



A Strategy for the long term management of
Cairngorm & Glenmore
Consultative Draft
1st December 2015 – 8th March 2016

Cairngorm and Glenmore – Consultation on Future Direction

How to Respond

The Cairngorms National Park Authority is managing this public consultation on behalf of the Cairngorm and Glenmore Partnership (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Forest Enterprise Scotland, the Highland Council, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Cairngorms National Park Authority).

We are seeking views to help develop a long term strategy for the management of the publicly owned land at Cairngorm and Glenmore. This consultation document reflects discussions with local businesses, community representatives and others with an interest in the area over the last 18 months. We would now welcome views on the overall direction and proposed approach.

The consultation runs from 1st December until 8th March at www.cairngorms.co.uk. Hard copies of the consultation document are available on request.

We are specifically seeking views on the following questions set out in the consultation document:

Question 1: Set in the wider context, what in your view is the distinctive character and role of Cairngorm and Glenmore? How can it best contribute to the wider area?

Question 2: What do you currently like about Cairngorm and Glenmore that you want to see retained? What would you like to change or improve?

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed vision, aim and objectives? If not, what would you change?

Question 4: Do you agree with the proposed approach and suggested headline areas of work identified? If not, what would you add or change?

Following consultation the Partnership will use the responses to finalise a long term strategy for Cairngorm and Glenmore, scheduled for completion in 2016.



CAIRNGORMS
NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
ÙGH DARRAS PÀIRC NÀISEANTA A'
MHONAIDH RUAIDH



1. An iconic destination at the heart of the National Park

1.1 Cairngorm and Glenmore are together an iconic destination at the heart of the Cairngorms National Park. Together with neighbouring Rothiemurchus, this area attracts 40% of all visitors to the National Park. Owned on behalf of the people of Scotland, the Cairngorm Estate managed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the National Forest Estate managed by Forest Enterprise Scotland, public bodies formed a partnership in 2014 to collaborate on the long-term management of this significant area of land.

The purpose of the Partnership is to collaborate in the strategic management of these land holdings in order to deliver:

- An exceptionally high quality natural environment
- A world-class visitor experience
- An economic asset contributing to the economy of the National Park and Scotland
- Engaged business and community stakeholders
- Efficient and effective public service delivery

1.2 This area is central to the identity of the Cairngorms as well as the local economy. There is a long history of debate and reports written about the area and distinct phases of development creating what we have today. It is a special place, but the results of some previous decisions made in the absence of an overall strategy over the decades are evident in the current visitor experience. We also have an obligation to ensure we are not only conserving but actively enhancing the conservation value, with Cairngorm and Glenmore sitting at the heart of some of Scotland's most important nature conservation sites, an expanding forest network and the country's most extensive montane plateau, all in the context of a destination central to the local economy.

1.3 The public land holding has also changed since the Forestry Commission made its first acquisition in Strathspey when the Glenmore estate was purchased in 1923. The property was divided in the 1970s with a sale to the Highlands and Islands Development Board, now Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and subsequent transaction returning part to the Forestry Commission in the 1990s. More recently in 2014 Forestry Commission Scotland acquired the Upper Rothiemurchus pinewoods.

1.4 This is a unique opportunity. To make the most of this place for people and nature we need a long term strategy that guides our future management. We do not set out to create a blueprint but we can lay firm foundations now that will help ensure the multiple organisations involved in managing this area co-ordinate plans, decisions and investment with a common sense of purpose and direction.

1.5 Through this consultation we want to hear people's views and aspirations for this area, what should change, what should stay the same, and how we make the most of Cairngorm and Glenmore for neighbouring communities, visitors, the National Park and Scotland as a whole.

