

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**ANGUS COUNCIL – 16 DECEMBER 2021**

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2022 – 2027: ANGUS COUNCIL  
RESPONSE**

**REPORT BY INTERIM DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

**ABSTRACT**

The Cairngorms National Park Authority is carrying out public consultation on the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan which covers the period 2022 to 2027. This report recommends that this report along with Appendix 1 be submitted as the council's response to the consultation.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Angus Council:

- (i) agree that this report with Appendix 1 be submitted as the Council's response to the consultation on the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022-27.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to priorities in the Angus Council Plan, which are:

Economy  
People  
Place and  
Our Council

**3. CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2022-27**

3.1 The Cairngorms National Park Authority is carrying out public consultation on the [Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan](#) which covers the period 2022 - 2027. The Partnership Plan is intended to replace the current National Park Partnership Plan 2017 – 2022 (the Plan).

The National Park has four distinct aims as set out by Parliament:

- 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.

These aims are to be pursued collectively. However, if there is conflict between the first aim and any of the others, greater weight is given to the first (as set out in Section 9.6 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000). This helps ensure conservation of the natural and cultural heritage underpins the economic, social and recreation value of the Cairngorms National Park.

The Plan embeds this approach in the strategy for the National Park that is approved by Ministers and sets the framework for all public bodies that work within the Cairngorms, from NatureScot and Local Authorities to Transport Scotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. It is also supported and delivered by a range of private and voluntary organisations.

- 3.2 The Plan sets out how all those with a responsibility for the Park will co-ordinate their work to tackle the most important issues. In particular, the Plan:
- Sets out the vision and overarching strategy for managing the National Park.
  - Guides the work of all public bodies and other partners to deliver the aims of the National Park.
  - Provides the strategic context for the Local Development Plan.
  - Sets out the Regional Land Use Framework and Regional Spatial Strategy for the National Park.
  - Sets out the Economic and Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the National Park.
- 3.3 The Plan is arranged in three sections: Nature, People and Place. Each section sets out long-term objectives up to 2045 (the year Scottish Government has committed to achieving net zero), and these are supported by a set of policies for the next five years, which are set out in the Policies section. The Plan is in turn underpinned by a series of themed action plans.

#### **Nature**

Nature objectives support the Cairngorms National Park reaching net zero by 2045 and the Park Authority is undertaking carbon baseline work at present. This objective is supported by ambitious objectives to expand native woodland cover, restore, and manage forests, peatland, rivers, wetlands, reduce deer numbers and work with farms to reduce their carbon footprint and improve biodiversity. The Park is one of four Regional Land Use Partnership pilot areas and a steering group and framework will be developed by 2023.

#### **People**

People objectives include stabilising the population, reflect a diversity of backgrounds and increase the proportion of young and working age people living and working in the Park. In terms of economy, objectives seek to develop a well-being economy, rural diversification and year-round employment and Increased numbers of employers offering living wage and skills and training opportunities.

In addition, the Plan aims to increase the area of land in community ownership or where the community is directly involved in its management. Empowering local communities to access funding and make decisions which affect their local area is a priority, as are improving the mental and physical health of residents and increasing the use of Gaelic.

#### **Place**

In terms of Place, a key objective is for the Park to become an exemplar in sustainable tourism and the management of protected areas. This will be achieved by stabilising visitor numbers throughout the year, managing visitor impacts whilst delivering high quality experiences and encouraging transformative change in transport and active travel.

The Plan also seeks to ensure sufficient housing stock to enable people to live and work in the National Park and help resolve affordability issues for key workers.

### **4. ANGUS COUNCIL RESPONSE**

It is proposed that this report along with Appendix 1 be submitted as the Council response to the consultation.

Overall, the vision and objectives of the Plan align well with Angus Council strategic policy. It is an exemplar of how climate and ecological emergencies can be addressed at all scales, by public bodies and communities working together.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications from this report.

### **6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices:

Appendix A: Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022-27: Angus Council Response

## **Appendix A: Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022-27: Angus Council Response**

### **Overall**

*1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the right objectives and targets for the National Park?*

**Angus Council fully support the objectives and targets proposed within the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022-27 (the Plan).**

The small area of Angus within the Cairngorms National Park boundary is predominantly rural upland with one small rural settlement. The objectives of the Plan align with the Angus Council strategies and action plans that consider this area, including: Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2030, Angus Sustainable Energy and Carbon Action Plan, Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 201-26, Angus Council Active and Sustainable Travel Action Plan and the future local development plan - AngusPlan.

The Partnership Plan is an exemplar of how to ambitiously tackle the climate and ecological emergencies and will shape the development catchment scale approaches to delivering nature-based solutions in Angus.

### **Nature**

The emphasis on natural regeneration of woodland is welcomed and it is noted that the intention is to achieve this through a reduction in deer numbers rather than deer fencing. Deer fencing is also often part of peatland restoration proposals and it would similarly be desirable if erosion from deer could be reduced by a reduction in deer numbers. Peatlands are typically in unenclosed upland landscapes and fencing can obstruct access, erode wildness qualities, and can have visual impacts. There may also be a case for limiting burning on carbon rich soils more generally rather than solely on deep peat.

