can provide more specific direction on the National Land Use Strategy that can be implemented at a regional level.
Scottish Forestry Strategy	Outlines strategic priorities for forestry including management, planting and environmental stewardship.	Water Soils Biodiversity Landscape	Provides strategic direction for forestry policy.
Scotland Rural Development Programme	Sets goals for sustainable rural development and the types of support available.	Water Biodiversity Landscape Soil	Park Plan can provide more specific direction on how rural development and diversification should be supported in the Park.

Climate Change: The UK Programme	Goal to reduce carbon emissions in the UK by 60% by 2050.	Climatic factors Air Soil	Park Plan should encourage reductions in emissions through a range of measures.
Changing Our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme	Demonstrates how Scotland will deliver carbon savings from devolved policy measures and reduce its vulnerability to the changing climate.	Climatic factors Air Soil	Park Plan should encourage reductions in emissions through a range of measures.
Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2009)	Establishes a framework by which Scotland will adapt to climate change.	Climatic factors Soil Air Water Human Health	Park Plan should include measures that help the Park adapt to climate change.
Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	Sets out objectives for eight air pollutants.	Air Soil Climatic factors	Park Plan should encourage reductions in emissions through a range of measures.
UK Biodiversity Action Plan	Identifies UK priority species and habitats where action to conserve is required.	Biodiversity Water Soil	Park Plan should support delivery of the UKBAP and significant Park species through support for Cairngorms LBAP.
Scottish Biodiversity Strategy	Identifies Scottish biodiversity priorities and lead partners for taking action.	Biodiversity Water Soil	Park Plan should support delivery of the UKBAP and significant Park species through support for Cairngorms LBAP.
Choosing our future: Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy	Outlines a strategic framework for the Scottish Government's strategies on climate change, transport, renewable energy, energy efficiency, green jobs and biodiversity.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.	Park Plan should help deliver sustainable development.
Scotland's Zero Waste Plan (2010)	Sets out the Scottish Government's vision for a zero waste society in Scotland.	Material Assets Soil Water Air Climatic factors Population	Park Plan should minimise waste.
A Policy Statement for Scotland – Designing Places	Provides the policy context for important areas of planning policy and design guidance.	Landscape Cultural heritage Population Human health	Park Plan should support good design.
A Policy on Architecture for Scotland (2001 updated in 2006)	Scottish Government Guidance 2001.	Landscape Cultural heritage Population Human health	Park Plan should support good design.
Scotland's National Transport Strategy 2006	Scottish Government - National Strategy for reducing transport emissions by 80%.	Population Human health Air Climatic factors	Park Plan should support reductions in emissions from transport.
Scottish Tourism: The Next Decade – a Tourism Framework for Change (2006)	Scottish Government's ambitions for growth in tourism revenues by 50% by 2015.	Population Land Human health	Park Plan should support development of sustainable tourism to contribute to national targets for tourism growth.

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Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP)	Outlines Scottish Ministers' policies on the historic environment, and supersedes the policy elements in Passed to the Future.	Cultural heritage Landscape	Guidance for policy development on the management of the historic environment.
Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes	Series of guidance notes which are designed to support the Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP) and Scottish Planning Policy.	Cultural heritage Landscape	Guidance for policy development on the management of the historic environment.
Scotland's Physical Activity Strategy 'Let's make Scotland more active' (2003)	Sets out how the Scottish Government aims to increase and maintain the proportion of physically active people in Scotland.	Population Human health	Park Plan should support physical activity
Local Plans and Strategies			
Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007-2012	The first National Park Plan for the Cairngorms National Park.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.	Park Plan 2012-2017 should build on the experience of delivering the first Cairngorms National Park Plan.
Mid-term Review of the Cairngorms National Park Plan 2009	Mid-point review of five-year Plan to assess achievements to date and to assess actions to achieve vision for 2030.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	Park Plan 2012-2017 should build on the experience of delivering the first Cairngorms National Park Plan.
Cairngorms National Park Local Plan 2010	Establishes development and settlement strategy for the Park, allocations specific development sites, and provides policies for managing development in the Park.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	Park Plan provides strategic context for development in the Park.
Local Authority Single Outcome Agreements	Strategic documents outlining priorities across communities in the National Park.	All SEA issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2006	Park Plan can help deliver community priorities and SOAs can help to deliver National Park Plan.
Community Plans	Plans set out how public services will be planned and delivered, through consultation and co-operation.	All SEA Issues listed in Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	Park Plan can support parts of Community Plans and Community Plans can help deliver parts of Park Plan.
Community Visions and Local Community Action or Development Plans	Statements from communities in the Park about how they would like to change or develop in future, sometimes with plans on how to get there.	Population Human health Biodiversity Cultural heritage	Park Plan can support communities in developing their own plans and capacity.
Local Housing Strategies (prepared by local authorities as housing authorities for each council area)	Required by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Sets out how housing authorities will provide for housing needs and demands in their area.	Population Human health	Park Plan provides additional context for housing strategies as they apply to the Park.

Housing Need and Demand Assessments (prepared by local authorities as housing authorities for each council area)	Assess housing need and demand in each local authority area, and identify likely future need and demand to inform housing strategies and development plans.	Population Human health	HNDAs inform housing requirement of Local Development Plan and provide context for Park Plan.
Regional and Local Transport Strategies	Set out how to maintain and improve infrastructure.	Air Climatic factors Human health Population	Park Plan should support sustainable transport solutions and encourage lower carbon forms of transport.
Area Waste Plans	Strategies for waste management, minimisation and recycling for each local authority area.	Soil Water Air Material assets Population	Park Plan should support minimisation of waste.
Economic Development Strategies	Priority areas for economic development.	Soil Material assets Population	Park Plan should encourage economic development that does not adversely affect the special qualities of the Park.
Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in the Cairngorms	Identifies measures to support and develop sustainable management of tourism in the Park in line with the Europarc Federation of Protected Areas Charter.	Population Biodiversity Landscape Water Air Material assets	Park Plan supports the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan	Priorities and actions for biodiversity in the National Park.	Biodiversity Soil Water Material assets	Park Plan supports implementation and review of Cairngorms LBAP.
Cairngorms Outdoor Access Strategy	Provides a framework for managing outdoor access in the Park.	Human health Biodiversity Landscape Air Climatic factors	Park Plan can support and promote responsible outdoor access.
Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan	Identifies a network of core paths throughout the Park.	Human health Biodiversity	Park Plan supports promotion and development of core paths.
Cairngorms Landscape Framework	A framework for managing landscape change in the Cairngorms to maintain and enhance the special landscape qualities and character.	Landscape	The Landscape Framework will help to ensure that the special landscape qualities of the Park are conserved and enhanced.
Catchment Management Plans for rivers Dee, South Esk and Spey	Catchment Management Plans bring together all the people and organisations who affect or are affected by the river catchment to manage in ways that maintain and improves the quality of water and overall health of the catchment.	Water Air Soils Biodiversity Climatic factors Human health Material assets	The Park Plan supports integrated catchment management as a way of improving water quality and the health of natural systems.