2. Working in Partnership

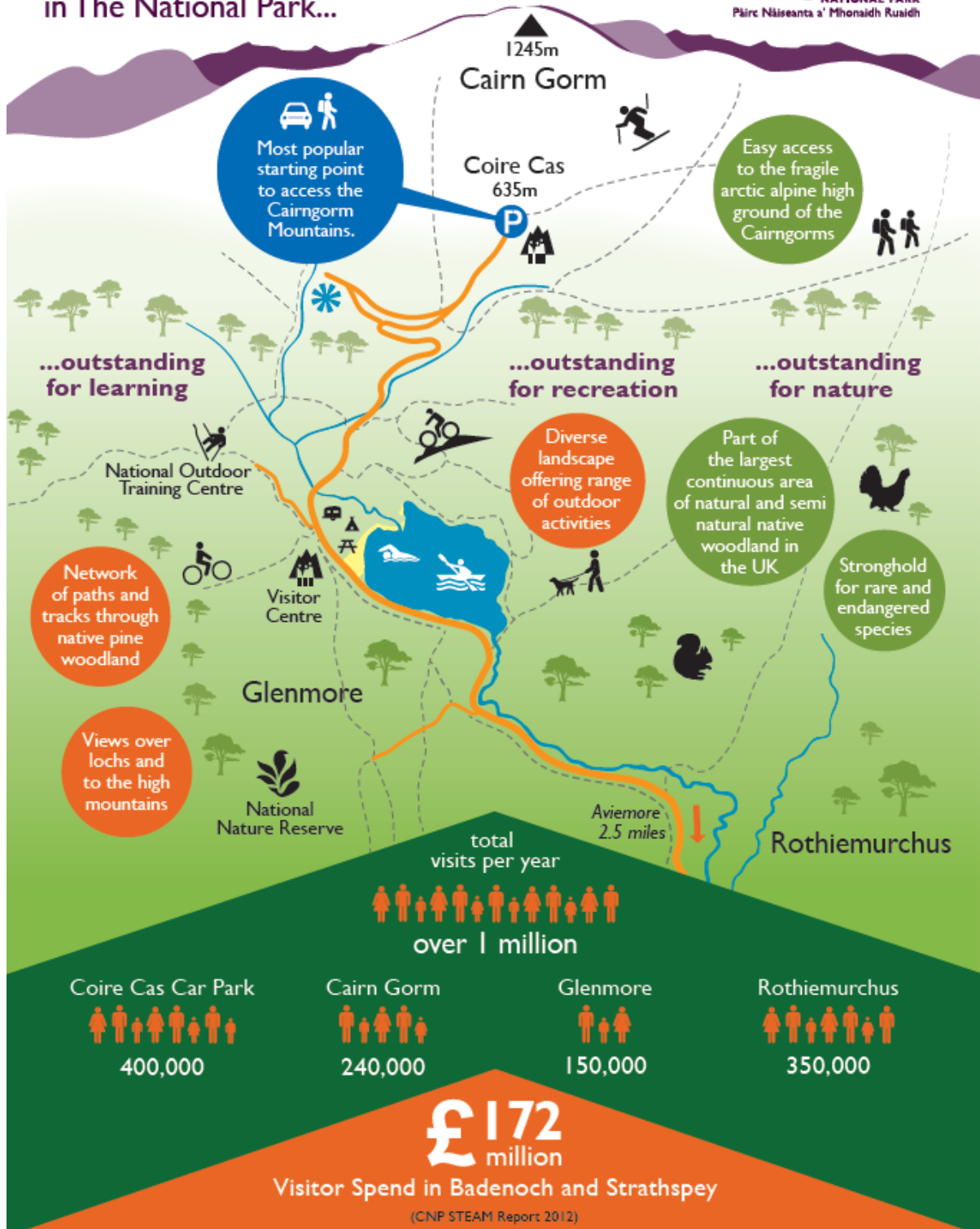
2.1 The Cairngorm and Glenmore Partnership brings together five public bodies, recognising that to make the most of this publicly owned land we need a co-ordinated and collaborative approach. These partners are: Cairngorms National Park Authority, Forest Enterprise Scotland, Highland and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Highland Council.

2.2 These partners are working directly with 'on-site' businesses including: Natural Retreats, Scottish Youth Hostel Association, Glenmore Lodge, Camping in the Forest, Cairngorm Reindeer Company, Loch Morlich Watersports and Glenmore Shop/Cafe.

2.3 Developing and delivering a future strategy however, needs much wider engagement and collaboration, working with neighbouring land owners, business groups and communities, and the wider community of people who feel a close connection to Cairngorm and Glenmore.

