

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Planning Performance Framework

2022 - 2023



Cairngorms
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh



Cairngorms
National Park

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Mhonaidh Ruaidh

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Our commitment

Our Planning Service is a key part of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and is committed to the Vision, Mission and Values as set out in the National Park Partnership Plan 2022. The Planning Service plays a key part in creating the National Park we all want by getting the right development in the right place, by promoting investment, by protecting and enhancing the natural/cultural environment and by creating places that we will value and enjoy. Further information in our Planning Service Charter at www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning-development

The Vision for Cairngorms National Park is:

*“An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone,
where nature and people thrive together.”*

Key performance markers

Development planning and land supply



Development Plan 2 years old.



412 new houses built over last 5 years.



8.5 years of effective housing land.



29.5ha Marketable employment land available.

Development management and decision making



100% of applications were approved.



Pre-application advice on 7.1% of applications.



0 Legacy applications remaining at the end of the year.



Processing agreements on 92.9 % of all applications.



7.6 weeks on average to determine planning applications.

Enforcement



54 enforcement cases taken up.

43 breaches resolved.

Introduction

Background

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

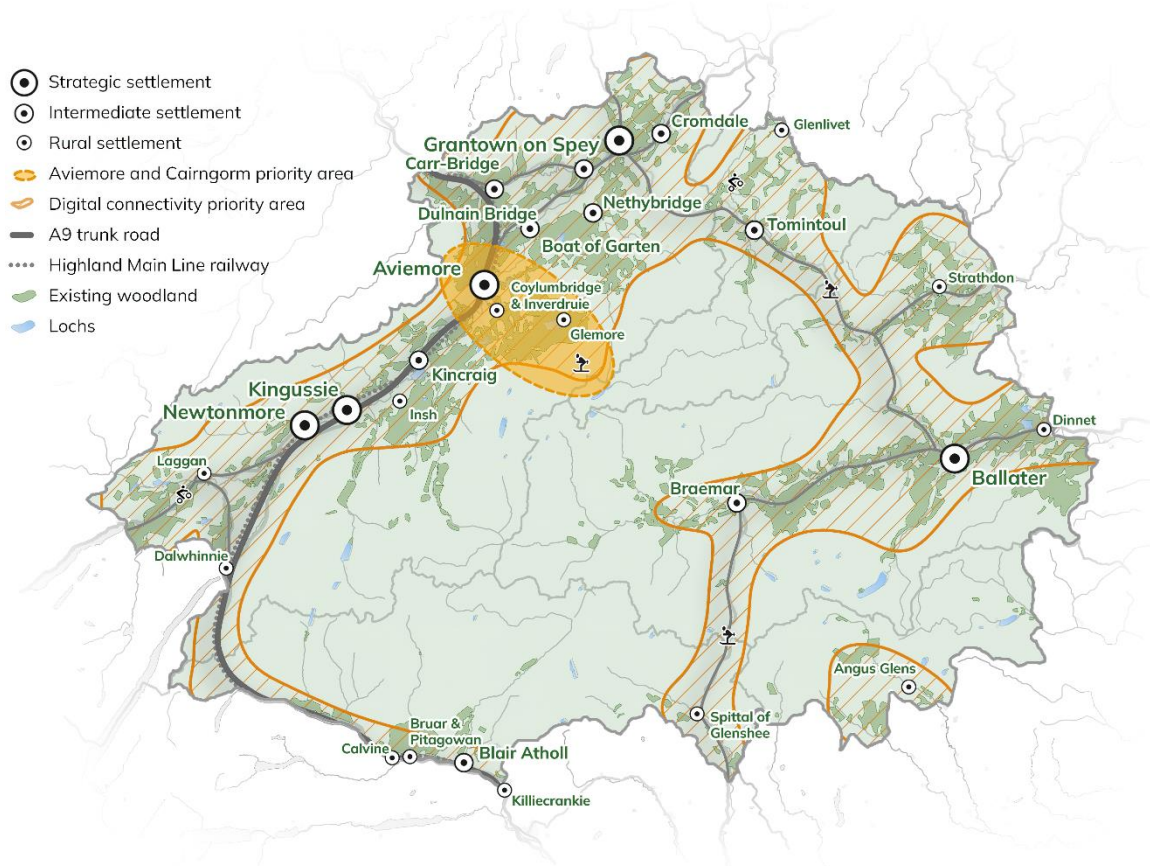


Figure 1 Strategic diagram from the National Park Partnership Plan 2022. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023.

This is the twelfth annual Planning Performance Framework report for the Cairngorms National Park Authority Planning Service. Scottish Government feedback about our last report for 2021 / 2022 was very positive with the Park Authority receiving a green rating for all performance markers. The report is available online. This report includes a summary of how we have performed in 2022 / 2023 and looks ahead to 2023 / 2024, highlighting the key areas where we want to improve our practice. We use the Planning Performance Framework report to feed back to Scottish Government and to significant stakeholders

including our Developers Forum and Planning Representatives Network (Community Councils and Associations).

Partnership approach

In the Cairngorms National Park, arguably more than in any other part of Scotland, we adopt an almost entirely partnership approach to planning. The Park Authority and the five local authorities that cover its area – Aberdeenshire Council, Angus Council, Moray Council, Perth and Kinross Council and The Highland Council – all play a key role in making the planning system work effectively.

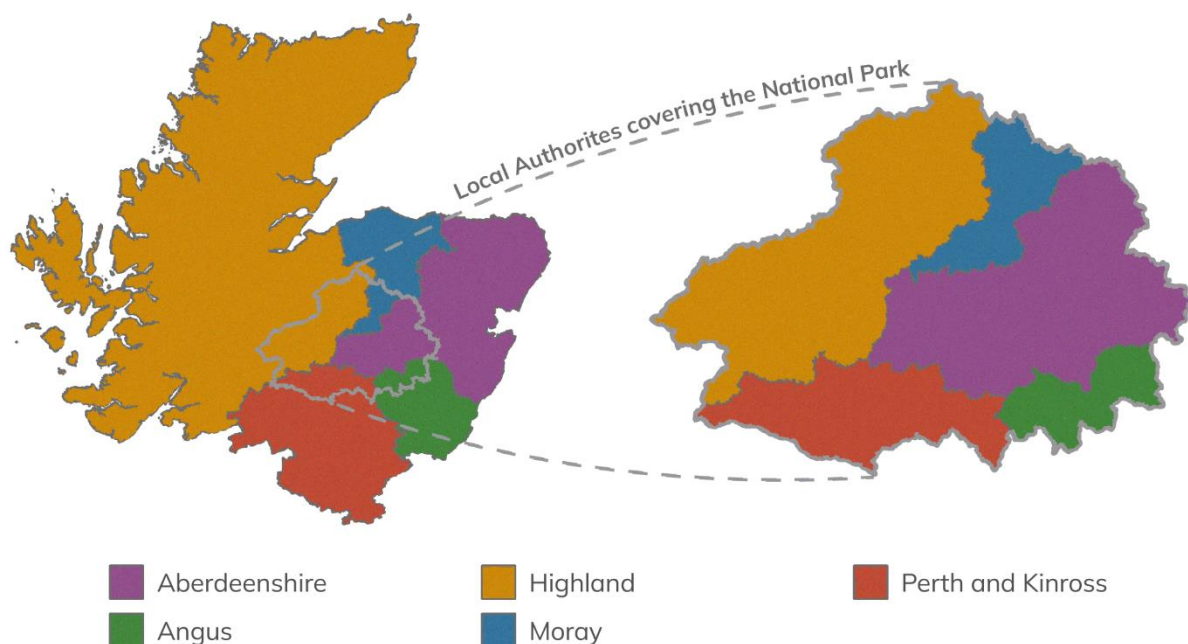


Figure 2 Local Authorities covering the Cairngorms National Park. Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2023.