Appendix 2

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017			
Assessment recording form			
Plan Objective/Outcome Vision			
An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together			
Summary of effect at scale of:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
SEA Question:			
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?	L		The vision implies that through nature and people thriving together, that farmland of the Park will continue to produce high-quality local and seasonal food. This is a likely positive effect of the Plan at the Park scale, though not significant at the national scale.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?	L		The vision implies that through nature and people thriving together, the Park will continue to produce timber and woodfuel. This is a likely positive effect of the Plan at the Park scale, though not significant at the national scale.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?	L	L	The vision implies that through nature and people thriving together, the Park will continue to supply and store high-quality fresh water. This is a likely positive effect of the Plan at the Park scale, and a benefit to areas outside the Park in Scotland.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	L		The vision implies that through nature and people thriving together, the Park will conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of species and habitats.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.	L	L	It could be argued that the vision implies through nature and people thriving together, that careful management of the land and storage of greenhouse gases are obvious objectives. However the vision does not explicitly say so.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?	L	L	It could be argued that the vision implies through nature and people thriving together that increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy waste loss are obvious objectives. However the vision does not explicitly say so.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles?	L	L	The vision explicitly supports enjoyment of the Park and implies through thriving people, that physical recreation and healthy lifestyles are supported.
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	L		The vision implies support for this objective by its references to people enjoying and valuing the Park, and through nature and people thriving together.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.	L		The vision explicitly supports enjoyment of the Park and this implies support for this objective.
Mitigation measures:	•		
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

Assessment recording form

Plan Objective/Outcome Strategic Objective I

To ensure the Cairngorms National Park is a special place where the natural and cultural heritage is conserved and enhanced.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?	SML		Farmlands in the Park are important for natural and cultural heritage so this Plan objective provides some support for this environmental objective.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?	SML		Woodland and forestry are a very important part of the natural and cultural heritage of the Park. They provide timber and woodfuel as well as supporting important species. This Plan objective is likely to support this environmental objective.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?	SML		This Plan objective is unlikely to have any significant effects on this environmental objective.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	SML	ML	This Plan objective is intended to conserve and enhance natural heritage.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.	L		This Plan objective is likely to have a positive effect where peatland, woodland and carbon-rich soil habitats are conserved and enhanced.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			This Plan objective is unlikely to have any significant effects on this environmental objective.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?	SML		Many recreational opportunities are associated with experiencing natural and cultural heritage. Although there can be conflict between recreational pursuits and some natural and cultural heritage, better conservation and enhancement is also likely to lead to improved recreational opportunities.
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	SML	SML	This Plan objective is intended to conserve and enhance natural heritage.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.	SML		Conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage will support this environmental objective.

Mitigation measures:

•

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

Assessment recording form

Plan Objective/Outcome Strategic Objective 2

To develop a sustainable economy that supports thriving and resilient business and communities.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?	SML		This Plan objective is likely to support this environmental objective by encouraging the production high-quality local and seasonal food.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?	SML		This Plan objective is likely to support this environmental objective by encouraging the production timber and woodfuel.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.	SML		This Plan objective should support this environmental objective by encouraging carbon management.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?	SML		This Plan objective should support this environmental objective by encouraging energy efficiency.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			

Mitigation measures:

•

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

Assessment recording form

Plan Objective/Outcome Strategic Objective 3

To ensure the Cairngorms National Park delivers an outstanding visitor experience and is a benchmark for sustainable tourism

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:

1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?

2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?

3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?

4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?

SML

SML

This Plan objective should support this environmental objective because the outstanding visitor experience of the Park is linked to the conservation and enhancement of distinctive species and habitats of the Park.

5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.

6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?

7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?

SML

SML

This Plan objective should support this environmental objective because the outstanding visitor experience of the Park is linked to opportunities for physical recreation in the Park.

8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?

SML

SML

This Plan objective should support this environmental objective because the outstanding visitor experience of the Park is linked to distinctive character and experience of the Park.

9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.

SML

This Plan objective should support this environmental objective because the outstanding visitor experience of the Park is linked to opportunities to learn about and experience the cultural heritage of the Park.

Mitigation measures:

•

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect

no effect or negligible effect

negative effect

not applicable

uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects

**SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017
Assessment recording form**

**Plan Objective/Outcome Five-Year Outcome I
More people will learn about, enjoy, and help to conserve and enhance the special natural and cultural qualities of the Park.**

1. Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) Marketing Framework.
2. Delivery of the Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
3. Development of a Cairngorms volunteering programme to co-ordinate and expand volunteering opportunities for all that conserve and enhance the Park's special qualities.
4. Development of a cultural heritage programme that provides a co-ordinating framework for interpreting the significance of the Park's cultural heritage; helps communities explore and share their cultural heritage through advice, training and support; and develops web resources to help record, collate and access information about the Park's cultural heritage.
5. Updating and delivery of the Cairngorms Rotheriemurchus and Glenmore Group (CRAGG) Strategy to create an outstanding visitor experience and manage visitor pressures across land ownership boundaries.
6. Development of National Park learning resource materials for formal and informal education, outdoor learning and business.

Summary of effect at scale of:

	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
SEA Question:			
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	S	S	This Plan outcome should support this environmental objective where volunteering supports distinctive species and habitats.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?	SML	SML	This Plan outcome should support this environmental objective by helping people do physical volunteering and learn about opportunities in the Park.
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	SML	SML	This Plan outcome should support this environmental objective where volunteering supports special landscape qualities of the Park.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.	SML	SML	This Plan outcome should support this environmental objective by helping people find out more about the cultural heritage of the Park.

Mitigation measures: •

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

Assessment recording form

Plan Objective/outcome Five-Year Outcome 2

The quality and connectivity of habitats will have improved, enhancing the landscape at a Park scale.

1. Landscape scale habitat enhancement programme that identifies opportunities for woodland and wetland expansion and connection for habitat improvement, species conservation and landscape character benefits.
2. Further development of Catchment Management Partnerships.
3. Delivery of the Cairngorms Deer Framework .
4. Targeted and proactive advice and support for land managers.
5. Communication, awareness raising and engagement to help the public see benefits of improvement to habitat quality and connectivity and understand the role of land management in achieving it.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?	ML		This Plan outcome has potential to reduce the ability of farmland to produce local and seasonal food if the best-quality farmland is lost to woodland expansion.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?	ML		This Plan outcome could have both positive and negative effects on timber and woodfuel production depending on the productivity of woodlands that are expanded.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?	ML	ML	This Plan outcome should have a positive effect on water quality and the ability of catchments to store water.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan outcome should have a positive effect on distinctive habitats and species in the Park.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.	SML	SML	This Plan outcome has potential to have both positive and negative effects on the storage of greenhouse gases depending on whether establishing new woodland releases more carbon from soils and peat than would otherwise be stored by woodland over time.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	SML	SML	The Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this environmental objective, but could have temporary or permanent negative effects depending on how it is implemented.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			
Mitigation measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure woodland expansion doesn't happen at the expense of best quality farmland. Ensure that woodland expansion maintains or increases timber and woodfuel production. Ensure woodland expansion does not increase carbon release over the longer term 		
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

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Plan Objective/Outcome Five-Year Outcome 3

The species for which the Cairngorms National Park is most important will be in better conservation status in the Park.