Cairngorm and Glenmore

Why it's the most popular destination
in The National Park...



3. Cairngorm and Glenmore in Context

3.1 Cairngorm and Glenmore are part of a much bigger picture in terms of the local economy, the visitor experience and of course the landscape. It is a destination that draws people to the wider area – specifically to Aviemore but also to other communities in Badenoch and Strathspey and the Cairngorms National Park as a whole. Its identity, the economic benefits and the visitor journey are all intrinsically connected with the wider area.

3.2 We must place the future management of Cairngorm and Glenmore clearly in the wider context, considering its role and relationship with immediate neighbours including Rothiemurchus, with Aviemore and the other communities of Badenoch and Strathspey, and with the National Park as a whole.

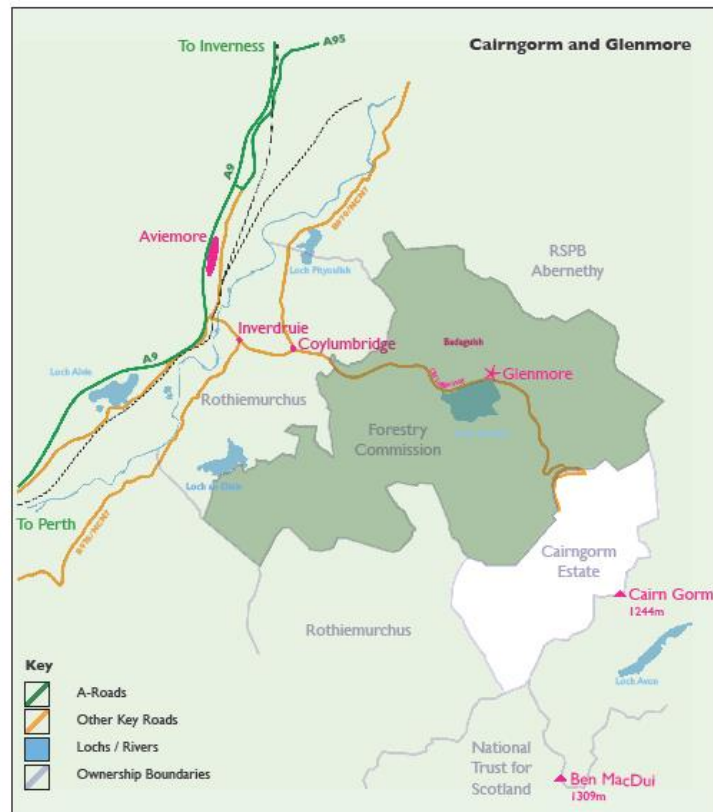
Key parts of this context include:

Badenoch and Strathspey	the most accessible part of the Cairngorms National Park by road and rail, within 30 minutes drive of Inverness and its airport, the area is the most tourism-intensive rural economy in Scotland as well as being one of Scotland's most valuable places for nature, for example the remaining national stronghold for capercaillie.
Aviemore	a well-connected, established settlement that is a focus for commercial and retail development: an economic hub for business, transport, residential and visitor accommodation and infrastructure.
Rothiemurchus and Coylumbridge	a popular forest destination with well-established visitor facilities: low altitude visitor activities, formal visitor attractions and accommodation; conservation and recreation managed in the context of the Rothiemurchus Forest Plan.
An Camas Mor	a new planned community scheduled to be developed over the next 30+ years.
Mountain core	the high mountain plateau commonly accessed from both Strathspey and Deeside, flanked by an increasingly connected forest.

3.3 In this context, the distinctive character and role for Cairngorm and Glenmore can be described as:

- A uniquely accessible mountain and forest visitor experience;
- A focus for high quality outdoor recreation, learning and activities;
- A setting-off point for the mountains;
- An experience of wildness for families and adventure enthusiasts alike;
- An important destination for outdoor sports (water, biking, snow and mountain), internationally recognised for climbing.
- Primarily a day visitor destination supporting accommodation provision in the wider area, with specialist accommodation associated with outdoor activity.