Similarly, a shared approach to tree planting, river system restoration and ecosystem management and nature-based solutions will continue to be crucial to restoring healthy, functional, ecosystems. Angus Council is currently involved in partnerships and projects which contribute towards the delivery of the objectives and targets within the Plan. These include working through the Cairngorms National Park Authority on the River South Esk via a joint catchment working group which shares good practice on landscape scale approaches to natural flood management, woodland expansion and riparian tree planting and river restoration on the rivers South Esk, Dee, Spey.

There may be some concern about actions under specific objectives having implications for Angus and other neighbouring local authority areas if for example deer and game bird management results in changes to distribution of pressures in upland Angus. However healthy, functioning upland ecosystems are a priority in the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-26 as such, actions that enable this are welcome.

Similarly, it is considered possible that the policy on large scale wind turbines might add pressure for such developments in Angus but welcome reference to them being inappropriate in areas out with the National Park where they adversely affect its landscape character or special landscape qualities.

### **People**

Angus, as a rural authority, will benefit from engaging in the delivery of actions in the Plan, in the Park area, where lessons can be learned in relation to mitigating challenges which impact on older and vulnerable communities.

The Cairngorms National Park journey to net-zero by 2045 focusses on key themes including: nature-based solutions, being a rural exemplar in achieving a just transition and working with businesses, land managers and communities have people at the heart of their success. Angus Council welcomes schemes such as the proposed carbon audit and baseline survey that will be established in 2022, the Heritage Horizons Green Investment Plan and the development of the pilot Regional Landuse Partnership.

Ambitions for reduced car travel, increased sustainable travel options and improved public transport in the national park area will be of interest. There is no road link between Angus and the core of the National Park, but the high-level paths from the Angus Glens into Highland Perthshire and Aberdeenshire are key links in the network.

## Place

The emphasis on moving in a direction of a well-being economy is welcomed, something which has potential to support a thriving future for Angus. The diversification of the rural economy and opportunity for increased support for sustainable forms of tourism are a key priority in Angus. Attracting and retaining young people and investment in skills/training and green jobs is central to a well-being economy and sustaining communities as places for people to live and work.

Concerns about the affordability and sustainability of housing in the National Park are appreciated and objectives and actions to address those issues are welcomed. The housing market in the Angus Glens may have some similar features, and the forthcoming Housing Need and Demand Assessment should provide some greater insight. Pressure on property markets in rural locations to support local economies and provide homes needs to be carefully managed. Significant levels of private rented stock which could be detrimentally affected by increased energy efficiency requirements may exacerbate affordability and availability of other properties.

The high-level principles of a capital investment strategy, as set out, makes useful reference to the interrelationships between aspects and note also reference earlier in the document to investment opportunities but also potentially necessary trade-offs, which is pragmatic and well said.

### *2. Why do you say that?*

The objectives and targets set out align with the policy direction set by Scottish Government through a variety of policy and strategy documents and as previously mentioned, a range of Angus Council policies and strategies.

In the context of the climate and ecological emergency there is a strong need to protect stored carbon in peatland soils as well as encouraging sequestration through woodland expansion in appropriate areas. Adaptation can create landscapes resilient to climate change with increased biodiversity using nature-based solutions. Angus Council welcome the support and direction provided by the Park Authority in relation to ongoing work and the opportunity to deliver the Heritage Horizons: Cairngorms 2030 project with partners.

The transport aims and actions of the plan is consistent with the vision set out in the National Transport Strategy (NTS2). Ultimately the vision and priorities of NTS2 is to “protect our climate and improve lives for the future,” by creating a more sustainable travel network throughout Scotland, and the Plan demonstrates that the national park understand the measures that could work towards this.

### *3. Is there anything missing from the list of objectives that you think we should prioritise?*

Carbon storage and sequestration are important but encouraging the use of timber products to replace cement-based products in construction has the potential to significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the construction industry. With Scots pine being the main timber tree within the national park, there are big opportunities to encourage a cross-industry solution. There are also opportunities for the commercial growing of birch. The sensitive commercial use of native woodland can help incentivise land use change. With the changing climate, Scots pine is likely to become the preferred commercial species in the Angus Glens, but the limited local provenance tree stock would make this adaptation difficult without tree planting.

### *4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the overall outcomes for nature, people and place we have proposed?*

***We agree with the ambitious outcomes within the Partnership Plan.***

### *5. Do you have any other comments?*

**No**

## **Actions and policies**

*1. Have you got any comments on the actions or policies we have proposed?*

It is considered possible that the policy on large scale wind turbines might also add pressure for such developments in Angus but welcome reference to them being inappropriate in areas out with the National Park where they adversely affect its landscape character or special landscape qualities (Policy C2).

*2. Are there any actions or policies you think should be added?*

**No**

## **Technical questions**

*1. Do you think these are the right principles for capital investment in the National Park and what key infrastructure projects should the National Park focus on over the next five years?*

**Yes**

*2. What are the key issues that you want the Regional Land Use Framework to focus on in the Cairngorms National Park?*

The Scottish Government has set out a twin crises approach to the interlinked climate and ecological emergencies. Angus Council has declared a climate emergency and has long recognised the need to enable nature to play a part in adaptation processes. Angus Council would welcome an ambitious, long term, Regional Land Use Framework where land managers, communities, partnership initiatives and NGO's work together to deliver shared priorities. This is of particular importance in upland landscapes where plans to expand native woodland cover, restore and manage forests, peatland, rivers, and wetlands can be complex and can only be delivered successfully through an innovative partnership approach