1. Local Biodiversity Plan and Partnership review to provide focus for delivery.
2. Wildlife crime reduction partnership.
3. Development and expansion of Wildlife Estates initiative.
4. Invasive non-native species programme, reducing the spread and removing the source of invasive non-native species.
5. Targeted and proactive advice and support for land managers to deliver conservation.
6. Communication, awareness raising and engagement to involve and help the public to see benefits of special management for rare and threatened Cairngorms National Park species.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	SML	SML	This Plan outcome should have positive effects on the viability and diversity of distinctive species of the Cairngorms National Park.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	SML	SML	This Plan outcome should have positive effects on the distinctive character and experience of the Park where rare and threatened species are helped.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			
Mitigation measures:			
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

Assessment recording form

Plan Objective/Outcome Five Year Outcome 4

The qualities of wildness in the Park will be greater.

1. Landscape scale habitat enhancement programme that identifies opportunities for woodland and wetland expansion and connection for habitat improvement, species conservation and landscape character benefits.
2. Protection of the Park's special qualities and wildness from inappropriate development in or outside the Park through the Local Development Plan and development management.
3. 'Quality in Design' programme that demonstrates good practice in the design of development and of habitat management such as woodland creation – reinforcing or improving some of the qualities of wildness.
4. A programme of information, interpretation and experiences that celebrate habitat expansion and the sense of wildness in the Park.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			The Plan outcome could make timber production more difficult if it resulted in less commercial timber production or less infrastructure to extract timber.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan outcome should support this environmental objective where the distinctive species and habitats are associated with wildness.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan outcome should support this environmental objective where because it is intended to increase the sense of wildness in the Park
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			
Mitigation measures:	•		
Duration of effects: L=long term, M=medium term, S=short term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/ effect cannot be predicted/ or both positive and negative effects			

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

Assessment recording form

Plan Objective/Outcome Five Year Outcome 5

There will be a better targeted programme of advice and support for land managers in the Park that delivers the National Park Plan

1. A programme to identify the public benefit priorities of different parts of the Cairngorms National Park and reconcile competing land use objectives.
2. Co-ordinated advice and support for land managers to deliver Cairngorms National Park public benefits.
3. Continued delivery of the Cairngorms Land-Based Business Training (LBBT) Project that provides customer led training and skills development for land based business.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			This Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this outcome but is about improving a process and system of support for land managers. If it is successful, it should have positive effects on the environmental objective, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this time.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			This Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this outcome but is about improving a process and system of support for land managers. If it is successful, it should have positive effects on the environmental objective, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this time.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			This Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this outcome but is about improving a process and system of support for land managers. If it is successful, it should have positive effects on the environmental objective, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this time.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			This Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this outcome but is about improving a process and system of support for land managers. If it is successful, it should have positive effects on the environmental objective, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this time.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			This Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this outcome but is about improving a process and system of support for land managers. If it is successful, it should have positive effects on the environmental objective, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this time.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			This Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this outcome but is about improving a process and system of support for land managers. If it is successful, it should have positive effects on the environmental objective, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this time.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			This Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this outcome but is about improving a process and system of support for land managers. If it is successful, it should have positive effects on the environmental objective, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this time.
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			This Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this outcome but is about improving a process and system of support for land managers. If it is successful, it should have positive effects on the environmental objective, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this time.

<p>9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.</p>			<p>This Plan outcome is intended to have positive effects on this outcome but is about improving a process and system of support for land managers. If it is successful, it should have positive effects on the environmental objective, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this time.</p>
<p>Mitigation measures:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		
<p>Duration of effects: L= long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term</p>			
<p>positive effect</p>	<p>no effect or negligible effect</p>	<p>negative effect</p>	<p>not applicable</p>
<p>uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects</p>			

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Assessment recording form

Plan Objective/Outcome Five-Year Outcome 6

The economy of the Park will have grown and diversified, drawing on the Park's special qualities.

1. Implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in the Cairngorms National Park.
2. Business support and development services and advice tailored to Cairngorms National Park business needs and opportunities, using exemplar practices in the Park and co-ordinated between public and private sector.
3. Infrastructure improvement for business development – high speed broadband, enhanced telecoms coverage, transport connectivity, access to housing for employees.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			This Plan outcome could have positive effects on this environmental objective by increasing demand for local food. It could also have negative effects by increasing competition for land leading to a loss of productive land for other uses.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			This Plan outcome is likely to have positive effects on this environmental objective by increasing demand for local timber and wood products. It could also have negative effects by increasing competition for land leading to a loss of forestry and woodland to other uses.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			This Plan outcome could have negative effects on this environmental objective by increasing demand for water use, abstraction and water waste. There are safeguards in place through the planning system and water regulation systems.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			This Plan outcome has potential to have negative effects on the environmental objective, but existing safeguards such as through the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Cairngorms Local Plan should prevent them.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			This Plan outcome could increase demand for fossil fuel-based energy and transport, though it is likely that successful business will be energy efficient and minimise energy waste.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			This Plan outcome has potential for both positive and negative effects on this environmental objective. One of the reasons the Park is an attractive place for business is that it has a distinctive character and experience, so many businesses will want to conserve that asset. On the other hand, new development could erode those qualities. Safeguards are in place to prevent the potential negative effects through the Cairngorms Local Plan.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			
Mitigation measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure most productive agricultural land is not lost to other uses. • Ensure economic development does not have negative effects on water quality and supply. 		
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable

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Plan Objective/Outcome Five-Year Outcome 6

The economy of the Park will have grown and diversified, drawing on the Park's special qualities.

1. Implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism in the Cairngorms National Park.
2. Business support and development services and advice tailored to Cairngorms National Park business needs and opportunities, using exemplar practices in the Park and co-ordinated between public and private sector.
3. Infrastructure improvement for business development – high speed broadband, enhanced telecoms coverage, transport connectivity, access to housing for employees.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			This Plan outcome could have positive effects on this environmental objective by increasing demand for local food. It could also have negative effects by increasing competition for land leading to a loss of productive land for other uses.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			This Plan outcome is likely to have positive effects on this environmental objective by increasing demand for local timber and wood products. It could also have negative effects by increasing competition for land leading to a loss of forestry and woodland to other uses.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			This Plan outcome could have negative effects on this environmental objective by increasing demand for water use, abstraction and water waste. There are safeguards in place through the planning system and water regulation systems.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			This Plan outcome has potential to have negative effects on the environmental objective, but existing safeguards such as through the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Cairngorms Local Plan should prevent them.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			This Plan outcome could increase demand for fossil fuel-based energy and transport, though it is likely that successful business will be energy efficient and minimise energy waste.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			This Plan outcome has potential for both positive and negative effects on this environmental objective. One of the reasons the Park is an attractive place for business is that it has a distinctive character and experience, so many businesses will want to conserve that asset. On the other hand, new development could erode those qualities. Safeguards are in place to prevent the potential negative effects through the Cairngorms Local Plan.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			

Mitigation measures:

- Ensure most productive agricultural land is not lost to other uses.
- Ensure economic development does not have negative effects on water quality and supply.