The Park Authority sets the planning policy framework for the National Park. This is achieved through the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan and the Local Development Plan. All planning applications in the National Park are determined in line with this policy framework.

However, planning applications are submitted in the first instance to the relevant local authority. The Park Authority then ‘calls in’ and determines the most significant planning applications for the National Park (generally around 10% of all applications), leaving the remainder to be determined by the local authorities¹.

¹ You can find more information about how the planning process works in the National Park in our Planning Service Charter and our Planning Service Protocol at www.cairngorms.co.uk

Part 1: Qualitative narrative

Quality of outcomes

The Park Authority has:

1. Adopted the National Park Partnership 2022. The Partnership Plan sets out the vision and over-arching strategy for managing the National Park, as well as identifying priorities for action and an overall strategic policy framework. Furthermore, the Partnership Plan acts as the Regional Spatial Strategy for the National Park, which is intended to address strategic development and issues.
2. Adopted the final two pieces of supplementary guidance that will support the delivery of the Local Development Plan 2021 - Developer obligations and Housing.
3. Held online and hybrid online and in-person Planning Committee meetings, streamed videos of meetings and ensured the opportunity for public representation by video link meetings. This has ensured the planning process continues in an effective and publicly accessible manner.
4. Improved the ability of the planning team to undertake their work remotely, supporting them with increased technical assistance, utilising online sharing and virtual meeting platforms and started a transition to increased office working.
5. Continued to support the delivery of a range of high-quality developments through the planning process. Selected highlights are identified within the case study section of this report.

Quality of service and engagement

The Park Authority has:

1. Continued to deliver Planning Committee meetings in a hybrid approach and have continued to allow public representation by video link. We have continued to live stream our public meetings on our website.
2. The process of reviewing our Planning Service Charter is underway. The document sets out clearly the overall purpose of the planning service, how

the Park Authority planning process differs from other Local Authorities and our commitments to customers engaged in the process.

3. Continued to maintain our good working relationships and shared understanding of different customer's experiences of the planning service through our Developer's Forum.
4. Offered processing agreements on all applications that are "called in" by Park and continued to promote the availability of this service via the park Authority website. Uptake of processing agreements has remained high in 2022 / 2023, with 92.9% of the planning applications determined by Park during the reporting period having a processing agreement (this compares with the previous high of 95.7% during 2020 / 2021).
5. Continued to maintain and review our suite of Planning Advice Notes which explain the way the planning system operates within the National Park and provide easy to read advice on matters that customers frequently ask about. Updates have continued to be made to reflect the changing practices surrounding the Public Meetings and attending Planning Committees.
6. Published Development Plan Scheme setting out the indicative timescales and participation methods for the next Local Development Plan. This edition will be reviewed and updated following the adoption of National Planning Framework 4 and The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 coming into effect.

Governance

The Park Authority has:

1. Continued to apply the Cairngorms National Park Planning Service Protocol – the voluntary agreement between the Park Authority and the five Local Authorities who all work together in the exercise of planning functions within and affecting the National Park.
2. Continued to implement our procedure for reviewing applications post-determination where outstanding Section 75 legal agreements have delayed the issue of decision notices.
3. Maintained a pattern of issuing swift decision notices following planning committee meetings (where there are no requirements for Section 75 legal agreements to be concluded). The majority of decision notices were issued within 7 days of committee determination.

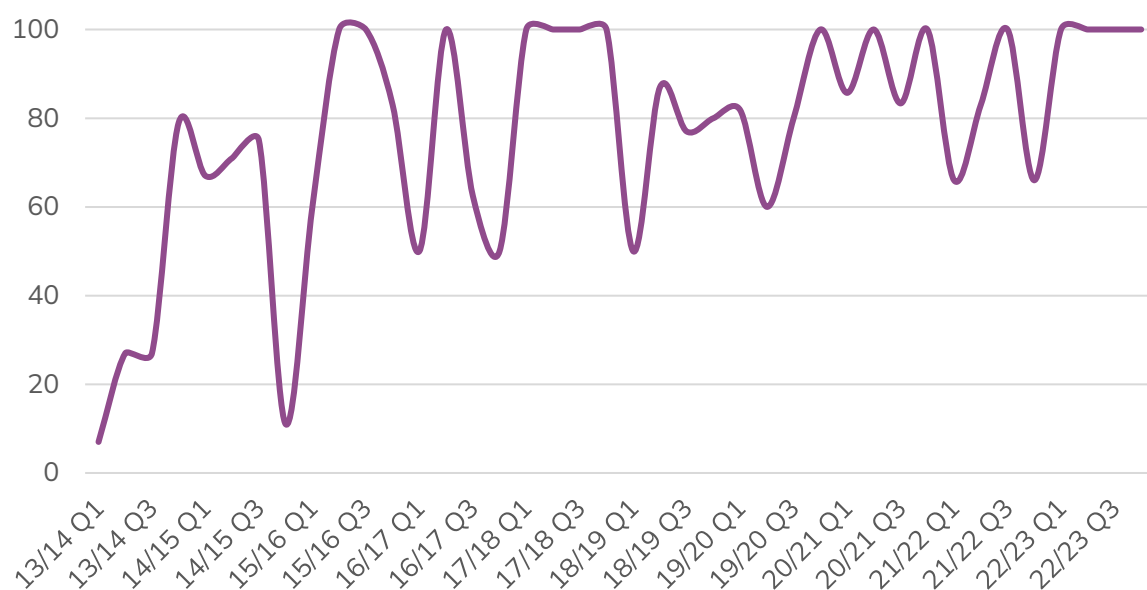


Figure 3 Percentage of Decision Notices for Local Developments issued within seven days.

Culture of continuous improvement

The Park Authority has:

1. Used six-monthly performance updates to monitor performance barriers our Management Team and reported to Planning Committee.
2. Continued to participate in the Heads of Planning Scotland's Development Planning and Development Management Sub-Committees.
3. Continued to participate in the North of Scotland Development Plans Forum, which allows the sharing of experiences, best practice, skills and knowledge amongst peers.
4. Officers continue to be active participants within the Royal Town Planning Institute North of Scotland chapter.
5. Continues to monitor and review of the working knowledge of the committee members to identify gaps in knowledge and deliver appropriate training to improve the planning committee process.
6. Appointed Planning Ecological Advice Officer to provide a dedicated resource in the planning team to evaluate the environmental impacts of applications.