Question 1: Set in the wider context, what in your view is the distinctive character and role of Cairngorm and Glenmore? How can it best contribute to the wider area?



4. The Need and Opportunity

4.1 This is a unique opportunity in Scotland. Cairngorm and Glenmore is the starting point for enjoying an internationally important area for nature conservation and a visitor experience in Scotland's most extensive native woodlands and mountain plateau.

4.2 The opportunity is to enhance the visitor experience to match the quality of environment; to ensure people leave feeling they have not only been to an amazing place, but had an experience to rival any of the world's best National Parks.

4.3 Cairngorm and Glenmore currently offer a wealth of visitor and learning experiences across the seasons, provided by a range of successful private businesses and public facilities. It is highly valued by residents and visitors for its character and sense of place. However, its facilities are dated and the results of previous ad hoc decisions are apparent in the fragmented visitor experience. We need to look 20 years ahead and be ready to embrace, adapt to and manage future changes, from changing visitor expectations, quicker access from central Scotland by a dualled A9, to changing habitat and species trends.

4.4 The opportunity is to enhance this special place for people and nature by guiding its future management in a long-term, planned way.

5. Our visitors

5.1 Data collated within the Cairngorm, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore area indicates that the area appears to be successful at attracting UK and overseas visitors, repeat visitors and predominantly ABCI visitors in socio-economic terms. While extended family groups form a core of the visitors, the area offers something for everyone from families through to thrill-seekers.

5.2 The 2015 Cairngorms National Park visitor survey allows us to compare the responses of visitors to the Cairngorm, Glenmore and Rothiemurchus area to those across the National Park as a whole, as set out in table 1 below.

Table 1: Extract from results of 2015 Cairngorms National Park Visitor Survey

Visitors to Cairngorm and Glenmore are:-	Cairngorm, Glenmore & Rothiemurchus*	Cairngorms National Park
more likely to be staying in the National Park	76%	62%
.... and staying slightly longer	4.9 nights	4.2 nights
more likely to be staying in a large hotel	22%	17%
.... or self catering	33%	25%
more likely to get information from a visitor centre	48%	27%
.... or a visitor attraction	17%	15%
Undertaking the following activities:-		
• Low level walking	49%	44%
• High level walking	10%	14%
• Cycling	16%	13%
• Winter sports	26%	13%
• Water sports	5%	2%
• Taking Photographs	8%	14%
• Watching wildlife	18%	12%
• Visiting attractions	35%	38%
• Eating out	19%	26%

more likely to be aware they are in a National Park	98%	91%
more likely to be from England	31%	25%
less likely to be from the Highlands	22%	28%
more likely to be female	51%	44%
Equally satisfied with their overall visit (rate out of 10)	8.76	8.76
For full survey results see www.cairngorms.co.uk		
<i>*Visitors surveyed at 6 visitor destination locations within area</i>		

5.3 We expect visitor numbers to gradually increase in the future, as access and transport connections improve, as businesses in the area continue to build their reputation and as promotion encourages more people to discover Cairngorm and Glenmore. So we are planning for an increase and to be able to manage the impacts of increasing visitor numbers, in terms of conservation management, infrastructure and quality of experience.

6. A look at Cairngorm and Glenmore now

6.1 Cairngorm and Glenmore is already a great place. But we know the quality of visitor experience, our co-ordination of management and visitor welcome falls short of our vision at the moment. We also know there are big opportunities to ensure the continued success and enhancement of this special place into the future.