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects

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Assessment recording form			
Plan Objective/Outcome Five Year Outcome 7			
Settlements and built development will retain and enhance the distinct sense of place and identity within the landscapes of the Park.			
1. 'Quality in Design' programme that demonstrates good practice and innovation in the design of development.			
2. Proactive guidance for new development in location and siting through the Local Development Plan.			
Summary of effect at scale of:		Park	Scotland
SEA Question:		Commentary on assessment	
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			This Plan outcome is unlikely to have significant effects on this outcome, though implementing Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) on new and existing developments could lead to small improvements in the ability of catchments to store water.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?		ML	This Plan outcome should have a positive effect on this environmental objective by encouraging energy-efficient design of development.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?		ML	This Plan outcome should have a positive effect on this environmental objective by incorporating recreational opportunities in the design of development.
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?		ML	ML
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.		SML	This Plan outcome should have a positive effect on this environmental objective by ensuring settlements and built development make a positive contribution to the distinctive character and sense of place in the Park.
Mitigation measures:	•		
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

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Plan Objective/Outcome Five-Year Outcome 8

Business and communities will be successfully adapting to a low-carbon economy.

1. 'Training, advice and demonstration tailored to business and community needs on energy and resource efficiency, renewable energy technology, active transport etc.
2. A programme to identify and deliver infrastructure improvements that will help businesses and communities adapt to a low-carbon economy.
3. A programme to develop a sustainable local food economy in the Park encompassing production, distribution, marketing, consumption and waste.
4. Pilots ways of reducing the energy needs of old buildings and funding to deliver solutions across the Park .
5. 'Quality in Design' programme that demonstrates good practice in the design of sustainable development that adapts to and mitigates climate change.
6. SRDP funding ensuring support for appropriate carbon management of land and climate change mitigation/adaption measures.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?	M		This Plan outcome should increase the production of local food.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?	M		This Plan outcome should increase the use of local timber and the management of woodland for timber and fuel.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?	ML		This Plan outcome should increase management within catchments to store water and reduce flood risks.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.	ML	ML	This Plan outcome should increase the active management of land for carbon storage and sequestration.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?	M		This Plan outcome should increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?	SML	SML	This Plan outcome should support and encourage active travel, increasing opportunities for people to exercise.
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			Lower-carbon design, energy-efficient design and renewable energy generating infrastructure could have negative effects on the character and experience of the Park unless they are carefully sited and designed to avoid and minimise effects. The Cairngorms Local Plan provides safeguards through the Planning system.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			

Mitigation measures:

•

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017

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Plan Objective/Outcome Five-Year Outcome 9

The Park's communities will be more empowered and able to develop their own models of sustainability.

1. 'Support for community development with training and support for planning and developing projects, establishing and running enterprise, involving all the community, business and public sector, and sharing good practice and experience.
2. Alignment of Community Planning Partnerships and community planning to support local community development and planning.
3. Innovation in affordable housing provision to find ways of better matching new provision with local needs.
4. LEADER support targeted at projects that have been developed through inclusive community planning processes.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			This Plan outcome is about helping communities develop in sustainable ways. It has potential to lead to positive effects on this outcome if a community wanted, but they cannot be accurately predicted at this stage.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			This Plan outcome is about helping communities develop in sustainable ways. It has potential to lead to positive effects on this outcome if a community wanted.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			This Plan outcome is about helping communities develop in sustainable ways. It has potential to lead to positive effects on this outcome if a community wanted.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			This Plan outcome is about helping communities develop in sustainable ways. It has potential to lead to positive effects on this outcome if a community wanted.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			This Plan outcome is about helping communities develop in sustainable ways. It has potential to lead to positive effects on this outcome if a community wanted.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			This Plan outcome is about helping communities develop in sustainable ways. It has potential to lead to positive effects on this outcome if a community wanted.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			This Plan outcome is about helping communities develop in sustainable ways. It has potential to lead to positive effects on this outcome if a community wanted.
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			This Plan outcome is about helping communities develop in sustainable ways. It has potential to lead to positive effects on this outcome if a community wanted.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			This Plan outcome is about helping communities develop in sustainable ways. It has potential to lead to positive effects on this outcome if a community wanted.
Mitigation measures:	•		
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

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Plan Objective/Outcome Five-Year Outcome 10

The Park's recreation opportunities will have improved the health and enjoyment of residents and visitors.

1. Ongoing core and promoted paths management, promotion and maintenance.
2. Development of an 'Active Cairngorms' project to increase the health of residents and visitors linking public health with exercise and the recreational opportunities in the Cairngorms National Park.
3. Promotion and upgrading of the existing long distance routes in the Park to make active travel along valleys and straths easier
4. Establish a 'Mountain Bike Development Cluster' to promote increased participation, mountain bike visitors and sporting success

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:			
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			There is potential for recreational activities to have negative effects on this outcome if those activities are not undertaken responsibly and if it is unmanaged. However, recreation activities are managed and planned for the most part to avoid negative effects. Only more detailed site based assessments can predict effects accurately.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			This Plan outcome could have both positive and negative effects on this outcome. More people undertaking physical recreation and active travel could reduce energy use, while if people use cars to access those opportunities, energy use could be increased.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?	SML	SML	This Plan outcome should have positive effects on this environmental objective by increasing opportunities for and information about healthy recreation.
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.	SML		This Plan outcome should have positive effects on this outcome because most outdoor recreational opportunities also provide opportunities to experience the cultural heritage of the Park – either with formal information and interpretation of being within the landscapes of the Park.

Mitigation measures:

•

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

Land Use Strategy Policy Directions

SEA of Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan 2012-2017			
Assessment recording form			
Plan Objective/Outcome Policy Direction 1: Enhance the special landscape qualities.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use landscape character areas as a basis to identify sensitivities and opportunities for enhancement. • Conserve and enhance wildness, monitoring it as a special quality. • Enhance habitat connectivity. • Promote new approaches to enhancing accessibility to the special landscape qualities for all. 			
Summary of effect at scale of:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
SEA Question:			
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction should support distinctive habitats and species that contribute to the special landscape qualities of the Park.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction is intended to enhance the special landscape qualities of the Park and so should have positive effects of this environmental objective.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction is intended to enhance the special landscape qualities of the Park and so should have positive effects on this environmental objective where the cultural heritage is an integral part of those qualities.
Mitigation measures:	•		
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

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Plan Objective/outcome Policy Direction 2: Enhance biodiversity.

- Achieve favourable condition of designated sites.
- Establish monitoring and reporting systems for key habitat and species states beyond designated sites.
- Adopt a presumption of 'no net biodiversity loss' resulting from land use change or management decisions. Establish a biodiversity fund to direct financial contributions in a co-ordinated approach to enhancement.
- Target species action to national and LBAP priorities.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction is intended to enhance biodiversity so should have positive effects on this environmental objective.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction is intended to enhance biodiversity so should have positive effects on this environmental objective where distinctive species and habitats contribute to the distinctive character and experience of the Park.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			

Mitigation measures:

-

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

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Assessment recording form

Plan Objective/Outcome Policy Direction 3: Expand and enhance woodland

- Expand woodland cover towards 25% of the area of the National Park, targeting expansion primarily to enhance connectivity of the existing woodland habitat network.
- Promote productive native woodlands that deliver economic and environmental benefits.
- Promote woodland in places that will contribute to natural flood management (riparian, floodplain and wider catchment woodlands).
- Encourage co-ordinated development of woodfuel supply and demand.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:			
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?	ML		This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it promotes productive native woodlands.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it is intended to contribute to flood management.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because many distinctive species and habitats are associated with native woodlands.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.	ML		This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because increased woodland can store carbon and woodland expansion will not be at the expense of carbon-rich soils.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles ?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because woodland is a key part of the distinctive character and experience of the many parts of the Park.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			

Mitigation measures:

-

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

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Plan Objective/Outcome **Policy Direction 4: Enhance resilience of habitats and land use to climate change**

- Enhance connectivity of habitat networks.
- Increase natural floodplain functionality.
- Enhance vegetation cover to help improve slope stability and tackle unnaturally high levels of erosion and sedimentation.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:			
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?	ML		This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it is intended to reduce flood risks.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it is intended to increase natural flood capacity and reduce risks of erosion.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it supports enhanced connection between habitats and reduces risks of extreme weather events.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.	ML		This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it encourages vegetation cover to stabilise soils and slopes.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it should reduce some of the risks of sudden landscape change brought about by extreme weather.
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective by reducing risks of erosion and slope instability.

Mitigation measures:

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

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Assessment recording form			
Plan Objective/outcome Policy Direction 5: Contribute to a low carbon economy			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map significant carbon stores. • Adopt a presumption against development/ground disturbance on significant carbon stores. • Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from land use practices. • Promote low impact energy generation and maintain a presumption against windfarms. • Provide spatial guidance on sensitivities and opportunities for renewable energy generation. 			
Summary of effect at scale of:		Park	Scotland
SEA Question:		Commentary on assessment	
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?		ML	This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective by encouraging use of woodfuel as an alternative to fossil fuels.
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.		ML	ML This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective by managing carbon stores.
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?		ML	This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from land use practices. That will require energy savings to be made through increasing energy efficiency.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			
Mitigation measures:	•		
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

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Plan Objective/Outcome **Policy Direction 6: Provide high-quality recreation opportunities**

- Identify areas of need for particular co-ordination in visitor management and establish collaborative management approaches across land ownership/business boundaries.
- Use the core paths network as the basis for promoting paths and ensuring access for all.
- Trial new approaches to managing recreation in sensitive environments.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:			
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?	ML		This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it is intended to find new ways of managing conflict between recreational activities and sensitive species or habitats.
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles?	ML	ML	This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it is intended to provide high-quality recreational opportunities.
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.	ML		This Plan policy direction should have positive effects on this environmental objective because it is intended to provide high-quality recreational opportunities, many of which are linked to cultural heritage sites, or are associated with history and tradition.
Mitigation measures:	•		
Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

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Plan Objective/Outcome **Policy Direction 7: Target proactive advice and public support to help land managers deliver multiple benefits**

- Identify the public benefit priorities in 'sub-areas' of the Park using landscape character areas as a basis, to provide clarity for public support.
- Develop integrated networks of advice through public, private and voluntary sectors.
- Continue to provide and co-ordinate training to maintain and enhance the skills base for land-based businesses.
- Support whole-unit management plans for all farms and estates in the National Park.
- Use catchment management and deer management groups as hubs for land management collaboration.
- Investigate alternative ways to pay land managers for the value of the public benefits delivered.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			It is not possible to accurately predict the effects of this Plan policy direction on the environmental objective because the policy direction is about systems of support. It is likely that the policy direction will lead to positive effects on many environmental objectives as the public benefits that land managers will be supported to deliver will be informed by the Park Plan.
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?			
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			
Mitigation measures:	•		
Duration of effects: L = longterm, M = medium-term, S = short-term			
positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

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Plan Objective/outcome

Policy Direction 8: Develop sustainable patterns of settlement growth, infrastructure and communications

- Retain the settlement strategy of the current Local Plan that reinforces the existing pattern of settlement by supporting greater growth in the main settlements and incremental growth to meet community needs in other settlements.
- Develop the new community of An Camas Mor as the main focus for growth in Badenoch and Strathspey.
- Reinforce a settlement hierarchy where Aviemore, Ballater, Grantown-on-Spey, Kingussie, Newtonmore and (in the long-term) An Camas Mor are the main settlements.
- Support well planned improvements to the A9 road and main railway line as an integral part of enhancing the connectivity of the Highlands. Ensure effective planning of improvements to safeguard natural heritage while maximising the views and enjoyment for visitors to be had from these routes.
- Support and promote improvements to IT communications.

Summary of effect at scale of:

Park

Scotland

Commentary on assessment

SEA Question:	Park	Scotland	Commentary on assessment
1. Will the Plan maintain or improve the ability of farmland in the Park to produce high-quality local and seasonal food?			
2. Will the Plan maintain or increase the production of timber and woodfuel in the Park?			
3. Will the Plan maintain or improve the Park's ability to provide a high-quality supply of fresh water in and from the Park, including the ability of river catchments to store water?			This Plan policy direction is unlikely to have any significant effects on this environmental objective. The sites identified for future development are assessed in more detail through the Cairngorms Local Plan and the Main Issues Report for the Cairngorms Local Development Plan. The Cairngorms Local Plan provides further safeguards through the planning system.
4. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the viability and diversity of distinctive species and habitats in the Park?			
5. Will the Plan maintain or improve the storage of greenhouse gases in peat, soils and woodland in the Park.			
6. Will the Plan increase energy efficiency and reduce energy waste?	ML		This Plan policy direction should have some positive effects on this environmental objective. The settlement strategy identified is intended to minimise need for travel by car by focusing growth on the areas with the greatest capacity to absorb it.
7. Will the Plan maintain the opportunities for people to enjoy physical recreation and healthy lifestyles?			
8. Will the Plan conserve and enhance the distinctive character and experience of the Park?			
9. Will the Plan maintain or improve opportunities to experience, learn about and share the cultural heritage of the Park.			

Mitigation measures:

-

Duration of effects: L = long-term, M = medium-term, S = short-term

positive effect	no effect or negligible effect	negative effect	not applicable
uncertain effect/effect cannot be predicted/or both positive and negative effects			

Appendix 3

Using the Ecosystems Approach in the SEA

Building the Ecosystems Approach into the SEA

1. Ecosystems are a natural unit of living things and their physical environment. The living parts and non-living parts work together as an independent system. An impact on one part of the system can lead to impacts on other parts of the system. The earth is made up of many ecosystems at many scales and there is often overlap between ecosystems. The Cairngorms National Park contains and is part of many ecosystems. It therefore makes sense to consider how the Park is managed in terms of its ecosystems.
2. Table I below identifies the main broad ecosystems services that are likely to be important in the Cairngorms National Park. It draws on and extends the work of the National Ecosystems Assessment.

Table I – Ecosystems Services in the Cairngorms National Park	
<p>Provisioning services:</p> <p>The products obtained from ecosystems. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food (crops & livestock) • fibre (crops, trees, wool, etc) • fuel • fresh water • distinctive wild species 	<p>Regulating services:</p> <p>The benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climate regulation(local temperature regulation, emission and storage of greenhouse gases) • hazard regulation (eg flooding, landslides, wildfire) • disease and pest regulation • soil quality • water quality • seed dispersal • air quality and noise • pollination
<p>Cultural services:</p> <p>The non-material benefits people obtain from ecosystems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge – ecological and geological • recreation – enjoyment, physical and mental health • patterns and forms of settlement • aesthetic experience of landscape • sense of place • tradition • awareness and appreciation of the historic environment • spiritual and personal association or connection with place, history and tradition • spiritual and personal association or connection with nature • societal identity and pride 	<p>Supporting services:</p> <p>Ecosystem services that are necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biodiversity • biomass production • atmospheric oxygen production • natural weathering processes • erosion • soil formation and retention • nutrient cycling • water cycling • river processes • provisioning of habitat • provision of rock/minerals & landforms • photosynthesis • evolutionary processes

3. Clearly, not all ecosystems services will be as important in all the broad habitats of the National Park. Nor will they all benefit the same people in the same way. Some will benefit people who live or work in the Park, some those who visit, and some will be important for people outside the Park. A scoping or sifting exercise can help tell us what ecosystems services are important in each habitat.
4. Table 2 summarises the importance of different ecosystems services from different habitats in the Cairngorms National Park. It also shows that there are some differences in the services or benefits that we take or get from the different habitats of the National Park. There are two points about the table that are worth highlighting. Firstly, the supporting ecosystems services are all, by their nature important. Secondly, the habitats of the National Park are linked to and important for many cultural ecosystems services – partly reflecting the value that society places on the National Park as a special place.
5. The ecosystems services identified can be linked to SEA topics. Table 3 shows how SEA topics are relevant to the different ecosystems services. Because the ecosystems services are derived from complex and interacting systems, most services are linked to many of the formal SEA issues.
6. However, not all ecosystems services are things that are likely to be affected by the National Park Plan at a National Park scale. In particular, many supporting ecosystems services are linked to natural processes that are unlikely to be significantly influenced by humans.
7. For example, supporting services such as the provision of rocks and landforms rely on geological processes operating over thousands and millions of years. Humans have little influence over such processes. Similarly, photosynthesis is a process that's vital to most terrestrial life, yet its function or the potential for it to function will not be significantly influenced by the National Park Plan.
8. The cultural ecosystems services provided by the Park are some of the most significant of all the ecosystems services provided by the Park's habitats. They reflect the way society experiences and values its special qualities, recognising that many of the benefits of the Park are nationally important.

Table 2 The Importance of Ecosystems Services in Broad Habitats of the Park.

		Enclosed Farmland	Woodland	Open Waters	Moorland	Semi-natural Grasslands	Mountains	Urban
Importance of the Ecosystems Service	High	[Dark Green]						
	Medium-High	[Light Green]						
	Medium-Low	[Yellow]						
	Low	[Grey]						
Provisioning Ecosystems Services	food	[Light Green]	[Grey]	[Grey]	[Yellow]	[Yellow]	[Grey]	[Grey]
	fibre	[Yellow]	[Dark Green]	[Grey]	[Grey]	[Grey]	[Grey]	[Grey]
	fuel	[Grey]	[Light Green]	[Grey]	[Grey]	[Grey]	[Grey]	[Grey]
	fresh water	[Grey]	[Grey]	[Dark Green]	[Grey]	[Grey]	[Light Green]	[Grey]
	distinctive wild species	[Yellow]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Yellow]	[Yellow]	[Dark Green]	[Grey]
Regulating Ecosystems Services	climate regulation (local temperature regulation, emission and storage of greenhouse gases)	[Light Green]	[Light Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Light Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	hazard regulation (eg flooding, landslides, wildfire)	[Light Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Light Green]	[Yellow]	[Yellow]	[Yellow]
	disease and pest regulation	[Yellow]	[Yellow]	[Light Green]	[Yellow]	[Yellow]	[Yellow]	[Light Green]
	soil quality	[Light Green]	[Dark Green]	[Light Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Yellow]
	water quality	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Yellow]	[Dark Green]	[Light Green]
	seed dispersal	[Grey]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Light Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Yellow]
	air quality and noise	[Grey]	[Light Green]	[Yellow]	[Yellow]	[Grey]	[Light Green]	[Dark Green]
	pollination	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Yellow]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Yellow]
	Cultural Ecosystems Services	knowledge - ecological and geological	[Light Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
recreation - enjoyment, physical and mental health		[Light Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Light Green]
patterns and forms of settlement		[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
aesthetic experience of landscape		[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
sense of place		[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
tradition		[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
awareness and appreciation of the historic environment		[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
spiritual and personal association or connection with place, history and tradition		[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
spiritual and personal association or connection with nature		[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Yellow]
Supporting Ecosystems Services	Biodiversity	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	biomass production	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	atmospheric oxygen production, natural weathering processes	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	erosion	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	soil formation and retention	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	nutrient cycling	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	water cycling	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	river processes	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	provisioning of habitat	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	provision of rock/minerals	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	provision of landform	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	photosynthesis	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]
	evolutionary processes	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]	[Dark Green]

Table 3 Ecosystems Services and SEA Topics		Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	Population and Human Health	Soil	Climatic Factors	Water	Air	Cultural Heritage	Landscape	Material Assets
Provisioning Ecosystems Services	food									
	fibre									
	fuel									
	fresh water									
	distinctive wild species									
Regulating Ecosystems Services	climate regulation (local temperature regulation, emission and storage of greenhouse gases)									
	hazard regulation (eg flooding, landslides, wildfire)									
	disease and pest regulation									
	soil quality									
	water quality									
	seed dispersal									
	air quality and noise									
	pollination									
Cultural Ecosystems Services	knowledge - ecological and geological									
	recreation - enjoyment, physical and mental health									
	patterns and forms of settlement									
	aesthetic experience of landscape									
	sense of place									
	tradition									
	awareness and appreciation of the historic environment									
	spiritual and personal association or connection with place, history and tradition									
	spiritual and personal association or connection with nature									
	societal identity and pride									
Supporting Ecosystems Services	biodiversity									
	biomass production									
	atmospheric oxygen production,									
	natural weathering processes									
	erosion									
	soil formation and retention									
	nutrient cycling									
	water cycling									
	river processes									
	provisioning of habitat									
	provision of rock/minerals									
	provision of landform									
	photosynthesis									
	evolutionary processes									

The Environmental Baseline

9. This section sets out the current state of the environment in the Cairngorms National Park. In using an ecosystems approach to inform the assessment, the information is presented by the seven broad habitats of the Park. The information supplements information in the State of the Park Report of 2006, and other publications of the CNPA. Table 2 summarises the ecosystems services that different habitats provide. We have made an assumption that with the exception of urban habitats, all the habitat types are important in their own right for providing supporting ecosystem services.

Enclosed Farmlands

10. It is estimated that around 7% of the area of the Park is enclosed farmland, confined to the straths of the Park. Most of that is enclosed pasture, with less than 1% of the area of the Park used for crops. The Park has seen a steady reduction in the area of enclosed farmlands, partly because of small-scale and marginal upland farming has become steadily less economical. There has been a trend towards loss of the enclosed pasture to more marginal rough grazing as well as a growth in farm woodlands¹. The majority of agricultural production in the Park is linked to beef and lamb. The long-term trend in these sectors has been one of declining numbers of stock, again linked to the marginal economics of farming of farming in much of the Park.
11. Historically, the farmlands of the straths of the Park have provided important habitat for wading birds. They continue to be important (the Strathspey area is one of Scotland's most significant areas for breeding waders) though populations have been in decline. The relationship of farmlands in the Park with water and wetlands is significant, partly because much farmland is within the functional or constrained floodplains of the main rivers. In some places the farmland has been drained and protected from flooding, but many areas continue to flood.
12. Farmland provides an important link to our cultural heritage, with historical remains and landscapes, active traditions and stories of the past. It is an integral part of the landscape in the valleys and straths of the Park.

Drivers of Change

13. Changes in farmland management have been for economic and policy reasons. The marginal nature of much of the farming in the Park means that some farm units are not viable businesses. It also means that most farming is reliant on subsidy in order to be economically viable, and the policy objectives of the subsidies drive farming practice.
14. Much agricultural land is managed for a range of public benefits including biodiversity, public access, and flood management as well as food. Climate change may increase the potential productivity of some farmland in the Park in the future. However, the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as adapt to potential extreme weather events are becoming stronger drivers of public policy. It is likely that more management will be based on the control of carbon-rich soils and the improved function of floodplains in the future. The national target for increasing Scotland's trees cover to 25% may result in woodland replacing some areas of farmland.

¹ The Economic and Social Health of the Cairngorms National Park Report, 2010.

Woodlands

15. Woodlands are the Park's richest and most diverse habitats. Woodland covers about 20% of the Park area, with around half being semi-natural woodland and half planted woodland². The semi-natural woodlands in particular are important with ancient pine woods, and important areas of birch, aspen and oak. Woodland supports some of the Cairngorms most iconic and distinctive species such as capercaillie, pine marten, Scottish crossbill, crested tit and red squirrel. They are also important for a wide range of plant, fungi and lichen species that only survive in particular woodland habitats. Many areas of woodland are protected by Natura designations and SSSI designations, and there are a number of woodland National Nature Reserves in the Park.
16. Woodland plays an important local role in the regulation of climate in the Park by providing shelter from wind and from sunlight. Woodland on floodplains and throughout catchments can improve their ability to store and slow the release of water, protect against erosion of slopes and the release of sediment into water courses. Woodland can also have the capacity to store atmospheric carbon. Woodlands in the Park are an important recreational resource providing many marked routes for people to follow, and have the potential to withstand many people without obvious impact. Nevertheless some woodland habitats and some species are sensitive to disturbance by people and by dogs. Woodlands are an intrinsic part of the landscape of the Park, and provide strong links with the historic environment and cultural heritage of the Park.
17. Woodland cover in the Park has been increasing for the past 50 years or so, initially through planting for commercial timber and latterly through planting and natural regeneration of native species. The Park has a significant industry based around the management of woodland for timber and timber products, for recreation, for biodiversity, and for woodfuel.
18. Semi-natural and native woodland is expanding in the Park, but there has been loss of some area of ancient semi-natural woodland to growth of settlements in Badenoch and Strathspey. Almost all settlements in Badenoch and Strathspey have at some point during the past 20 years expanded over areas of ancient semi-natural woodland. Although there remain contentious sites for housing development within the planning system (either as planning applications or sites zoned for potential future development), no significant new areas of ancient semi-natural woodland have been identified for development in development plans since the National Park was established.

Drivers of Change

19. Most woodland management is influenced by public policy through designation and through financial support. A continued emphasis on management for biodiversity and for recreation as well as timber and woodfuel production and management of carbon is likely to remain. The effects of climate change on the species that inhabit woodland is not fully understood. The national target for increasing Scotland's trees cover to 25% may result in more woodland replacing other habitats.

² Cairngorms National Park Forest and Woodland Framework, 2008.

Open Waters

20. The Cairngorms National Park has the headwaters of three of Scotland's major rivers as well as many smaller ones. Many of the rivers and their tributaries as well as lochs and wetlands are designated as Natura sites and SSSIs. The rivers in particular provide water for people in the National Park, and for people outside the Park as they flow downstream towards the sea.
21. The open waters cut across many of the habitats of the Park and receive water from them. Each habitat plays a role in the quality of the water, sometimes removing chemicals or materials and sometimes adding them to the water system. The open waters themselves provide further changes to the qualities of the water. As well as providing fresh drinking water, the rivers are used to remove waste. Treated sewage normally flows back to the river system, and waste from farmland and industries such as whisky distilling often re-enters the rivers.

River processes of erosion and deposition, turbulence and flooding all contribute to the water quality and the function of the river systems. Changes in a river or water systems can affect it downstream and upstream.

22. Open waters play an important role in recreation for water sports and for angling and are an integral part of the landscape of the Park. Because of their importance to human society, they have long historical connections of use and change, providing an important link with the Park's cultural heritage.

Drivers of Change

23. Open waters are subject to a regulatory system to ensure their continued high-quality, and this manages many human activities that could effect open waters. However, because of the connections with so many other habitats, open waters can be sensitive to a number of pressures. Climate change has already increased the temperature of many water bodies, so much so that some species such as salmon, that rely on a specific temperature range to spawn successfully may be affected by small increases in future. The temperature of water also effects the chemical composition and the ways that nutrients and chemical are processed. The pollutants that fall with rain can also vary with changes in climate.
24. Extreme weather events such as rainstorms and sudden snow melt increase the run-off from other habitats to open waters. The run-off can contain large volumes of chemicals and materials that the open waters are not used to, and the extra volume of water is either stored through flooding or runs downstream faster, increasing the likelihood of destructive erosion and flooding. Invasive non-native species of plant and animal can have a destructive effect on wetland habitats.
25. The development of small-scale hydro energy schemes has potential to change water courses. Water is abstracted, used and returned as waste water by humans for land management and business activities as well as domestic uses. With projected increases in households and new developments of housing, this has potential to change the demand for water and the discharge of waste water.

Mountains

26. Mountains form a large and iconic part of the Cairngorms National Park. They are a backdrop to most views of the National Park; are a distinguishing part of the landscape character of the Park; have a range of iconic species, habitats and geological and geomorphological features; and the significant resource for recreation. The height and mass of the Cairngorms themselves provide a range of habitats and associated species that are rare or unique in the British Isles. Large areas of the mountains of the Park are designated as Natura sites, SSSIs, and NNRs for their species, habitats and geological importance. The mountains provide a focus for precipitation and an important starting point for the buffering of pollutants in precipitation as they move towards open waters.
27. Mountains are amongst the least intensively managed parts of the Park, with deer stalking and management for a few other game species as well as recreation management and management for biodiversity being the main objectives. The habitats of the mountains can be very sensitive to the level of grazing by herbivores such as deer, sheep and hare. The mountains are particularly important as a recreation resource for hillwalking, rock climbing in summer and winter climbing as well as skiing. The mountains have a long cultural history of use and exploration that is well documented and shared. They contain material evidence of past ways of life that is well preserved, and have numerous associations with stories, songs and art.

Drivers of Change

28. Because so many species and habitats of the mountains occupy particular niches of temperature and precipitation that are not present elsewhere in the UK, they are particularly sensitive to changes in climate. Increases in temperature and changes in snowfall or the length of time snow remains have already changed the nature of habitats and the composition of species, and will continue to do so in future. The deposition of chemicals on the mountains is also slowly changing the chemical composition of soils, making them more fertile in some cases, but also allowing different plant species to grow in place of others. Soils and surfaces on mountains are often less stable than in other habitats and can be more likely to slip and slide during and after heavy rainfall or snow melt.
29. Different parts of the mountains are important for different habitats. Some species and habitats can cope with grazing by deer and sheep while others die back. Managing the numbers of deer and sheep and their grazing pressure to support a range of species and habitats is a driver of public policy on designated areas.
30. People enjoying the mountain for recreation can also affect the habitats and species. Human feet can cause erosion of vegetation and soils; people can disturb birds and other animals, and dogs can disturb and kill birds or other animals even when people do not. However, work to maintain paths and reinstate damaged ground has proved effective in the past and is likely to be effective in the future. Few people who enjoy the mountains do so with the intention of disturbing wildlife, so improving people's understanding of the sensitive species and habitats is likely to reduce disturbance.

Moorland

31. Moorland habitats in the Cairngorms run between the mountains, woodland and farmland. The moorlands of the Park are a distinctive and iconic habitat and landscape that is internationally famous. Moorlands tend to be managed for red grouse shooting but are also important for black grouse near woodland margins.
32. Moorlands frequently overlap areas of upland wetland and blanket bog and is also associated with a mosaic semi-natural acid grassland on drier ground, and by water courses or where heavily grazed by sheep cattle or deer. The use of moorland for rough grazing by sheep and cattle is an integral part of upland farming. The peat deposits of moorlands are a significant store of carbon. They also play an important role in maintaining water quality by buffering some pollutants.
33. Moorland's role in recreation is significant, partly because the network of tracks and paths that provides easy access, and partly because most mountain habitats are accessed via moorland habitats. Moorlands often preserve archaeological remains and evidence of past environments that tells us about historical life and culture of human society as well as what the land was like before humans managed it. In common with many other habitats of the Cairngorms, there is a recorded history, stories and tradition linked to moorlands that enrich our cultural heritage.

Drivers of Change

34. Moorland management relies on muirburn or cutting to promote new heather growth and maintain a habitat that supports as many red grouse as possible. Without this active management, moorlands would change as heather grows rank and scrub or woodland may succeed it. Similarly, the level of grazing by sheep, cattle and deer affects the habitat. The habitat is more sensitive to extreme events than some others. For example, periods of very low humidity and low temperature can kill heather, and infestations of the heather beetle will similarly affect the growth of heather.
35. Intensive management for grouse can reduce or remove populations of other species such as deer and mountain hare, and illegal persecution of raptors is occasionally associated with moorland management.
36. The conditions for the formation of peat require a particular temperature and precipitation range that may be influenced by climate change. As an important store of carbon, it is likely that future public support for the management of moorland will seek to secure the long-term storage and management of the carbon in peat and soils. Changes in climate can lead to erosion of peat from sudden weather events and may also play a role in the success of species such as ticks and the diseases they can carry.
37. The national target for increasing Scotland's trees cover to 25% may result in woodland replacing some areas of moorland.

Semi-natural Grasslands

38. Semi-natural grassland habitats are mostly associated with the margins between farmland and moorland and an area of rough grazing, or in a mosaic of semi-natural acid grassland and moorland on drier ground, by water courses and where heavily grazed by sheep cattle or deer. They are frequently found on areas of ground that were previously farmed and have since been abandoned. This means they often provide clear physical remains of past uses, ways of life and communities.

Drivers of Change

39. Most grasslands are maintained by grazing. Changes to semi-natural grasslands are therefore mostly associated with changes in the grazing regime. This may occur through changes in the management of livestock or deer, by fencing or removal. Woodland planting will change a grassland over time and will also normally be accompanied by a reduction in grazing. Where semi natural grasslands occur on abandoned farmland, heather moorland, scrub woodland and wetland areas may also develop. The national target for increasing Scotland's trees cover to 25% may result in woodland replacing some areas of semi-natural grassland.

Urban

40. About a third of 1% of the Cairngorms National Park is within a settlement boundary in the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan. Perhaps as much land is covered by other buildings, roads and human development. These areas are important because it is in them that most human activity takes place. Urban habitats are diverse, with a range of buildings, gardens and open spaces and unique micro climates. They require energy to function and create waste energy, noise and light. They also add pollution to the air, water and soil.
41. The urban areas of the Park are the established way of living for most of its human population. The quality of accommodation, services and resources available in urban areas play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of the population. They also have a long cultural history, with a distinctive built heritage and a focus for cultural celebrations. The streetscapes and views with urban areas are a distinctive part of their character, and views of the straths and valleys of the Park are linked by the settlements and their connecting routes.
42. All urban areas within the Park provide some opportunities for recreation within them, or are connected to a network of paths and tracks and open areas around them and that link to other habitats of the Park. They are a significant place for visitors to the Park, both as a place of shelter, food and drink, but also as a place to get information about opportunities to experience, enjoy and learn about the Park.
43. The design of our urban areas has changed over time. New developments should now incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) and other measures to minimise their impacts on natural systems.

Drivers of Change

44. Urban areas in the Park are linked to people's ability to live there and for most people therefore linked to economic opportunity or availability of money. Changes in the wider Scottish economy may affect the ability of people to live in the Park.
45. Migration to the Park has been slightly higher than migration from the Park since 2003, and this has led to a slow increase in the population. Allied to the increasing population, changes in the composition of households (a trend towards a greater number of smaller households) mean a requirement for more house units to hold the same population. Current allocations of land for future housing development are expected to provide 20-25 years of housing land supply if the population continues to increase at its recent rates. However, constraints to the supply of new housing, such as the slow-down in bank lending to house builders of the past two years will also slow or stop increases in population. Nevertheless, new development can change the character and appearance of existing settlements and other areas.
46. Life in the National Park is currently heavily reliant on oil for energy. Much of the built fabric of the Park is old and requires a lot of energy to heat. The remote location of the Park increases transport costs. Without action to improve the energy efficiency of buildings and ways of life, reduce energy consumption, and use lower carbon energy sources, life in the Park could become economically unviable for many of the working population.



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