Part 1: Case studies

Case study 1: Cairn Distillery

Location and timescale



Grantown on Spey



June 2019 – June 2023

Elements of high-quality planning service this study relates to

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key markers

1: Decision making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types

3: Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:

- Availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications.
- Clear and proportionate requests for supporting information.

Key areas of work



Economic
development



Planning
applications

Stakeholders involved

- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Gordon MacPhail

Overview

Gordon & MacPhail are a long-established local company based in Moray. Prior to submitting their application for the Cairn Distillery, they already owned and ran an existing distillery & visitor facility in nearby Forres, while retailing a variety of Malt Whiskies with a strong performance in export markets. Following the success of the distillery operations at Forres, the company developed a project to open a new distillery and visitor facilities near Grantown on Spey – a relatively large settlement in the area however one without an existing distillery, despite being close to the Speyside whisky trail.



Cairn Distillery © John Paul Photography, 2023.

The Cairngorm National Parks Partnership Plan 2022 provides an over-arching framework for development within the park and includes the policy aim of ‘encouraging growth of business sectors that draw on the special qualities of the National Park, such as sustainable tourism, ecological restoration and food and drink.’ Whisky distilling is a sector where we have significant local expertise, a strong brand awareness & substantial exports. The development of a new distillery with associated cafe appears therefore to offer a number of positives, including the creation of long-term employment, which would deliver on

economic policy objectives. The principle of the development was therefore supported by the planning team, subject to alignment with other policy.

Pre application engagement with the applicants took place during late 2018, with a planned pre-application consultation postponed to make adjustments regarding initial feedback. Other proposed developments near the intended site include community active travel links, trunk road upgrading & extension of the Strathspey Steam Railway – key people on these projects were brought together in early 2019 as part of further stakeholder engagement. Pre application consultation took place in February 2019 – the associated report indicated that there was strong support for the proposal.

The final proposal was for a new distillery with associated cafe & visitor facilities, extensive landscaping & a new access onto the A95 Trunk Road.



Cairn Distillery © John Paul Photography, 2023.

The planning application required a substantial list of consultees, attracted significant local interest & was faced with a number of critical considerations. However active engagement by the applicant and Planning Authority staff ensured that this apparently positive, high quality Major development was approved by Planning Committee within 3 months of being called in and with no objections registered.

Development took place between summer 2020 and winter 2022 with the distillery officially opening in June 2023. Over that period the Park Authority monitored the development's progress, finding no breaches of condition.

The outstanding landscapes & natural heritage of the Cairngorms is an important factor in attracting visitors, whilst tourism is the most significant economic sector within the National Park – the statutory aims of National Parks reflect these priorities. Given the visibility of the site on the main approach to Grantown, a high quality & sensitive design was critical.

The distillery building is therefore rounded in form with roofline sloping from West to East – allowing the building to blend in with the rounded local hills & also avoiding the presentation of an industrial style rear elevation to the Trunk Road & entrance. The slope of the site down towards the River Spey also reduces the impact of the building.



Cairn Distillery © John Paul Photography, 2023.

The building boasts extensive glazing to allow the iconic distillery equipment to be viewed from outside & further breaking up the massing. The cafe has views over enhanced water features & the River Spey towards the Cairngorms Massif, while the distillery's warehouse has a low profile & turf roof, enabling it to blend in with the landscape. The site's design and layout therefore succeeds in being contemporary & iconic whilst also sympathetic to the surrounding landscape.

A new active travel link to the nearby settlements of Grantown on Spey & Dulnain Bridge was also created by the development. At the time of the application, Gordon & MacPhail did not control the necessary land to deliver this however, due to the visitor appeal of the site and the need to encourage active travel, a commuted sum towards delivering the infrastructure was achieved. This money was used to develop a long planned for proposal to link the settlements, incorporating access to the distillery and contributing to the Partnership Plan's objective to promote a modal shift towards sustainable and active travel in the way visitors and commuters get to, and everyone moves around, the National Park.

Goals

The proposal aimed to deliver:

1. Economic development by an established local company, in a key business sector for the area.
2. Increase exports in a high value sector that benefits from local characteristics long term employment opportunities & additional visitor facilities.
3. The protection and enhancement of landscape & natural heritage as

Outcomes

The completion of a major economic development proposal in a key business sector, having been approved within 3 months of being called in with no objections.

Key officers

Katherine Donnachie (Planning Officer); Stephanie Wade (Planning Officer)

Case study 2: Granish business units

Location and timescale



Aviemore



February 2022 - March 2023

Elements of high-quality planning service this study relates to

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key markers

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

3: Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:

- Availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications.
- Clear and proportionate requests for supporting information.

Key areas of work



Economic
development



Planning
applications

Stakeholders involved

- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Granish Farm Partnership

Overview

On 14 March 2023, the Park Authority granted Granish Farm Partnership planning permission for the erection of 20 commercial letting units on land immediately north of Aviemore. The brownfield site, allocated for business use with the Local Development Plan, is between a waste water treatment works, a landfill site and waste transfer station, a civic amenity site and a go-cart track.

20220057/DET



Landscape plan @ Ecos Design

The proposal will create 20 commercial letting units within timber clad sheds with peripheral tree planting to soften the development within the context of

neighbouring woodland. The development was oriented to minimise its visual impact towards Aviemore to the south, from where it will be most visible. The development is located close to existing bus routes and will extend an existing footpath from Aviemore allowing people using the units to walk or cycle from Aviemore with a few minutes.



3D visualisation of units © Ecos Design.

Once built, the development will make an important contribution to the economic vitality of Aviemore and Badenoch and Strathspey. Aviemore plays an important role as a service centre and employment centre within Badenoch and Strathspey, with existing business land being close to capacity and strong demand for business premises from small and medium sized businesses as larger business chains have realised the market opportunities that exist in the area and opened premises. This development will provide units at the size that matches local business demand and allows for business development in site that is well-serviced but unsuitable for residential or retail uses.

The planning application was made in February 2022 and a processing agreement was used throughout the life of application. The principle of the development was established through the Local Development Plan, but the detail of internal roads layout, road connection to the B9152 connecting road to Aviemore and the detail of pedestrian access were the subject of extensive modification and clarification to address consultee concerns.

Goals

The proposal aimed to deliver:

1. Economic development by an established local company, creating opportunities for new or diversified businesses.

Outcomes

Consent for business units on an allocated site in an area of high demand for business premises.

Key officers

Stephanie Wade (Planning Officer)

Case study 3: Cairnview Road affordable homes

Location and timescale



Aviemore



2018 – 2023

Elements of high-quality planning service this study relates to

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key markers

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

Key areas of work



Affordable housing



Collaborative working

Stakeholders involved

- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Cairngorms Business Partnership
- Highland Council
- Highland Housing Partnership

Overview

Aviemore is the largest settlement in the Cairngorms National Park and one of the most under pressure in terms of the need for affordable housing. This is recognised in the Local Development Plan 2021 which sets out a requirement for

at least 45% of all new housing to be of an affordable tenure. Aviemore is also physically constrained, with steep topography and the A9 to its west and the River Spey and its floodplain to the east. The effective use of land is therefore vitally important in delivering beneficial outcomes.