Table 2: SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The iconic view in the National Park- Loch Morlich and the Cairngorms • Outstanding mountain and forest landscape and habitats • Distinct sense of place and identity • Reputation for outdoor recreation including sports (winter, climbing, biking, paddle) • Ease of access from A9, railway and Inverness airport • Ease of access to a wild place • Snowsports and for many people a rare opportunity to simply play in the snow • Close relationship to Aviemore and communities of Badenoch and Strathspey • Popular destination points – eg Loch Morlich, Cairngorm Mountain • Long term forest management and restoration of native pinewoods • Passionate people and a history of pioneering activity in outdoor recreation • Successful visitor management system delivering conservation and visitor benefits at Cairngorm Mountain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dated visitor facilities • Lack of connections between facilities and activities for visitors • No clear direction for best stopping points to photograph iconic views • Limited ranger service provision and visitor welcome • Limited cross selling between businesses • Unclear brand identity for the area • Limited public transport connectivity • Lack of consistent messages to visitors • Lack of co-ordination in car parking arrangements • Lack of co-ordination in signage and signage ‘clutter’ • Lack of broadband/mobile connectivity
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being part of a bigger landscape scale vision for woodland expansion and habitat restoration • Improving the quality and connectivity of the visitor welcome and experience • Building on strengths to become a centre for excellence for outdoor learning • Engage people more with nature • Better opportunities to travel without a car • Improved signage • More co-ordinated visitor information – pre-arrival and on-site • Consistent identity and promotion • An exemplar of integration between conservation and visitor experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing visitor pressure due to increasing ease of access • Increased pressure for large scale events without appropriate management • Growth in irresponsible visitor behaviour – litter, noise, fires • Poor economic viability, seasonality and under-investment • Recreation pressures on protected species conservation interests • Non-native species impacts • Competition with each other rather than collaborating to succeed • Lack of co-ordination in management

Question 2: What do you currently like about Cairngorm and Glenmore that you want to see retained? What would you like to change or improve?

7. Future Direction

7.1 Our long term strategy for Cairngorm and Glenmore is to build on the area's strengths and benefits to the wider area. We aim to collaborate and compete nationally and internationally to benefit the area and National Park as a whole. We want Cairngorm and Glenmore to be among the top 5 countryside destinations in Scotland, playing its part in Scotland's international appeal as a tourism destination.

7.2 We see Cairngorm and Glenmore retaining the distinctive sense of place, enabling people of all ages, abilities and interest to experience the wildness of the mountains and forests at the heart of the National Park. We recognise that investment in the quality of visitor experience at Cairngorm and Glenmore underpins and benefits the tourism economy of the wider area and communities.

7.3 In a national context, this area offers a uniquely accessible combination of activity, wildlife, cultural heritage and wild landscapes.

- **We want to improve the visitor infrastructure** including facilities, routes, signage and travel to ensure it matches the top quality environment.
- **We want to join up the visitor experience**, across the land holdings of Cairngorm and Glenmore, with neighbouring businesses and particularly with Aviemore to deliver a quality experience accessible to all.
- **We want to build on the post-war tradition of outdoor education in the area**, including the National Outdoor Centre, to further develop Cairngorm and Glenmore as a national resource for outdoor learning.
- **We want to retain and enhance the distinctive sense of place**, enhancing the conservation value, landscape, design of built infrastructure and sense of being on the edge of wildness.

7.4 We expect more people to come and enjoy this area in years to come and we need to plan to manage likely increases in visitor numbers. The importance of the area for nature conservation means there are clear parameters in which to plan for and manage future visitor numbers. For example, there is very limited scope for additional development area on the ground, meaning the focus is on improving, renewing or re-orientating the use and functionality of existing facilities and built development. This means, for example, that significantly increasing car parking provision is not a realistic option. Instead, we should look to make better use by reconfiguring and potentially relocating car parking and looking at better travel options from Aviemore.

7.5 The aim is that travel by bus and/or bike becomes part of the visitor experience, rather than just a means of getting from A to B, encouraging more people to choose these options. This would be a transition to the much longer term aspiration of a fully integrated travel system, including park and ride from Aviemore, leading to a major switch to arrival by public transport and bike.

7.6 Cairngorm and Glenmore is primarily a day visitor destination. Though it provides appropriate specialist accommodation connected with outdoor activity, it is inter-dependent with Aviemore and other local communities which should continue to provide the main accommodation and retail provision. We want to ensure Cairngorm and Glenmore continue to play their part in attracting people, for the benefit of the wider area.

Cairngorm & Glenmore Future Direction				
Context	National Park Partnership Plan			
	Visitor Experience	Conservation		Rural Development
Vision	An accessible wildness at the heart of the Cairngorms National Park where the quality of visitor experience matches the world-class natural environment.			
Aim	Co-ordinated management creating a nationally renowned high quality destination that underpins the delivery of nature conservation, visitor experience and rural development in the wider region.			
Objectives	Enhance the visitor experience to match the quality of environment	Enhance habitat and species conservation on a landscape scale	Support and enhance the regional economy	Create outdoor recreation and learning opportunities for all
Goals	A high quality visitor welcome, easy to plan your visit across land holdings and visitor attractions	People engaging with a clear and ambitious conservation vision in the heart of the Cairngorms	Improve the year round visitor offering	Be a national resource for outdoor recreation and learning
	A more connected visitor experience with improved orientation in Aviemore	An expanding woodland, including montane woodland, better connected with neighbours	A high quality of place and infrastructure that underpins tourism and activity business opportunities	Further develop the area’s reputation for outdoor sports and activity
	Proactive visitor management to deliver high levels of visitor satisfaction combined with nature conservation	Montane habitats and species in robust conservation status	A clear and consistent identity for promotion of the area	Improve outdoor learning facilities
		Favourable condition of designated site features		Make it easier for a wider range of groups to experience and learn from the area
	Consistent messages about the area to engage people in a sense of connection and responsibility			

Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed vision, aim, objectives and goals? If not, what would you change?



8. Proposed Approach

8.1 Nature Conservation

Cairngorm and Glenmore lie at the heart of the mountain plateau and an expanding forest surrounding it. Management of these land holdings should be in collaboration with neighbours to deliver large scale conservation benefit, delivering the Cairngorms Nature vision.

Objective: Enhance habitats and species conservation on a landscape scale

Our proposed conservation goals are:

1. People engaging with a clear and ambitious conservation vision in the heart of the Cairngorms;
2. An expanding woodland, including montane woodland, better connected with neighbours in a landscape scale approach;
3. Montane habitats and species in robust conservation status;
4. Favourable condition of designated site features

To achieve these we will need to:

- a) Integrate land management across the Cairngorm and Glenmore landholdings;
- b) Expand the area of montane woodland;
- c) Continue forest design to a more semi-natural structure;
- d) Review recreation management for species conservation, implementing the Capercaillie Framework;
- e) Continue to operate effective visitor management on Cairngorm Mountain;
- f) Engage visitors more in the conservation work they can see around them

8.2 Visitor Experience

Cairngorm and Glenmore provide a uniquely accessible mountain and forest experience and are an integral part of the visitor experience centred on Aviemore and other communities in Badenoch and Strathspey.

Objective: Enhance the visitor experience to match the quality of environment

Our proposed visitor experience goals are:

1. Deliver a high quality visitor welcome that makes it easy to plan your visit across land holdings and visitor destinations
2. Work with the community and partners in Aviemore to develop a more connected visitor experience with an improved sense of orientation in Aviemore
3. Proactive visitor management co-ordinated with neighbours to deliver high levels of visitor satisfaction combined with nature conservation
4. Offer safe enjoyable experiences that are as accessible to all as practical

To achieve these we will need to:

- a) Develop and deliver plans for the renewal of visitor facilities at Cairngorm Mountain and Glenmore;
- b) Enhance the ranger service provision, co-ordinating across land holdings and connecting with Aviemore;
- c) Deliver co-ordinated visitor information and key messages, pre-arrival and on-site and 'de-clutter' signage;
- d) Improve public transport options, enhance the travel experience, rationalise and co-ordinate car parking provision;
- e) Develop a co-ordinated spatial approach to recreation management and conservation with neighbouring land holdings;
- f) Investigate the opportunities for greater wildlife watching;
- g) Work to best practice on inclusion and safety management

8.3 Rural Development

Cairngorm and Glenmore are significant to the regional economy. Management should aim to improve the underlying quality of these land holdings and their infrastructure as key assets underpinning businesses and benefiting the wider region.

Objective: Support and enhance the regional economy

Our proposed rural development goals are:

1. Improve the year round visitor offering
2. A high quality of place and infrastructure that underpins tourism and activity business opportunities
3. A clear and consistent identity for promotion of the area

To achieve these we will need to:

- a) Share and collaborate on customer feedback, market research and visitor surveys with the Cairngorms Business Partnership and private businesses. This to include collaborative analysis on market segmentation so that the motivations of visitors can be better understood and provided for;
- b) Collaborate across businesses to provide a co-ordinated range of options for visitors at different times of year;
- c) Promote a clear and consistent identity for the area;
- d) Invest in the public realm infrastructure to ensure a high quality asset underpinning business opportunities

8.4 Outdoor Learning and Recreation

Cairngorm and Glenmore offer an outstanding location for outdoor learning and activities with a network of providers including the National Outdoor Centre already based in and using the area. This is a unique positioning in Scotland.

Objective: Create outdoor recreation and learning opportunities for all

Our proposed outdoor learning and recreation goals are:

1. Be a national resource for outdoor recreation and learning
2. Further develop the area's reputation for outdoor sports and activity
3. Improve outdoor learning facilities
4. Make it easier for a wider range of groups to experience and learn from being in the area

To achieve these we will need to:

- Improve connections between existing learning and activity providers
- Create flexible learning facilities with indoor and outdoor space
- Enhance volunteering opportunities in the area and enhance management arrangements to support this sector

Question 4: Do you agree with the proposed approach and suggested headline areas of work identified? If not, what would you add or change?

ANNEX Strategic Context

National Park Partnership Plan	<p>The Partnership Plan sets out three long term outcomes for the National Park to which this strategy will contribute:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation - A special place for people and nature with natural and cultural heritage enhanced; • Visitor Experience - People enjoying the Park through outstanding visitor and learning experiences; • Rural Development - A sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities. <p>Cairngorm and Glenmore makes a significant contribution to all three given its conservation value, visitor numbers and role in the area's economy.</p>
Forest Enterprise Scotland Inverness, Ross and Skye Strategic Plan	<p>The District Strategic Plan recognises the significance of the National Forest Estate at Glenmore to the visitor economy and identity of the National Park. It prioritises work to deliver a more joined-up visitor experience and landscape scale conservation with neighbours.</p> <p>The Forest Design Plan for Glenmore (now incorporating Upper Rothiemurchus) sets out the long term plans for the sustainable management of the forest, with restoration and expansion of the Caledonian forest a major objective , alongside providing high quality visitor experience, while still yielding a supply of timber.</p>
Highlands and Islands Enterprise Sustainable Tourism Route Map	<p>HIE's Sustainable Tourism Route Map aims to help make Scotland a destination of first choice, for a high quality, value for money and memorable customer experience delivered by skilled and passionate people. It seeks to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create jobs, increase turnover and boost international sales • Maximise the economic and social potential of our most remote and rural areas • Lead strong partnerships across the public sector and with industry • Support a vibrant regional identity which attracts people to live, work, invest and visit our region <p>Of particular relevance to Cairngorm and Glenmore it focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning more of our assets into experiences by stimulating improved provision of signature tourism experiences and supporting collaboration to achieve the scale required to reach new markets and better manage the visitor experience. • Encouraging more vibrancy in our key tourism towns and hubs through building strong partnerships with public partners and with creative industries and food & drink. • Facilitating development of tourism product development specifically designed to attract and grow higher value markets. •

Highland Community Planning Partnership

This strategy will contribute to several connected outcomes in the Highland Single Outcome Agreement, including:

- *Business support* – supporting the growth of tourism by proactively enhancing one of the Highlands top visitor destinations and underpinning the tourism economy of Badenoch and Strathspey.
- *Children are equipped with the skills, confidence, and self-esteem to progress successfully in their learning and development* – through providing top class opportunities for outdoor learning embedded within the Curriculum for Excellence.
- *Increasing physical activity* – through improving outdoor access infrastructure and opportunities, further developing Active Travel connections in and around Aviemore and promoting use, activity and volunteering through Active Cairngorms.
- *Manage sustainably the outstanding natural heritage of the Highlands to optimise economic, health and learning benefits* – through an integrated approach to enhancing the area, securing delivery of designated site targets, delivering wider biodiversity and landscape enhancement, and realising the economic and learning opportunities underpinned by the quality of place.