Cairnview Road affordable homes.

The Cairnview Road site is located on a mixture undeveloped and previously developed land which was allocated for economic development in the centre of Aviemore, constrained on either side by the Highland main line and the Strathspey Heritage Railway. The land had formerly been occupied by the Cairngorm Technology Park, but had been vacant for some time, despite attempts to market it. By 2019 most of the allocation had been granted consent, with the Badenoch and Strathspey community hospital taking up most of the southern portion of the site.

The remainder of the site was occupied by the former call centre known as Spey House and an area of undeveloped land to its east. The call centre had been empty for several years and while it had previously been marketed for economic uses, it had failed to attract any commercial interest. Therefore, having demonstrated compliance with the Local Development Plan, in August 2018 an application to convert it to 23 affordable homes was approved. 20 of these would be for social rent, 2 for mid-market rent and 4 made available as shared equity purchases. The site's use for affordable housing was considered particularly beneficial due to its close proximity, not only to existing services such as shops and the primary school, but also to the new community hospital, which was being delivered at the time. The conversion was completed in early 2020.

In September 2019 an application was submitted for the remaining 0.4ha of the allocation, with a proposal to build 14 additional affordable homes, comprising of 6 terraced houses, 4 bungalows and 4 cottage flats. 10 of these were to be for social rent, 2 for mid-market rent and 2 for low cost home ownership. Like the previous phase, the benefits of the proposal was considered to outweigh the potential economic use of the land. Therefore, the application was approved in April 2021 and completed in early 2023.



Cairnview Road affordable homes.

Value was added to the development through an innovative partnership between Highland Council, Highland Housing Alliance and Cairngorms Business Partnership. Designed and led by Highland Housing Alliance and the Cairngorms Business Partnership respectively, in 2021 local businesses came together to form the Cairngorms Housing Partnership. Members of the partnership pay a small fee that allows their employees to take priority for available mid-market rental properties subject to meeting relevant criteria, in a bid to ensure there is substantial housing stock for the local workforce. The Cairnview development was used to pilot this project with four properties delivered through the scheme, all of which were occupied by June 2022. The Cairngorms Business Partnership, with support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, is now investigating how the pilot can be rolled out across other local authority areas in the National Park.

Goals

To deliver high quality affordable housing across a range of tenures on a previously development site in Aviemore.

Outcomes

The delivery of 38 affordable homes of various tenures that support the Aviemore community and the needs of local businesses.

Key officers

Katherine Donnachie (Planning Officer); Stephanie Wade (Planning Officer)

Case study 4: Struan Hotel

Location and timescale



Carrbridge



January 2021 - ongoing

Elements of high-quality planning service this study relates to

- Quality of outcomes

Key markers

14: Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion / withdrawal of planning applications more than one-year-old

Key areas of work



Affordable
housing

Stakeholders involved

- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- The Highland Council

Overview

The Struan Hotel in Carrbridge was once a pioneering ski hotel. Opening in 1954, the hotel was established by Austrian Olympic-class skier Karl Fuchs and his wife, Eileen, it was the first of its kind in Scotland. The hotel and its owners played a huge part in the early days of making the Cairngorms a winter sports destination and in its heyday was at the heart of village life. However, in 2006, having gone through several different owners, the hotel closed its doors for the

last time and in the following years steadily fell into a state of disrepair, becoming derelict and a target for vandalism.

In 2008, planning permission was granted by the Park Authority for the “conversion of, and alterations and extension to, hotel to form 5 dwellinghouses”. However, this was never implemented and by 2021 the building had become a significant eyesore on one of Carrbridge's busiest thoroughfares and, nicknamed 'The Ruin' by some of the village's residents, a source of frustration for the local community.

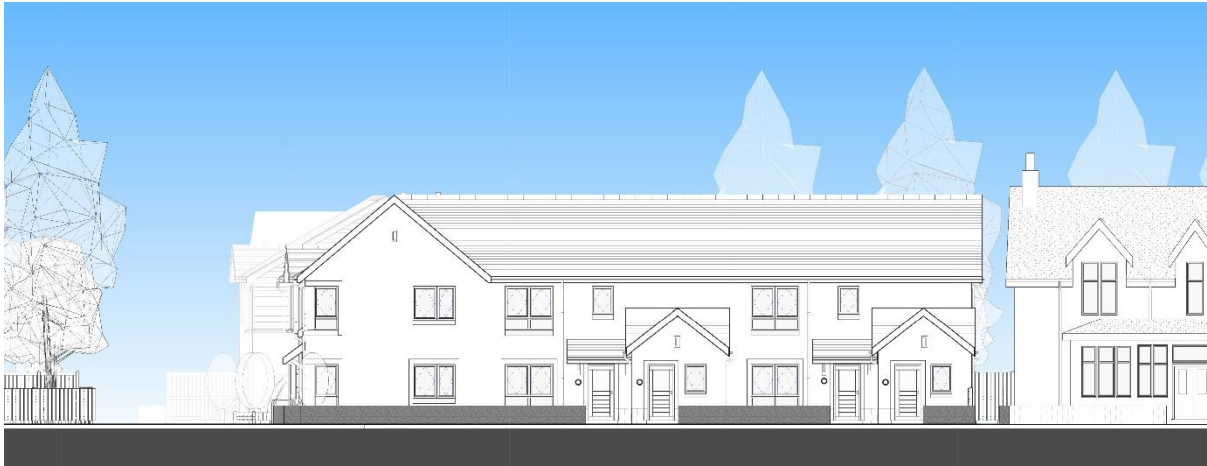


Struan Hotel in July 2022 © Google Street View.

The property was placed on the market several times; however a sale was never agreed despite numerous offers being made. Therefore, in early 2021 the Highland Council used its compulsory purchase powers to acquire the hotel with the aim of using the land it occupied to deliver affordable housing for the benefit of the community.

Due to the dilapidated condition of the building, its future use was now impossible. Therefore, in September 2021 a planning application to demolish the hotel and erect 10 affordable flats was received by the Park Authority.

The hotel gone, the proposal would see three terraced blocks of flatted, residential accommodation comprising ten units and associated services developed on the footprint of the original building. Two of these units would be designed specifically for wheelchair users. This would deliver much needed affordable homes in a community where there is high demand for housing.



Elevation to main road (B9153) © NORR Consultants Limited.

The loss of the original building allowed the Council to maximise the use of the site, achieving a higher number of units while also creating a new active frontage on the village streetscape, bringing benefits to the village in terms of improved aesthetics.

The application was approved by the Park Authority's planning committee in April 2022 and in November work on demolishing the hotel was completed. Completion of the affordable homes is expected in 2023 / 2024.



The site following the demolition of the Struan Hotel, March 2023 © Google Street View.

The development will help deliver the aims of the National Park Partnership Plan 2022, Local Development Plan 2021 and the Highland Council's Strategic Housing Plan 2021, all of which seek to increase the supply of affordable housing in Badenoch and Strathspey.

Goals

To deliver high quality development on a site that has been in a state of dereliction for over 15 years and to help meet the National Park and Highland Council's aims to deliver affordable housing.

Outcomes

Consent for a development that will improve the quality of the built environment in Carrbridge while delivering much needed affordable housing.

Key officers

Stephanie Wade (Planning Officer)

Case study 5: Battery storage

Location and timescale



Boat of Garten



2021 – September 2022

Elements of high-quality planning service this study relates to

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key markers

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

3: Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:

- Availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications.
- Clear and proportionate requests for supporting information.

Key areas of work



Climate change

Stakeholders involved

- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Highland Council
- The Energy Workshop

Overview

On 27 September 2022, the Park Authority approved a major planning application for a 49.9 Megawatt battery storage facility near Boat of Garten. The processing of the application was managed through a processing agreement and following initial discussions with the CNPA in 2021, the applicant gained pre-application advice via Highland Council's major pre-application advice service to inform the production of a planning application made in February 2022.



Visualisation of development in landscape © The Energy Workshop.

The location of the proposals was significantly informed by the site of an existing electricity sub-station, but the use of pre-application advice refined details of the proposal and ensured that a comprehensive planning application was made that addressed most issues raised by consultees. The proximity of the development to the River Spey Special Area of Conservation meant that detailed construction environmental management measures and details of drainage from the site required to be clarified in order to be certain that there would be no effect on the integrity of the River Spey SAC.



Visualisation of development in landscape © The Energy Workshop.

The location of the proposal also meant that, while it would be a relatively crude industrial compound, it would not be viewed by many people from close to the site, would often be screened from surrounding viewpoints by topography and vegetation, or would be viewed in the context of the electricity substation occupying higher ground. This meant that the potential impacts of the development on the special landscape qualities of the National Park were minimised.

Goals

To support the efficiency and resilience of the electricity grid.

Outcomes

Consent for a energy generation/storage facility in the National Park, supporting the efficiency and resilience of the electricity grid.

Key officers

Katie Crerar (Planning Officer), Alan Atkins (Planning Officer)

Part 2: Supporting evidence

This report was compiled drawing on evidence from the following sources:

- Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022:
<https://cairngorms.co.uk/working-together/partnershipplan/>
- Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021 and supporting guidance: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/planning-development/ldp-2021/>
- Cairngorms National Park Authority Planning Advice Notes:
<https://cairngorms.co.uk/planning-development/the-planning-service/viewing-and-making-comments-on-applications/planning-advice-notes>
- Cairngorms National Park Authority Design Advice:
<http://cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/planning/good-design/>
- Cairngorms Planning Enforcement Charter: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Item9Appendix1PlanningEnforcementCharter.pdf>
- Cairngorms Planning Enforcement Register: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/211112EnforcementRegistertextversion.pdf>
- Planning Committee Item 7 11/10/2019:
https://www.eplanningcnpa.co.uk/online-applications/files/B613E70F585E5C8A7DC08DE88B3D8D0D/pdf/2019_0209_DET-COMMITTEE_REPORT-100157753.pdf
- Planning Committee Item 8 10/03/2023:
https://www.eplanningcnpa.co.uk/online-applications/files/EBBA02C1D118A7EAC90C45B77FFF2986/pdf/2022_0057_DET-COMMITTEE_REPORT-100188042.pdf
- Planning Committee Item 6 24/01/2020:
https://www.eplanningcnpa.co.uk/online-applications/files/327CEC47AFB16257F063A94C9F5A7D65/pdf/2019_0298_DET-COMMITTEE_REPORT-100160846.pdf
- Planning Committee Item 5 17/08/2018:
https://www.eplanningcnpa.co.uk/online-applications/files/E0D2B9160A8E68EC4D41E2A53FC6B53B/pdf/2018_0027_DET-COMMITTEE_REPORT_FINAL-100148893.pdf
- Planning Committee Item 5 22/04/2022:
<https://www.eplanningcnpa.co.uk/online->

Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study (page no.)	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study (page no.)
Design		Interdisciplinary Working	
Climate change	27	Collaborative Working	19
Conservation		Community Engagement	
Biodiversity		Placemaking	
Regeneration		Design Workshops / Charrettes	
Environment		Place Standard	
Greenspace		Performance Monitoring	
Town Centres		Process Improvement	
Masterplanning		Project Management	
Local Develop Plan & Supplementary Guidance		Skills Sharing	
Housing Supply		Staff Training	
Affordable Housing	19, 23	Online Systems	
Economic Development	10, 15	Data and Information	
Enforcement		Digital Practice	
Development Management Processes		Transport	
Planning Applications	10, 15		

Part 3: Service improvements

Park Authority service improvements 2023 - 2024

In the coming year the Park Authority will:

1. **Review and improve approach to conducting Equality Impact Assessments** to improve outcomes for people with protected characteristics through the planning system.
2. **Improve approach to early community and stakeholder engagement on the Local Development Plan** to ensure that the Evidence Report benefits from a broad range of views.
3. **Increase the involvement of planners in the Community Action Planning process** to help communities create plans that are more spatially focused and may lead to the preparation of Local Place Plans.
4. **Work jointly with the local authorities that cover the National Park area on open space and play sufficiency assessments** to help inform the next Local Development Plan and help deliver the local authorities' Open Space Strategies.
5. **Deliver carbon literacy training to all planners** to help embed awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of development in the decision making process and help the National Park contribute towards reaching net zero.
6. **Deliver ongoing specialist training to committee members on landscape in relation to wind farm developments** – and with continued reviews to monitor gaps in members knowledge to deliver suitable additional training as required.

The identified service improvements aim to respond to feedback received from stakeholders, including through the National Park's Planning Representatives Network and the Developers Forum. The priorities will build upon progress that has been made in previous years.

Delivery of Park Authority service improvement actions in 2022 – 2023

Table 1 provides the Park Authority's assessment of how we consider we have delivered on our service Improvements and actions identified in Planning Performance Framework 2021 - 2023.

Table 1 Summary of service improvements and actions 2022 - 2023.

Committed improvements and actions	Complete
Continue our monitoring of hill tracks development and increase awareness of policy amongst estates and land managers - Our monitoring and enforcement of unauthorised hill tracks has increased in recent years. During 2023 / 24 we will continue work on completing a monitoring project using aerial photography.	Yes - work ongoing.
Adopt the next National Park Partnership Plan (2022-2027) which will act as the National Parks Regional Spatial Strategy.	Yes – The Partnership Plan was adopted in 2022.
Adopt the final two pieces of supplementary guidance; Developer obligations and Housing, to support the delivery of the Local Development Plan policies.	Yes - Developer obligations supplementary guidance was adopted in 2022 and the Housing supplementary guidance was adopted in 2023.
Support Highland Council implement Short Term Let Area in Badenoch and Strathspey and prepare Park Authority planning guidance on Short-term Letting.	Partially – guidance has been prepared but is yet to be adopted.
Finalise the plan for the Cairngorms National Park Design Awards; begin the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Design Awards, through an engagement and awareness campaign beginning	No - constraints to staff time means that the preparation for a Design

Committed improvements and actions	Complete
toward the end of 2022. The Design Awards will be scheduled to be conducted in the Summer/ Autumn of 2023.	Awards has been paused.
Continue to review the effectiveness of the delivery of the Action Programme and Development Plan Scheme to ensure they are accessible and comprehensive in their reporting of the Local Development Plan.	Yes, taking into account the content of National Planning Framework 4 and Local development planning guidance the Development Plan Scheme has been redesigned and will be published in 2023.
Deliver specialist training to committee members on landscape in relation to wind farm developments – and with continued reviews to monitor gaps in members knowledge to deliver suitable additional training as required.	Partially – landscape training was arranged, but due to scheduling was not given to planning committee in June 2023.
Review the format and content of the Planning Service Performance Updates reported to the Planning Committee; Improve the clarity and data representation in a more engaging and meaningful manner.	Partially – work has commenced and is ongoing.

Part 4: National headline indicators

The National Headline Indicators are a detailed list of work programme information that each planning service needs to collate in-house. They are designed for ongoing measurement of performance.

Table 2 National Headline Indicator key outcomes.

Key Outcomes	2022 - 2023	2021 - 2022
Development Planning		
Age of local development plan (years and months) at end of reporting period. Requirement: less than 5 years	2yr 0m	1yr 0m
Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Yes / No)	Yes	Yes
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? (Yes - earlier / Yes - later / No)	No	No
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year? (Yes / No)	Yes	Yes
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs		
Established housing land supply	1,523	3,023
5-year effective housing land supply programming	611	812
5-year effective land supply total capacity	1,320	2,827
5-year housing supply target	358	358

Key Outcomes	2022 - 2023	2021 - 2022
5-year effective housing land supply	8.5 years	11.3 years
Housing approvals	35 units	48 units
Housing completions over the last 5 years	412	334
Marketable employment land supply	29.5ha	29.5ha
Employment land take-up during reporting year	Not available	Not available
Development Management Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	7.1%	21%
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	N/A	N/A
Decision-making		
Application approval rate	100%	92.9%
Delegation rate	N/A	N/A ²
Percentage of applications valid upon first receipt	N/A	N/A ³
Decision-Making Timescales (average number of weeks to decision)		
Major developments	N/A	N/A
Local developments (non-householder)	7.6 weeks	6.8 weeks
Householder developments	N/A	N/A
Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	0	0

² There is no scheme of delegated authority in the National Park – all applications are taken to committee for decision.

³ Planning applications within the National Park are initially submitted to and validated by local authorities.

Key Outcomes	2022 - 2023	2021 - 2022
Number remaining	0	0
Enforcement		
Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed (months) Requirement: review every 2 years	0 years 5 months	0 years 7 months
Complaints lodged and investigated	54	58
Breaches identified – no further action taken	30	38
Cases closed	43	57
Notices served	4	0
Direct action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

Context Statement

Development Planning

The National Park Partnership Plan was approved by ministers and adopted in 2022. The Partnership Plan is the overarching management plan for the Cairngorms National Park and sets out the vision and over-arching strategy for managing the National Park, as well as identifying priorities for action and an overall strategic policy framework. Furthermore, the Partnership Plan acts as the Regional Spatial Strategy for the National Park, which is intended to address strategic development and issues.

Scottish Government guidance states that Local Development Plans for National Parks should be consistent with the Partnership Plan and Regional Spatial Strategy. The Partnership Plan therefore provides the strategic context for the next Local Development Plan, and the next Local Development Plan will help to deliver a number of the Partnership Plan's policies and priorities.

The Park Authority adopted the final two pieces of supplementary guidance that will support the delivery of the Local Development Plan 2021 - Developer obligations and Housing.

Work begun on the preparation of the next Local Development Plan 2021. A Development Plan Scheme setting out the indicative timescales and participation methods was published in summer 2022. This edition will be reviewed and updated following the adoption of National Planning Framework 4 and The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 coming into effect.

To ease pressure on the Park Authority's conservation team, the post of Planning Ecological Advice Officer has been created and appointed. The role of the post is to work on the preparation of the next Local Development Plan and provide the Development Management team with advice on the environmental impacts of development proposals.

Work is ongoing to continually monitor and deliver training to the Committee on matters of clarification where additional training/ or information is deemed necessary.

A project and engagement plan for the third Cairngorms National Park Design Awards (2023) was drafted however resource constraints mean that a 2023 date for the Awards is unrealistic. Therefore, the project has been paused.

Development Management

In 2022 / 2023 the Park Authority called in 25 planning applications during the reporting period and determined 16 applications (5 being withdrawn). This is slightly higher than in 2022 / 2021 when 24 planning applications were called in, though In that period 22 were determined and zero withdrawn.

The Park Authority's use of processing agreements continues to be a good way to provide certainty for applicants and for Park Authority staff. The use of processing agreements is reflected in the official statistics produced by the Scottish Government, which exclude timescales for applications with processing agreements. Figure 4 shows the official statistics for applications that did not have processing agreements as well as the timescales for applications with processing agreements.

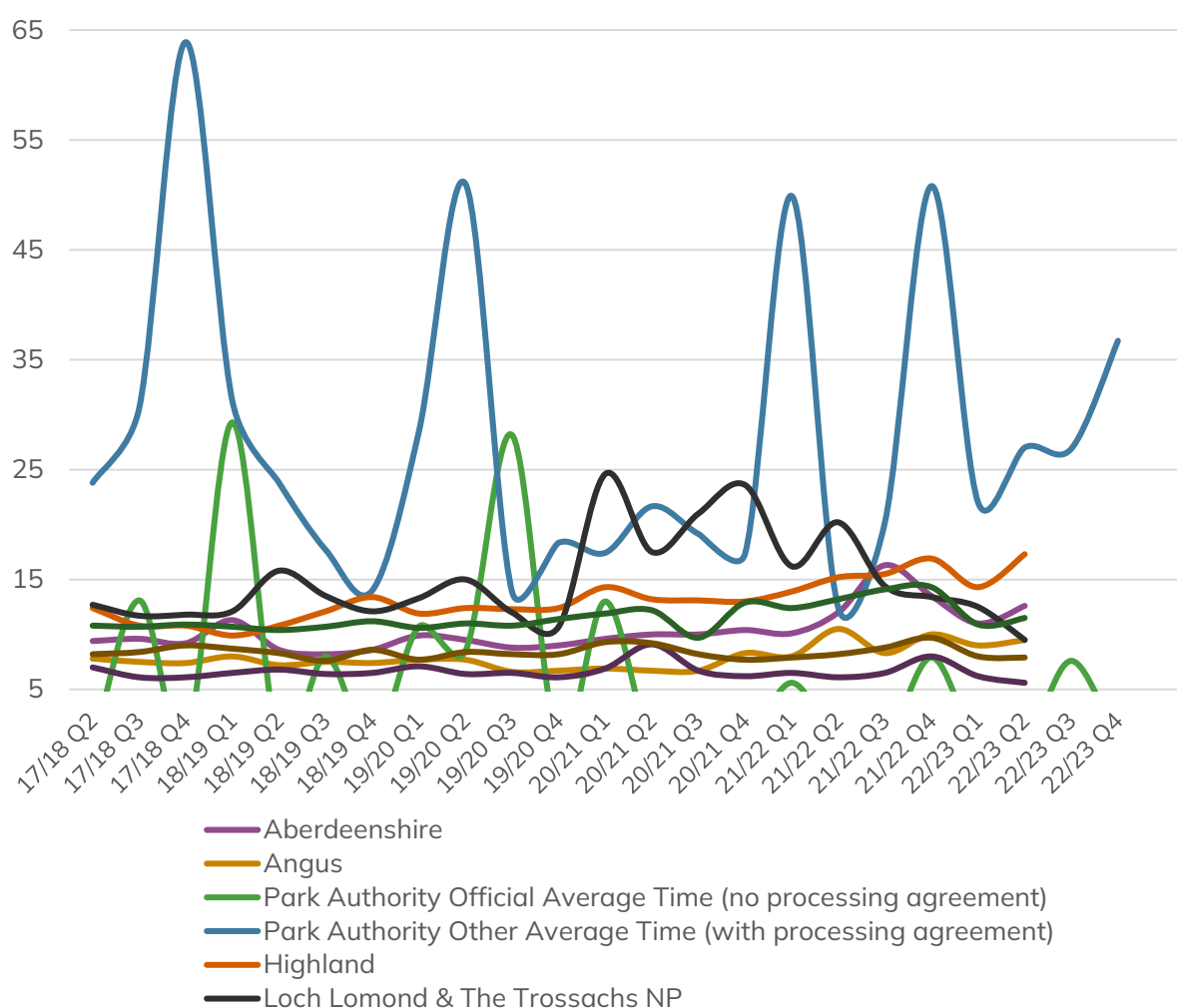


Figure 4 Average time for planning application determination for local developments (most Park Authority call-in applications).

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

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

The internal audit of the planning service that reported during 2015 / 2016 recommended that the Park Authority use a rolling annual average indicator for service performance monitoring.

Part 5: Official statistics

Scottish Government official statistics are drawn from quarterly returns by planning authorities. They are collated into an annual set of figures that is published on Scottish Government's website:

www.gov.scot/collections/planning-statistics

Table 3 to Table 4 presents the information from these returns in a consistent format.

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

Table 3 Decision making timescales 2022 - 2023.

Category	Total number of decisions 2022 - 2023	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2022 - 2023	2021 - 2022
Overall			
Major developments	0	N/A	N/A
Local developments (non-householder)	1	7.6 weeks	6.8 weeks
Local: less than 2 months	1	7.6 weeks	6.8 weeks
Local: more than 2 months	0	N/A	N/A
Householder developments	0	N/A	N/A
Local: less than 2 months	0	N/A	N/A
Local: more than 2 months	0	N/A	N/A
Housing developments			
Major	0	N/A	N/A

Category	Total number of decisions 2022 - 2023	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2022 - 2023	2021 - 2022
Local housing developments	0	N/A	N/A
Local: less than 2 months	0	N/A	N/A
Local: more than 2 months	0	N/A	N/A
Business and industry			
Major	0	N/A	N/A
Local business and industry	1	7.6 weeks	N/A
Local: less than 2 months	1	7.6 weeks	N/A
Local: more than 2 months	0	N/A	N/A
EIA developments	0	N/A	N/A
Other consents⁴			
Prior approval	1	9.6 weeks	N/A
Planning / legal agreements⁵			
Major: average time	0	N/A	N/A
Local: average time	0	N/A	N/A

B: Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

⁴ Consents and certificates: Listed buildings and Conservation area consents, Control of Advertisement consents, Hazardous Substances consents, Established Use Certificates, certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development, notification on overhead electricity lines, notifications and directions under GPDO Parts 6 & relating to agricultural and forestry development and applications for prior approval by Coal Authority or licensed operator under classes 60 & 62 of the GPDO

⁵ Legal obligations associated with a planning permission; concluded under section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 or section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973

Table 4 Information about local reviews and appeals in 2022 - 2023.

Type	Total number of decisions	Original decision upheld			
		2022 – 2023		2021 - 2022	
		No	%	No.	%
Local reviews ⁶	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	2	2	50%	1	100%

C: Context

The official decision-making timescales during 2022 / 2023 (7.6 weeks on average) are slightly lower than the 6.7 weeks reported in 2021 / 2022. The difference between these average times is low and demonstrates how improvements made since 2013 / 2014 have been consistently maintained. The shorter decision times show that despite the low number of applications determined by the Park Authority, the Park Authority has avoided any single complex and lengthy cases that could otherwise significantly affect the overall figures (as has happened in previous years).

⁶ The Park Authority does not have a Local Review Body, with all appeals against Park Authority planning decisions going straight to Planning and Environmental Appeals Division.

Part 6: Workforce information

The workforce information below provides a snapshot of the Planning Service staff position on 31 March 2022. This information is an integral part of providing the context for the information presented throughout the Planning Performance Framework.

Table 5 Tier of the most senior member of planning staff in 2022 - 2023.

	Tier 1 ⁷	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Head of Planning			✓	

Table 6 Approximate age profile of the planning staff in 2022 - 2023.

Staff Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	1
30 – 39	3 ⁸
40 – 49	3
50 and over	4

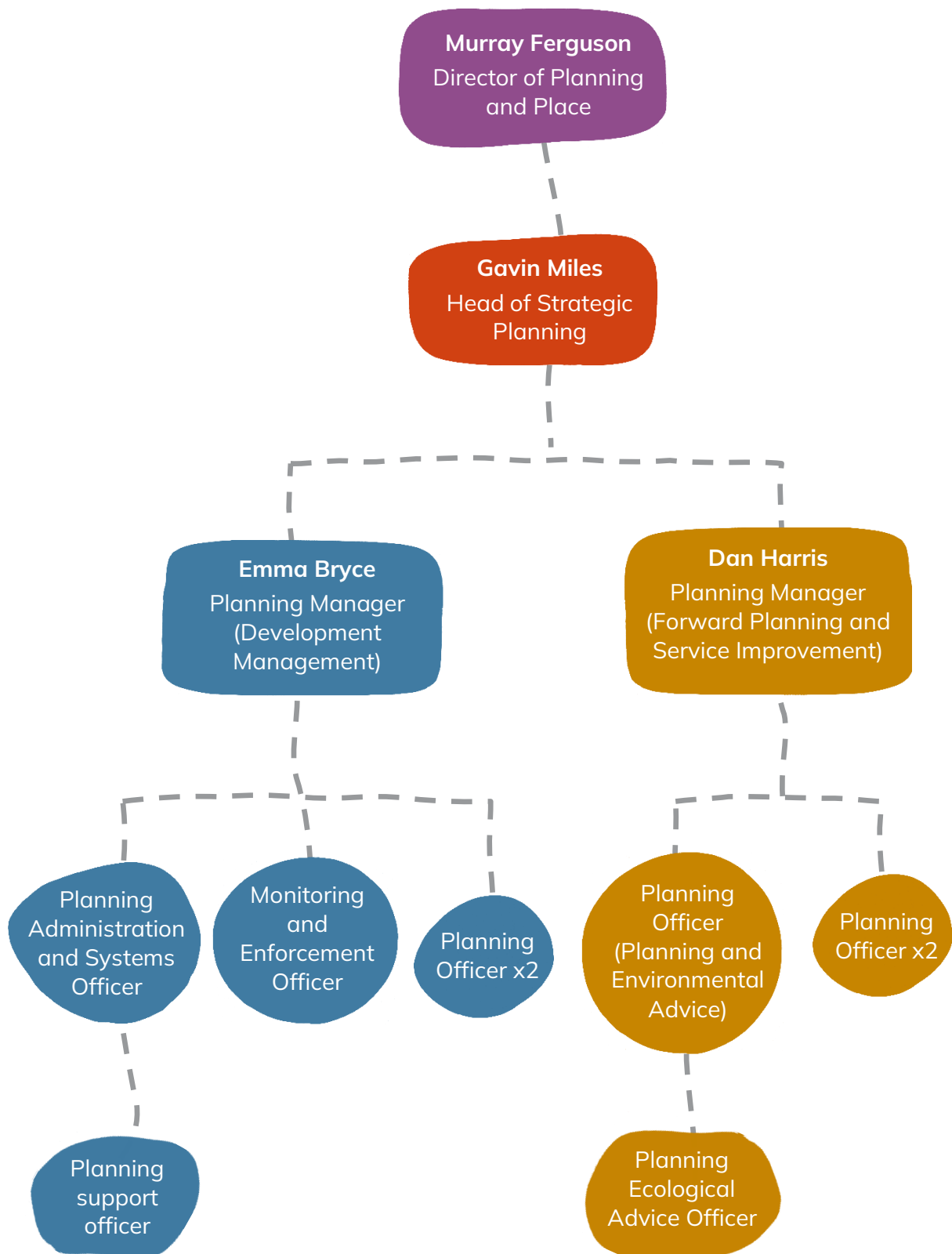
Table 7 Approximate numbers of staff which are members of the Royal Town Planning Institute in 2022 - 2023.

Royal Town Planning Institute chartered staff	Headcount
Chartered staff	4

⁷ Tier 1= Chief Executive, Tier 2= Directors, Tier 3= Heads of Service, Tier 4= Managers.

⁸ One staff member 0.8 FTE and one 0.69 FTE

Park Authority planning organisational structure



Part 7: Planning committee

Table 8 Information on the number of meetings and site visits carried out in 2022 - 2023.

Committee and site visits ⁹	Number per year
Full board meetings	5
Planning committees	9
Area committees (where relevant)	N/A
Committee site visits	2
Local review body ¹⁰	N/A
Local review body site visits ¹¹	N/A

⁹ References to committees also include National Park Authority Boards. Number of site visits is those cases where visits were carried out by committees/boards.

¹⁰ The Park Authority does not have a Local Review Body, with all appeals against Park Authority planning decisions going straight to the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division.

¹¹ See footnote 9.

Appendix 1: Performance marker evidence

The following table provides a summary of how we consider the Park Authority performed and the progress we are made in relation to the performance markers identified by Scottish Government over 2022 - 2023. The coloured red / amber / green (RAG) range highlights status for 2021 - 2022 as published in Scottish Government's feedback report.

	Performance marker	Previous RAG rating	Source or evidence
Driving improved performance			
1	Decision making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types	Green	<p>Major Applications</p> <p>The Park Authority determined no applications for major developments in 2022 - 2023.</p> <p>Local (Non-Householder) Applications</p> <p>The Park Authority's average timescale of 7.6 weeks is significantly below the Park Authority's average of 21.6 weeks (2013 - 2022) and faster than the Scottish average.</p> <p>Householder Applications</p> <p>The Park Authority determined no applications for householder developments in 2022 - 2023.</p>

	Performance marker	Previous RAG rating	Source or evidence
2	Project management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and availability publicised on planning authority website	Green	<p>Processing agreements are offered on all applications called-in: 92.9% of applications determined by Park Authority were subject to a processing agreement.</p> <p>Processing agreement information is publicised on the Park Authority's website.</p>
3	<p>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications • clear and proportionate requests for supporting information 	Green	<p>The Park Authority provides pre-application advice via the local authority services.</p> <p>Planning guidance provides clarity on information required to support applications.</p>
4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6	Green	No applications where legal agreements took longer than 6 months to conclude.

	Performance marker	Previous RAG rating	Source or evidence
	months of 'resolving to grant		
5	Enforcement charter updated / re-published	Green	The Park Authority enforcement charter was updated and republished in December 2022.
6	<p>Continuous improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	Green	<p>The Local Development Plan and enforcement charter are up to date. Decision making timescales are similar to last year and the Scottish average with no legacy cases.</p> <p>The Park Authority has completed 4 of its 8 of its improvement commitments, with 3 partially completed. One was not completed due to constraints to staff time.</p> <p>The newly adopted Developer Obligations and Housing supplementary guidance provide additional support in delivering community infrastructure and affordable housing.</p>
Promoting the plan-led system			
7	Local Development Plan (or Local Plan) less than 5 years since adoption	Green	The current Local Development Plan was adopted in March 2021.

	Performance marker	Previous RAG rating	Source or evidence
8	<p>Development plan scheme demonstrates next Local Development Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on course for adoption within 5-year cycle • project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	Green	The current Local Development Plan was adopted in March 2021. A new development Plan Scheme was published in September 2022 and will guide the preparation of the next Local Development Plan.
9	Stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government are engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation	N/A	Current Local Development Plan was adopted in 2021.
10	No longer applicable - gap kept for data continuity	N/A	N/A
11	Production of relevant and up to date policy advice	Green	The Local Development Plan was adopted In March 2021 and provides basis for up-to-date policy. The two

	Performance marker	Previous RAG rating	Source or evidence
			<p>final pieces of supplementary guidance - Developer obligations and Housing - were adopted in 2022 / 2023. Consequently, there are now ten supporting supplementary and non-statutory guidance documents supporting the Local Development Plan.</p> <p>The National Park Partnership Plan was adopted in 2022. The Partnership Plan acts as the Regional Spatial Strategy for the National Park and provides strategic direction for the next Local Development Plan.</p>
Simplifying and streamlining			
12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice)	Green	The Park Authority contributed to various pre-application advice requests from Local Authorities, including a number of Major Applications.
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Green	The Park Authority continues to share best practice with the North of Scotland development forum. Several Officers are also active in the Royal Town Planning Institute North of Scotland and Grampian chapters.

	Performance marker	Previous RAG rating	Source or evidence
Delivering development			
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases: conclusion/withdrawal of planning applications more than one-year-old	Green	No legacy cases remaining at end of reporting period.
15	Developer contributions: clear expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and • in pre-application discussions 	Green	The Local Development Plan and its supporting supplementary Developer obligations and Housing supplementary guidance set out information on developer contributions. Referred to in pre-application discussions where relevant.



Cairngorms
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh