

---

The Cairngorms - Stepping Forward  
A Manifesto from the Cairngorms Campaign

The supreme landscapes and internationally important land-forms, soils, plant and animal communities of the entire Cairngorms Area, from low ground to high tops, should be cherished and nurtured in ways that:-

- protect their qualities and enhance them where degraded;
  - recognise and sustain their proposed World Heritage Status;
  - maximise benefits to local communities and the people of Scotland and further afield in ways consistent with the conservation of the area;
  - allow the widest possible recreation compatible with the other objectives;
  - set the standard for conservation in Scotland and the UK.
- 

**ORDER OF CONTENTS**

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>The Cairngorms - A Special Place</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Managing the Cairngorms</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Objectives Papers:</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Wild Land and Landscape</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Woodland and Forestry</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Rivers and Wetlands</b>
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Red Deer</b>
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Recreation and Access</b>
<b>4.6</b>	<b>Downhill Skiing</b>
<b>4.7</b>	<b>Tourism and the Local Economy</b>
<b>4.8</b>	<b>Sustaining Cairngorms Communities</b>
<b>4.9</b>	<b>Development and Infrastructure</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>The Way Forward</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Factors to be Considered</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
<b>6.1</b>	
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Guiding Principles - Summary</b>

*The Cairngorms Campaign is grateful to the William Grant and Sons Charitable Trust for their generous contribution towards the editing and printing costs of this Manifesto.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This Manifesto is a statement by the Cairngorms Campaign on how it believes the Cairngorms should be managed into the 21st century.

After a brief assessment of the importance of the Cairngorms in their local, national and international context, the Manifesto outlines the principles and mechanisms which the Campaign believes must underpin any management proposals. There then follow several objective papers discussing the major issues. Each paper concludes with a Guiding Principle which is held to be fundamental to the future management of the Area. These guiding principles, together with the mechanisms, provide the minimum basis for a secure and sustainable future for the Cairngorms.

The ideas contained in this Manifesto have been developed by a team of members from many of the Organisations supporting the Campaign. They are presented here as the subject for discussion to everyone who is concerned about the future management of the Cairngorms. While the broad sweep of the proposals in the paper has the approval of all the organisations supporting the Campaign, individual proposals should not necessarily be taken as the policy of the supporting bodies.

The suggestions presented in the Manifesto are based on the combined knowledge and experience of this team drawn from members of the Campaign, all of whom know the Cairngorms intimately, value their special qualities and are committed to the protection and enhancement of these. Many of the contributors live and/or work in the area and understand the concerns of the local people who are essential participants in all future management plans.

The members of the Cairngorms Campaign maintain that anything less than the basic principles outlined in this document would be a betrayal of the special qualities of the Cairngorms Area. National and international appreciation of the value of the Area has been recognised by the Government decision that application should be made to the international authority for the Area to be considered for designation as a World Heritage Site - the only one in mainland Scotland. To meet the international criteria necessary to achieve this status will require the implementation of long-term plans for the sustainable management of the Cairngorms.

Meantime a viable management plan is a matter of immediate urgency in view of the Government's declaration about National Parks in Scotland. The Cairngorms Campaign offers this Manifesto as its contribution towards forming and implementing such a plan, which is crucial to protect the irreplaceable qualities of the Cairngorms.

Ian Lawson  
Convener, The Cairngorms Campaign December  
1997

## 2.0 THE CAIRNGORMS - A SPECIAL PLACE

*"The Cairngorm Mountains are a mass of granite thrust up through the schists and gneiss that form the lower surrounding hills, planed down by the ice cap, and split, shattered and scooped by frost, glaciers and the strength of running water so many square miles of area, so many lochs, so many summits of over 4000 feet - but this is a pallid simulacrum of their reality, which like every reality that matters ultimately to human beings, is a reality of the mind."*

Nan Shepherd, The Living Mountain, 1977.

Many books celebrate in prose and pictures the landscape and wildlife of the Cairngorms, one of the supreme natural areas of Western Europe. The high tops are frequently given special emphasis, but cannot be seen in isolation. The beauty of the hills is perhaps best seen reflected in a loch surrounded by native woodland, with wildlife forming a continuum that runs from the rivers to the high tops. Any management proposals for the Cairngorms Area must recognise this diversity and take account of the entire ecological and cultural unit.

The Area is of such outstanding national and international value for nature conservation that even an incomplete catalogue gives a strong sense of this natural wealth:

- one of the most important areas for mountain wildlife in the European Union;
- a concentration of glacial and post-glacial land forms (matched only by Baffin island and Labrador);
- the home for many scarce plants, insects, birds and mammals with arctic or northern distributions - such as twinflower, capercaillie, dotterel and mountain hare;
- heartland of the remaining Caledonian woods - outliers of the boreal forest which are national monuments as important as any cathedrals;
- the bed for some of the least polluted rivers in Britain, including the world-famous Spey and Dee;
- breeding ground for uncommon wading birds and birds of prey, many of which are now rare in the UK; and, in the fertile straths and extensive moorlands,
- a land worked by generations of farmers and crofters, stalkers and gamekeepers.

The Cairngorms have a unique place in Europe and in the history of Scotland. That special significance has long been recognised, culminating at the World Wilderness Conference at Findhorn in 1983 with the call to designate the area as a World Heritage Site.



It is also one of the finest landscapes in Europe, comprising the largest mass of high and wild land in the United Kingdom and including five summits above 4000 feet. The rolling granite plateaux are broken by deep glaciated glens and impressive corries which shelter high lochans. The feeling of remoteness and the expansive views are enjoyed by many hill users. In contrast to the wilderness of the plateaux, there are vast tracts of heather moorland and some of the most extensive remnants of old Caledonian pine woods. Birch woodland, marshes, meandering rivers, and remote glens all add to the diversity of scenery and wild land experience, while a range of historical and archeological remains record the cultural history of this landscape. Farming in the more fertile straths, harvesting of the timber, and management of the heaths and woods have helped to shape the landscape, and all will play a significant role in its future.

All these features are integral parts of the Area and they have long been recognised as attractions not just to local people but also to visitors from the rest of this country and from all over the world - international assets of immense value. The diversity is one of the main appeals of the Area: the hill walker may be a knowledgeable botanist, and the rock climber a keen downhill skier, but most recognise the fundamental spiritual value of the superb landscape in which they take their recreation.

The Cairngorms Area is unusual in Britain, and indeed western Europe, for its past human history and culture; it was the eastern extent of the Highland clan system, and hence the eastern edge was a major historical and cultural boundary for centuries and it was heavily raided by clan freebooters from less fertile glens further west, and was traversed by them on their way to raid the lowlands to the east.

The eastern edge was a major linguistic boundary for centuries, marking the division between Gaelic to the west and lowland Scots speech to the east. This is very unusual, and is of great interest for linguistic studies.

Formerly there was much social interchange across the hills on old drove roads so the Gaelic spoken on either side of the hill was similar. Virtually the only contact now is by long, roundabout public roads around the Cairngorms resulting in the local vernacular speech of Aviemore differing greatly from that of Deeside. These points make the Cairngorms an area of great interest in terms of human history, culture and language.

---

### **3.0 MANAGING THE CAIRNGORMS**

For many years it has been suggested that National Park status would lead to better management of the Cairngorms, partly by allowing better co-ordination of the activities of the many agencies involved. The new government has announced that it considers National Parks appropriate for some areas of Scotland and it is widely expected that the Cairngorms will be one of the earliest designated. A major outcome of National Parks should be the establishment of World Heritage Status. We should build on the experience of National Parks throughout the world and ensure that Scottish National Parks are guided by best practice applied to the particular conditions of the Cairngorms.

The Park needs a clearly stated remit, which must encompass protection and wise management of areas important for nature conservation and landscape quality, together with sustainable use and development where appropriate. Clear and measurable targets should be set for proposed land uses ( areas and timescales) and for economic and social objectives.

It is important that the Park should provide benefits and opportunities for local people as well as protection for internationally important areas for wildlife and landscape. The Park must include the human settlements and other areas of low ground where most economic activity takes place and must act positively as an agency encouraging sustainable and appropriate development with a diversity of opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The Park Authority must have sufficient powers and resources to deliver integrated management and sustainable development for the whole of the National Park. Experience has repeatedly shown that the combination of partnership and the voluntary principle is inadequate. The new Park Authority must, as a minimum, have development control and local planning powers. Legislation is necessary to bring land uses such as agriculture and forestry under planning control. The Authority would adopt new powers where there were deficiencies e.g. for bulldozed tracks, water abstraction etc.) For these purposes the Park Authority or Board should have its own dedicated planning and management staff. There needs to be a 'one-gate' approach for public money held by State bodies i.e. Forest Authority, Scottish Office Agriculture Environment and Fisheries Department, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Enterprise bodies would all have money for the Area controlled by the Authority. This would put an end to the majority of conflicts. A poorer alternative is the the Secretary of State orders these bodies to use their money only in ways determined by the Authority.

The Cairngorms National Park should implement zonation as has been widely practised internationally. An inner core comprising the montane zone and the higher-altitude woods and moors would be managed primarily for nature conservation and landscape quality, and qualify for IUCN Category II status ( see Appendix II for details). Informal recreation would be an important secondary use which depends on the maintenance of nature conservation and landscape quality. Already the majority of this area has been designated as a candidate Special Area of Conservation/Special Protection Area under the European Commission Habitats and Birds Directives and there is a strong case for extending these designations to the remainder of the area in the inner zone which, as it is mostly Annex 1 habitats, would qualify. This would provide a robust legal framework for protection of the international interests.

The lower ground should be managed in a manner that would qualify for IUCN Category V status, although some areas of particular interest or importance such as the Insh marshes and Morrone Birkwoods should be nature reserves qualifying for Category IV. Many of these areas are already managed as nature reserves and are Sites of Special Scientific Interest. In this Category V area suitable development should be encouraged and mechanisms such as the ESA used to support sustainable agriculture and to improve existing practice in line with environmental considerations.

Probably the most controversial issue is the composition of the Park Authority. A balance has to be struck between local involvement and the national ( and international) interests in the area. All the existing local authorities must be adequately represented, and should comprise up to 50% of the members. The Park users are important and must be represented. Similarly, local representatives of the tourism, commerce, conservation and informal recreation sectors must be able to contribute. The remainder of the management group should be independent specialists in a variety of disciplines pertinent to the Cairngorms, including botany, geology, ornithology, applied ecology and the social sciences including local history. There will be overlap between the different interests and the exact

composition of the group should ultimately be decided by the Scottish Parliament. The body should have the Precautionary Principle as its guiding ideal, that is following a conservative course of action directed by appropriate principles of conservation, sustainability and maintenance of biodiversity, even where scientific knowledge is incomplete.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE: A strong Park Authority is needed with the appropriate planning and other powers with a clear remit aimed towards measurable targets. The Park should be managed in a manner which would qualify for IUCN status with the Precautionary Principle paramount in all decision making.**



## **4.0 OBJECTIVES PAPERS**

In the following papers, the Cairngorms Campaign reviews the main issues affecting the future management of the Cairngorms Area and offers for discussion proposals on how these issues should be addressed. Each paper ends with a fundamental Guiding Principle which the Campaign believes sets a minimum standard for the sound, sustainable management of the Area. Any management proposals which fall short of these will be seen as inadequate to meet the challenge of managing the supreme natural heritage of the Cairngorms Area. Issues in several papers interlink and the Campaign has recognised this where possible. An holistic approach to the diverse issues is essential.

### **4.1 WILD LAND AND LANDSCAPE**

The main landscape characteristics of the Cairngorms Area are the feeling of wildness and remoteness in the hills and woodlands, and the pattern of human settlement in the straths and glens. All are easily destroyed by careless or ill-planned intrusions into the landscape.

All management proposals for the area should therefore have the maintenance and enhancement of the wild land and landscape qualities as a prime objective. There should therefore be no further development in areas zoned as "wild land" (ie land with few or no obvious signs of human intervention). Planning mechanisms (see 4.9) should be used to ensure that developments in other parts of the area are appropriate, sustainable, and designed to blend in with the mosaic of recreational areas, woodland and open land.

Bulldozed tracks are an unacceptable intrusion, causing visual scarring and soil erosion. High-altitude bulldozed tracks should be removed and the ground reinstated and any footpaths destroyed by the bulldozed tracks should be re-formed. Some bulldozed tracks should be left in place for a limited period to assist with the initial phase of increased red deer culling, but within an agreed period all should be closed and rehabilitated. No new bulldozed tracks should be allowed. To prevent vegetation damage and soil erosion, all off-road use of vehicles on unenclosed land should be banned, with the exception of mountain rescues. Training exercises using ATVs should be zoned to less sensitive areas. Pony tracks, hill paths and drove roads should be maintained, provided that they do not seriously prejudice other management objectives. Woodland tracks, whilst providing recreation and access, should be managed to fit specified design criteria. In places there should be a presumption against new tracks and consideration be given to their removal in some cases.

Infrastructure developments such as power lines, water supply facilities, wind-power generators and transmitters should not impinge on the wild land quality. Excessive noise should be curbed and overflying of the Area by tourist and military flights should be minimised.

The treatment of old bridges, new road alterations, culverts, road verges, drains and roadside cut and fill needs to be improved to much higher standards. Similarly the widening of narrow tourist roads and bridges to allow passage of large timber trucks should be limited. The inappropriate use of construction standards, better suited to urban areas, should be avoided.

Destruction of old ruins by removing stone should be banned to allow patterns of previous settlements to remain. Historical cairns clearly indicate past human use of the landscape but the development of new ones, such as those appearing on the plateaux, should be deterred.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE: The wild land and landscape qualities which are internationally recognised as important characteristics of the Cairngorms Area should be maintained**

**and enhanced, through improved development control and more sensitive land management.**



## **4.2 WOODLANDS AND FORESTRY**

The extensive remnants of Caledonian woodland in Strathspey and Deeside are a major part of the natural and cultural heritage of the Cairngorms Area. These woods comprise not just Scots pine, but also birch and a range of other species including juniper and rowan. They extend to some 6000 hectares, representing about half of the area of such woods remaining in Scotland.

Today, this native woodland is much reduced in extent, and the landscape is further spoilt by large rectilinear forestry plantations. Woodland formerly extended up the hillsides to at least 2000 feet, with a scrub zone above that to about 2500 feet, depending upon local conditions. This montane scrub zone has been almost entirely destroyed. The main forest loss resulted from timber felling, but today (and for the last 200 years in some parts) regeneration has been prevented by the overgrazing of an excessively large population of red deer, sheep, hares and rabbits.

One of the primary aims of management in the Cairngorms Area should be to re-establish woodland of natural form and extent including over-mature trees and dead wood as well as saplings. This would have natural open areas and clearings, a diversity of trees and plant species, provide the habitat for the full range of boreal-woodland wildlife, and grade naturally into a restored montane scrub zone. The rich diversity of plants and animals associated with surviving native woodlands should be protected and enhanced and allowed to expand. The best farmland and open areas of high wildlife value (including heather moorland) should be maintained as part of an integrated management plan for the Area set within clearly defined targets. Some areas, especially in nature reserves, should be managed with the minimum of intervention.

Re-establishment of woodland is best effected by natural regeneration, as this results in a structure which reflects the particular conditions of each area in a way which planting cannot achieve. Exclosure fencing is, at best, a short-term measure to prevent overgrazing; it creates an unacceptable visual intrusion and restriction to animal and human access, has been shown to maim and kill many birds such as the capercaillie, which is now in danger of extinction, and results in unnatural, even-aged regeneration. Some grazing is natural in woodland, and cannot be achieved if deer are totally excluded. A substantial reduction in the grazing pressure produces the closest possible approach to establishing a natural woodland. The time-scale is important: the age-range of trees in a native pine woodland is at least 400 years, so a naturally structured wood cannot be fully re-established in a shorter time.

At sites identified in an area strategy plan (see 4.9), extensive community forests should be established. These should be established in the most natural form possible, with local species of local provenance, without ground preparation. Their design should provide amenity near population centres; allow sustainable harvesting by local woodsmen using selective felling and small coupes (for fuel or small-scale local timber industries); and encourage a wide range of recreational opportunities (see 4.5). Effective woodland management could increase the potential for increased employment locally.

Existing commercial woodlands of exotic species or native species of non-local provenance should be replaced by local provenance native species at an early opportunity. An indicative area strategy might allow for limited intensive crops of Scots pine or birch in parts of the straths.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE: A woodland of natural form and extent should be established, where appropriate, throughout the Cairngorms Area, allowing sustainable forestry based on native species, while maintaining and enhancing the landscape and wildlife and quiet enjoyment of them by people.**



---

### 4.3 RIVERS AND WETLANDS

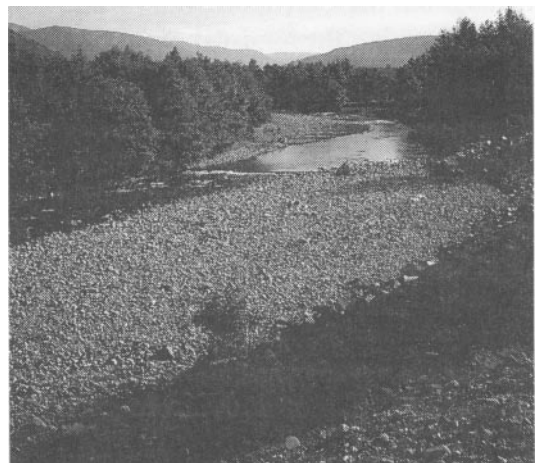
The rivers, lochs and wetlands of the Cairngorms are extremely important natural features which are integral parts of the character of the Area. These waters are essential components of the landscape, from the dark corrie lochans to the great glacial troughs of Lochs Einich and Muick and from the swift torrents falling from the high plateau to the meandering loops of the Spey and Dee at the edges of the area where gradients are less.

These aquatic resources are important for a variety of important reasons. The rivers, lochs and wetlands are vital habitats for wildlife. The Rivers Spey and Dee which rise in these high hills, are two of the most famous salmon rivers in the world and these fisheries are of great importance to the economy of the Area. Other valuable recreational opportunities on or in waters in the Area include sailing, canoeing, sail-boarding, bird/wildlife watching and swimming while riverside walks are popular with many people. The supply of drinking water from the rivers rising in the Area to towns outside the Cairngorms is regionally of strategic importance. Loch Einich is the supply for much of Strathspey.

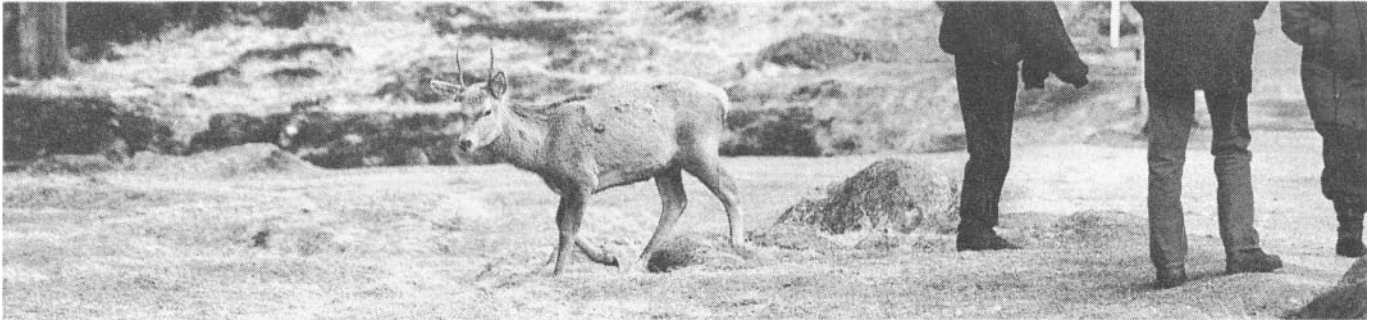
These waters are characteristically nutrient poor and very sensitive to enrichment or acidification. The communities of plants and animals so well adapted to these conditions are also extremely sensitive to pollutants and easily damaged by them.

In much of the area the critical load for acid deposition is already exceeded and some of the waters are acidified. It is vital to continue to press for further reductions in acidic emissions from fossil fuel combustion but more locally to ensure that afforestation proposals are carefully controlled and developments managed to minimise additional acidification effects. Re-establishment of broadleaved riparian woodlands would have major benefits in terms of reducing erosion and providing habitats and food supplies for aquatic life. Enrichment of lochs has already occurred, such that in recent years toxic blue-green algae have been recorded in Lochs Insh, and Morlich. Treated sewage effluent discharged into streams and rivers from villages and skiing centres are undoubtedly contributing to this enrichment. There is a strong case for insisting on the highest possible standards for sewage effluents including, in the most sensitive areas, phosphorus removal in order to protect water quality. There is potential for pollution from sheep-dip chemicals and other agricultural chemicals and current monitoring is not adequate to determine the threat from these. It is particularly important for agricultural best practice to be enforced by the competent authorities. Reductions in grazing pressure throughout catchments, leading to regeneration of woodlands and deeper ground vegetation, would reduce the rate and amount of run-off entering rivers, thus reducing flooding and producing a more stable flow. The quantity of water in the Cairngorms is also at risk from abstraction for power generation, drinking water and fish farming. The sustainable management of water quality is vitally important to protect fisheries and other uses but neither the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) nor North of Scotland Water Authority (NOSWA) have clear powers to control abstraction in this area. This lack of control is a serious omission for SEPA and must be addressed by the Government. Future consideration should also be given to integrated catchment management plans that address the concerns expressed above and to the strategic analysis of flood plains to identify major areas for wetland restoration.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** The sustainable management of water features is vitally important to safeguard and improve the high quality of the Cairngorms' rivers and lochs. The highest environmental standards should be applied to forestry developments, sewage effluents



**and agricultural practices, and powers to control abstraction and to cover whole catchment management should be granted to SEPA.**



#### **4.4 RED DEER**

Red deer are an important feature of the Cairngorms, with a continuous presence in the Area since the last ice age. The main objective should be to conserve the genetic integrity of the red deer (to include preventing hybridisation with Sika deer), and to achieve habitat and species restoration targets throughout the deer's entire range, by reducing their numbers.

Red deer numbers in the Cairngorms peaked in the 1980s at some 60,000 head, about a fifth of the Scottish population on an eighth of the deer range. Increased culling in recent years, particularly of hinds and calves, has resulted in some decrease in the hind:stag ratio but only a slight decrease in overall numbers. On most estates the deer numbers (and their breeding potential ) are still far too high to allow significant recovery of vegetation.

Sheep, roe deer, mountain hare and rabbits have a significant impact in places, and consideration should be given to ways of minimising this. The main priority, however, particularly on the higher, more vulnerable ground must be to control the red deer population.

An assessment of the deer range confirms that deer density is too high in most areas. Regeneration of native pine and birch woodland remains minimal or absent, and the ground vegetation and associated wildlife are severely damaged. Montane scrub zones and tree lines have long been eliminated, and fragile montane vegetation damaged by overgrazing and trampling, whilst many arctic-alpine plants are restricted to inaccessible crags and ledges. Trampling also destroys the eggs of ground-nesting birds such as dotterel. Overgrazing of heather moorland in many glens resulted in a change to grassland and a decrease in its value to moorland birds including red grouse. The rate and amount of run-off of precipitation is altered, leading to an impoverishment of aquatic life, and a greater risk of flooding ( see 4.3). On lower ground, damage occurs to agriculture and to forestry, and the current practice of expensive deer fencing kills birds, restricts access, reduces the landscape quality and creates unnatural blocks of woodland ( see 4.2) whether planted or naturally regenerated.

The overall effect of excessive deer numbers is to create a degraded and impoverished environment in which the deer also suffer. Poorer nutrition, lower body weight, decreased fecundity and increased winter mortality all attend the herd that overgrazes its range. The practice on some estates of winter feeding of deer is a tacit admission of an imbalance between the deer population and the natural carrying capacity of the land.

Sufficient evidence exists to enable an initial target cull to be set, followed by fine tuning of the deer numbers to achieve habitat recovery. The recognition of natural heritage interests and greater flexibility with respect to out of season culling within the recent Deer (Amendment)(Scotland) Bill, should assist this task. Meanwhile the success of Abernethy, Inshriach/Invereshie and the nearby Creag Meagaidh estates, in reducing deer numbers and starting the process of environmental restoration, clearly demonstrates the feasibility of this management approach.

Without restrictions on access, without reliance on deer fencing, without annihilating the deer population and without significant detrimental effects on neighbouring stalking estates, these estates have in the last ten years achieved woodland regeneration, ground vegetation recovery, increases in woodland grouse numbers, healthier deer and more human employment. This shows the way for the rest of the Cairngorms.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE: The numbers of deer (and other grazers) throughout the entire Cairngorms Area should be brought into long-term, sustainable balance with a habitat**

**restored to its full richness and diversity.**

---

## 4.5 RECREATION AND ACCESS

The recreational qualities of the Cairngorms depend critically on the Area's natural beauty and landscape, which are key features in attracting visitors. Activities such as hill walking, rock and winter climbing, ski touring, wildlife study, canoeing, sailing, cycling and pony trekking have long been popular. Outdoor enthusiasts also cherish the wildness and feeling of remoteness, which are integral to many of these activities, along with freedom of access to land and water. The quality of recreation is enhanced by the wide variety and high aesthetic quality of the landscapes of the straths, woods, moors, corries and plateaux.

The "quality and widely-agreed long walk in" principle should guide the management of the more remote areas of the Cairngorms. There should be a presumption against facilities which ease access into these areas (eg tracks, way-marked trails, bridges and shelters). Planning policies (see 4.9) should be designed to ensure that developments, such as roads and car parks, skiing facilities, hotels, camp sites and outdoor centres, do not lead to a deterioration of heritage and amenity values. Activities should not concentrate visitors in fragile environments.

The greatest risk to both the recreational quality and the natural heritage of the Cairngorms comes, not from too many people using the outdoors, but from inappropriate and insensitive land-use policies, as described in other objectives papers. Such conflicts which arise between recreation and the environment are the product of inappropriate activities or inappropriate sites or inappropriate levels of use. The policy should therefore be to encourage only those recreational opportunities which are compatible with the conservation of the natural resource around which they are based. Mass participation events and mechanised forms of recreation should be regarded generally as inappropriate. These activities can however be beneficial if located close to communities.

One of the most severe recreational impacts results from the downhill ski developments at Cairn Gorm, Glenshee and the Lecht. In particular, the ski road to Cairn Gorm acts as a major funnel into the montane zone. There is a strong case for closing this road to private vehicles beyond Glen More throughout the year, and providing alternative access via low impact systems. There is also a strong case for summer closure of the uplifts at Cairn Gorm and Glenshee. These controls should not result from commercially-led, inappropriate development. Large impacts from downhill ski development have occurred at Glenshee and the Lecht ski areas in addition to Cairn Gorm but on a far lesser scale in intensity and extent. The Strategic Review of the skiing areas (see 4.6) should give these issues urgent consideration and make recommendations accordingly.

Severe restriction on access results from deer management where extensive fencing is used to protect the remnants of native woodland or plantations. The other main source of adverse recreational impacts are associated with deer stalking which has resulted in bull-dozer tracks and more recently use of ATVs. Stalking in the Cairngorms should set new standards following the example of Mar Lodge by abandoning use of ATVs and restrictions on access.

The capacity of the Cairngorms Area to support casual recreation will be enhanced by restoring the woodland cover of the straths and glens, as outlined in previous sections. The provision of paths and trails on the lower hill slopes, by riverbanks and on land around towns and villages would allow increased recreation for both residents and visitors. New systems of robust tracks could be highlighted for mountain hikers to guide them away from fragile areas and promotion of low level cross-country skiing should be enhanced. There are numerous initiatives which could help support such schemes.

In developing these, however, great care should be taken to ensure that sensitive sites are not subject to severe impact as a result of inappropriate forms or levels of recreation. An environmental assessment of recreational opportunities (present and future) should be undertaken. This should include a review of sites which are already subject to serious pressure, such as the Glenmore Corridor, from Aviemore to the plateau, Glen Muick and the Linn of Dec.

All visitor management should be developed in a participative approach involving users and other interests. Codes of practice to direct and manage an activity must be derived by participants rather than imposed. Individuals and organisations responsible for publicising the attractions and recreational opportunities of the Cairngorms Area should follow the principles identified in these codes.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE: There should be freedom of access for those recreational activities which are dependent on the natural qualities of the Cairngorms Area, provided that they are compatible in character and scale with the protection, enhancement and quiet enjoyment of the Area.**

## **4.6 DOWNHILL SKIING**

Although downhill skiing, as a recreational pursuit, must be subject to the same constraints as any other form of recreation in the Cairngorms Area - see 4.5 - it has proved such a sensitive issue in the past that the Campaign felt there were merits in giving it separate treatment.

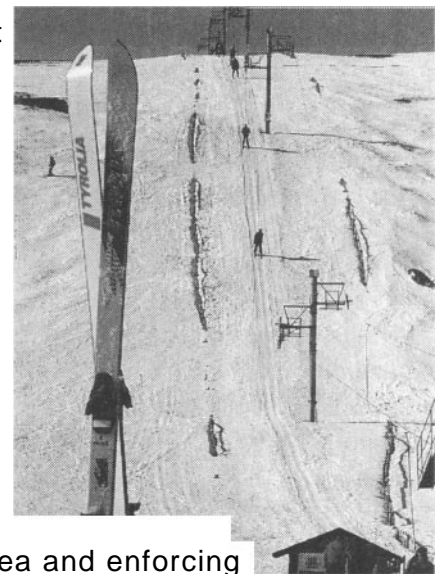
At present within the Cairngorms Area there are three downhill ski centres, at Cairn Gorm, Glenshee and the Lech'. Outline planning permission was granted for a fourth area at Drumochter, but this has now lapsed. The Campaign assumes that there is a presumption against further expansion of downhill ski development.

Some believe that the present downhill skiing facilities in the Cairngorms Area are inappropriate in an area of such international significance. It is recognised that they do contribute, in a minor way, to the local economy of Badenoch and Strathspey, where employment opportunities are scarce.

The Government has already committed itself to the principles of sustainability in its white paper, "This Common Inheritance", and it is therefore essential that the present (and any future) skiing facilities should meet these principles. To do so, they will need to:-

- protect major ecosystems, soils and waters from pollution or damage; preserve biological diversity; and
- use resources sustainably.

Given the scenic impact and erosion caused by the existing ski areas and the summer use by visitors of them, an urgent review should be undertaken into their management, meeting the highest standards and undertaken by an independent authority. From the conclusions of this, a strategic plan should be produced, and the chairlift companies should then be licensed by the Area Authority (sec 3.0) to operate under the terms of this plan. The Authority would be responsible for monitoring the operation of the skiing area and enforcing high environmental standards, in full consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage. Where practical, action should be taken to reduce and eliminate impacts which affect either the visual or natural heritage of the area.



At Cairn Gorm, the uplift needs replacing for skiing, but not by a funicular railway which represents an unacceptable intrusion into the very fabric of these great mountains. Also, consideration should be given to the closure of the ski road uphill from Loch Morlich as part of an integrated management plan for Glenmore thus re-creating the long-walk-in' and protecting the mountain for future generations.

No further development of downhill skiing facilities should be approved, pending a major review of the Scottish skiing industry, its benefits, costs, impacts, and sustainability (taking account of the best estimates of the effects of global warming). Any subsequent developments should be consistent with the conclusions of this review and the principles of sustainability. They should also be subjected to rigorous Environmental Impact Assessments, and meet the highest environmental standards, in terms of landscaping, visual impact, building design, construction methods, operation of facilities and re-instatement costs.

Public money should be invested in such developments only after a full cost-benefit analysis, which takes into account the potential adverse effects on competing businesses and must be done by an impartial body not committed for or against the particular development, and with a geographical focus wide enough to cover all of Scotland's five ski centres. The same rigorous standards must be applied to all new skiing developments in Scotland, so that their imposition in the Cairngorms Area does not have adverse effects on competing businesses in Scotland.



All ski companies must operate in a sustainable way.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE: All downhill skiing facilities in the Cairngorms Area must meet the principles of sustainability, and be subject to the most rigorous, ongoing Environmental Impact Assessments.**

4.7 TOURISM AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Figures from the 1996 report by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, "The Economic Impacts of Hillwalking, Mountaineering and Associated activities in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland" together with data from an unpublished Scottish Tourist Board survey quoted in the Link report "The State of the Scottish Environment 1991" show the estimated revenue from types of countryside recreation for visitors to Scotland from 1986-1995, as follows:-

Mountaineering(1996)	£176.0m
Field Nature Study(1991)	£33.6m
Salmon fishing(1989)	£37.0m
Trout and coarse fishing((1991)	£14.1 m
Skiing(Cairngorm)(1986)	£ 6.1m
Grouse shooting (1991)	

Additionally, a Rural Forum report, "The Management of Wild Red Deer in Scotland," estimates the total Scottish income from deer stalking at less than £4m.

Field nature study and mountaineering are therefore among the most important sources of income (£233.9m) in highland Scotland. Given that the Cairngorms Area offers one of the finest opportunities for these in Britain, it is clear that the sensitive development of appropriate tourism, based on a wide variety of natural, cultural and recreational attractions in the Area, is the best short-term and long-term way forward for the local economy.

The lowland parts of the Area can absorb many more visitors provided that their impact is managed. Access to the mountain plateau should be managed by the "long walk in" principle for all (see 4.5).

The tourist potential of the entire Area should therefore be assessed, to spread the benefits amongst all local people and avoid capital intensive honeypot developments such as the Aviemore centre. Any developments should be small-scale, locally controlled, rely on local labour and respect the local way of life. The aim should be to provide enriching and refreshing holidays in a range of prices for visitors who appreciate the natural amenities of the Area, since they would have less impact on the environment and spend longer in the Area, increasing the benefits to the local economy.

Sporting estates are part of the tourist industry, but the figures above show that they are not major components of the local economy. They are likely to be increasingly superseded by more integrated forms of land use. The best grouse moors, however, should be identified and protected, for their benefits to other wildlife as well as their contribution to the local economy.

Farming on the lower ground should continue to receive support, but cross compliance and mechanisms similar to those for Environmentally Sensitive Areas should be used to tune it more closely to the environment. Extensive forestry, deer control, and countryside management would provide further employment, and other small-scale appropriate industries could be encouraged.



Many of these part-time opportunities could be combined effectively with tourism to provide fuller employment.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE: Tourism and other industries (including farming and forestry) should be of a scale and type appropriate to and sustaining the environment; they should support and enhance the natural environment, support**

**the local way of life, and spread economic benefits throughout the human communities in and around the Cairngorms Area.**

#### **4.8 SUSTAINING CAIRNGORMS COMMUNITIES**

The well-being of the Cairngorms communities must be a key aim of any Cairngorms-wide strategy. Many of the settlements are small and remote and access to services difficult. Others, particularly in Badenoch and Strathspey, are already crammed to overflowing with new houses, built to accommodate not the local population growth, but outside demand for holiday and second homes. Such expansion damages local communities without addressing the need for affordable housing to encourage young local people to remain in the area.

Employment opportunities are limited. Tourism has helped but brings with it the pitfalls of seasonality, low wages and marginal returns on capital. There are employment dependencies on farming, forestry, and other primary sectors. Landownership patterns reinforce some of these problems, lessening the viable options that local people could harness to provide economic well-being. Most comparable hill people in Europe are more connected to the land through their patterns of land ownership and land tenure. These foster a local community-based entrepreneurial approach which has seen a socioeconomic revival rarely witnessed in Scotland.

Some Cairngorms communities are developing a new approach, for example Strathdon's celebration of its local culture. Others should be encouraged to follow suit. The result of developments on Mar Lodge or Abernethy by non-governmental organisations has been increased employment and more visitors. Community well-being is inextricably linked to the environmental well-being of the Cairngorms themselves.

Restoration and repair of the land is a task for these communities and should not become the preserve of incoming contractors. The Wester Ross Footpath Trust is an exemplar of this. Maintenance of the woods, moors and footpaths will increasingly provide work for people of the Cairngorms. Laggan Community Woodlands already shows what can be done. CAP reform will start to pay for non-food goods such as footpaths and biodiversity/green tourism will bring a growing market to this area. Bird-watching economies are a successful reality in Boat of Garten and present an approach which offers greater prospects for sustained economic well-being than some of the more grandiose economic development projects which have been promoted in the past such as the Invergordon aluminium smelter, Kishorn oil platform construction yards or the Corpach paper mill.

Economic activity should reflect the quality of the Cairngorms environment by producing high quality "value-added" products, using local materials and local craftsmen and women. Examples include using sustainably managed native woodlands to provide the raw materials for small scale furniture and wood-turning products, as well as the organic beef, venison, and fish available in local shops, bed and breakfast places and hotels. A labelling system denoting quality products from the area would assist with effective marketing of local produce and services.

Wider environmental considerations will also see a greater self-sufficiency amongst many of the remoter communities. Work on insulating housing to meet standards set by the Home Energy Conservation Act, and to generate electricity locally through wind, small hydro and biomass schemes will provide employment and often funds to feed back into community projects. The Upper Don Villages Trust is one such enterprise already underway.

Public transport must be improved for both local people and visitors alike to alleviate the problems of travel to and from the Area, parking and associated issues such as pollution. Other European countries such as Switzerland consider their transport issues as part of a more holistic approach to enjoyment of the countryside.

Finally it must not go unsaid that the main assets of the Cairngorms are the hills themselves. Such is the level of spending from recreation, and particularly hill-walking, that it is probably the most significant economic factor in the area. Current estimates show that over £150 million accrues to the Highland economy per annum from mountaineering activities over 2500 feet.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:**

The wellbeing of Cairngorms communities depends crucially on the health of the natural environment and the economic emphasis should be based upon quality and highest possible standards and pride in local products and culture.

## 4.9 DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

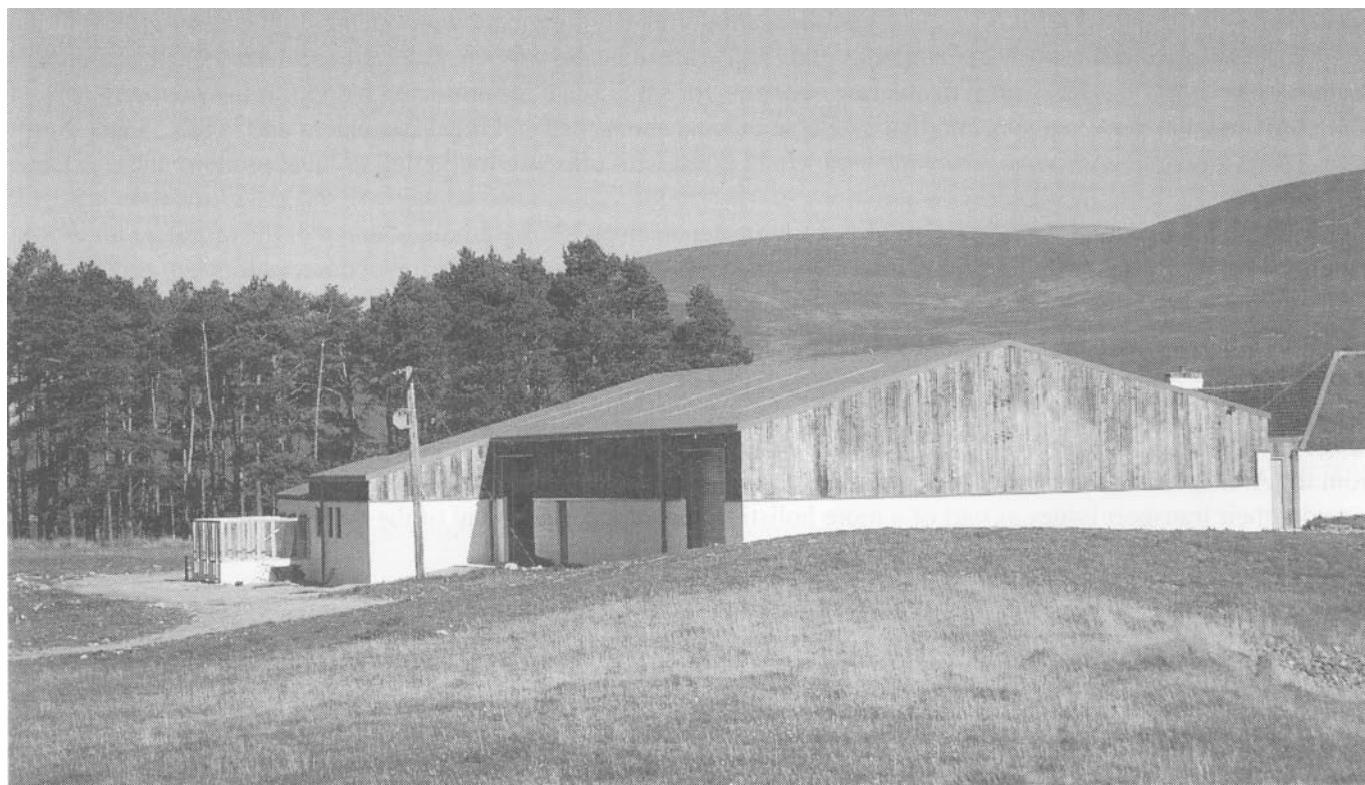
The Cairngorms Campaign is concerned that special status for the Cairngorms Area should not lead to the further despoliation of other mountain areas of Scotland. Most of the proposals presented here need also to be applied to the other hill areas of Scotland, while the proposals in "Managing the Cairngorms" (see 3.0) should have even wider application.

The Campaign is concerned that central Government has failed to address the many problems of upland land management, including the many serious concerns raised by the 1990 Countryside Commission for Scotland review of the "Mountain Areas of Scotland." The Campaign therefore urges the Scottish Office to undertake an immediate review of the management of hill areas, examining the opportunities for moving to a whole land-use planning system underpinned by the principle of maintaining the natural resource base of the area.

Extensions of planning controls to allow an integrated land-use planning system should be implemented. Local Authorities of the Cairngorms Area should agree to vest their planning powers with the National Park Authority (which would be staffed by planners). Limited extensions of planning controls in the Area might be proposed by the National Park Board, but certainly existing powers should be applied more effectively, using the enhanced enforcement procedures of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991.

A Cairngorms Design Guide should also be prepared and stringently applied. This would be based on the principles in SDD Planning Advice Note 36 "Siting and Design of New Housing in the Countryside;" (February 1991), but also take account of principles in the book "Tomorrow's Architectural Heritage: Landscape and Buildings in the Countryside," commissioned by the Countryside Commission for Scotland (October 1991).

The creative use of positive management agreements, combined with the sensitive application of planning controls, and the fall-back powers of cross-compliance penalties, should give the National Park Authority strong powers to tackle and solve the many problems currently afflicting the Cairngorms area.



**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** The Cairngorms Area needs a unified, cross-boundary planning that applies appropriate planning mechanisms and cross-compliance, to ensure that any development in the area preserves and enhances the natural and cultural features of the area and meets the principles of sustainability. This approach is best achieved through the

medium of a National Park Authority.

## 5.0 THE WAY FOR WARD

**"This Assembly calls on the UK government to take all practical steps to secure for the Cairngorms Mountains protection appropriate to their international significance"** (IUCN General Assembly Resolution. 1981)

The Cairngorms Campaign and its predecessor body has supported and called for designation of the Cairngorms area as a World Heritage Site. We believe that this would be an appropriate recognition of the area's natural and cultural heritage, and would confer considerable benefits to the natural environment and local people of the area.

The Cairngorms Campaign welcomes the announcement by Lord Sewel in September 1997 that Scotland is to have a top tier of designations in National Parks and expects the Cairngorms to be amongst the first designated. It looks to the Scottish Office to progress the listing of the Cairngorms as a World Heritage Site and to also ensure that policies and practice do not jeopardise this possibility for present and future generations.

## 5.1 FACTORS TO **BE** CONSIDERED

In supporting the Government's moves to seek ratification of the Cairngorms World Heritage Site, the Cairngorms Campaign believes two important factors should be taken into account:

Firstly, designation of a World Heritage Site should not simply represent the addition of a further conservation label to the existing designations; positive benefits, both in terms of improved management of the area's natural resources and in associated economic and social benefits should ensue, for both local and national interests.

Secondly, World Heritage Designation should be seen by a Scottish Parliament as an opportunity to forge a closer partnership between all those organisations with an interest in the Cairngorms; a primary aim should be to develop greater cohesion between the Scottish Parliament and its agencies including Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Local Authorities, community councils and the voluntary conservation and recreation organisations.

The Cairngorms Campaign maintains that the firm view that any management proposals and suggested administrative arrangements for the Cairngorms area must meet the criteria to ensure World Heritage designation at an early date and so confirm the long-term benefits that this would bring to the area. Furthermore it considers implementation overdue.

The Cairngorms Campaign believes that attainment and maintenance of World Heritage listing is the key indicator of success.

The Cairngorms Campaign believes that, in view of the points above, the Cairngorms Partnership and the Government should take urgent steps to ensure that the entire Cairngorms Area can achieve listing as a World Heritage Site.

Of the criteria by which a natural site can be designated under the World Heritage Convention, the Cairngorms Campaign believes that the Cairngorms contain features of universal value in terms of the development of land forms and scenery, of biological evolution and human interaction with the environment, of natural beauty, and of natural habitats. At this stage we therefore recommend that the Cairngorms are promoted under all four criteria for admission to the World Heritage List.

Another important aspect of the World Heritage Convention is its role in safeguarding distinctive types of land management. Within natural sites, the Convention includes areas which demonstrate "human interaction with the natural environment", in addition to those areas relatively little affected by human activity. It emphasises how the Convention can demonstrate the partnership between nature and culture through World Heritage Sites reflecting all stages in human development and use of the natural



environment. This includes the present day use of natural areas for, for example. timber products. recreation and watershed protection. It is therefore important that any World Heritage Site in the Cairngorms should include the distinctive patterns of land use which have evolved through a long history of human use, as well as the natural land forms and wildlife habitats. Although these natural elements will predominate in any Cairngorms World Heritage Site proposal, the case will be considerably strengthened by the incorporation of appropriate cultural aspects, which the Cairngorms Area has in abundance.

---

**6.0 APPENDIX I. WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION****1. Criteria for World Heritage Designation**

The World Conservation Strategy, published in 1980 by IUCN, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Worldwide Fund for Nature, recognised the Scottish Highlands as a distinctive area in world terms on account of its particular combination of climate, soils, landscape and wildlife. Most of the world's mountain areas experience 'continental' climates, being some considerable distance away from the nearest sea coast. The Scottish Highlands are one of the few mountain areas to experience an oceanic climate, characterised by high winds and rainfall, and a low seasonal variation in temperature. Mountain areas with similar types of climate are found only in south-west Norway, Patagonia, New Zealand, and parts of the western seaboard of North America. A World Heritage Site in the Cairngorms should therefore encompass the full range of land-forms, habitats, species, and land uses which give this area of the Highlands its distinctive value in international terms.

The IUCN criteria require all World Heritage sites to satisfy the need for 'site integrity'. This means that all key components of important land-forms, ecological processes and requirements for species' survival should be contained within the World Heritage Site. For example, an area with important glacial features must contain the full range of erosion surfaces, slopes and cliffs at the higher elevations as well as the depositional features (moraines, river terraces etc), should have their catchments safeguarded within the World Heritage Site, and the main plant and animal species should be protected by ensuring that all habitats essential for the survival of these species lie within the World Heritage Site. This is particularly important, for example, for large predatory birds such as golden eagles, which require extensive hunting grounds.

## **6.1 APPENDIX II. Protected Areas Management categories of the IUCN (World Conservation Union)**

### **IUCN - THE WORLD CONSERVATION UNION**

Founded in 1948, the World Conservation Union brings together States, government agencies and a diverse range of non-governmental organisations in a unique world partnership. There are over 800 members in all, spread across 125 countries. The UK is a State Member. With its headquarters in Switzerland, IUCN seeks to encourage and assist people throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

An integral part of IUCN are its six Commissions of experts world-wide. One of these, the World Commission on protected areas (WCPA) is recognised as the world's leading<sup>9</sup> source of expertise on protected area issues. With over 1000 of the world's foremost experts in protected area planning and management, WCPA has - inter alia- developed a widely used system of categorising protected areas by their management objectives, which has been adopted by IUCN.

**IUCN Protected Area Management Categories:**  
(Extracted from 'Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories' IUCN 1994.)

**Category I : Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area.** protected area managed mainly for science or wilderness protection. An area of land and/or sea possessing some outstanding ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring.

**Category II: National Park:** protected area managed for ecosystem protection and recreation. Natural area of land and/or sea, designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.

**Category III: Natural Monument:** protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features. Area containing one or more specific natural or natural/cultural feature which is of outstanding or unique value because of its inherent rarity, representative or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance.

**Category IV: Habitat/Species Management Area:** protected area of land and/or sea subject to active intervention for management purposes so as to ensure the maintenance of habitats and/or to meet the requirements of specific species.

**Category V: Protected Landscape/Seascape:** protected area managed for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation. Area of land, with coast and sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.

**Category VI: Managed Resource Protected Area:** protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems. Area containing predominantly unmodified natural systems, managed to ensure long-term protection and maintenance of biological diversity,

while providing at the same time sustainable flow of natural protection and services to meet community needs.

## 7.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES - SUMMARY

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** A strong Park Authority is needed with the appropriate planning and other powers with a clear remit aimed towards measurable targets. The Park should be managed in a manner which would qualify for IUCN status with the Precautionary Principle paramount in all decision making

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** The wild land and landscape qualities which are internationally recognised as important characteristics of the Cairngorms Area should be maintained and enhanced, through improved development control and more sensitive land management.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** A woodland of natural form and extent should be established, where appropriate, throughout the Cairngorms Area, allowing sustainable forestry based on native species, while maintaining and enhancing the landscape and wildlife and quiet enjoyment of them by people.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** The sustainable management of water features is vitally important to safeguard and improve the high quality of the Cairngorms' rivers and lochs. The highest environmental standards should be applied to forestry developments, sewage effluents and agricultural practices, and powers to control abstraction and to cover whole catchment management should be granted to SEPA.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** The numbers of deer (and other grazers) throughout the entire Cairngorms Area should be brought into long-term, sustainable balance with a habitat restored to its full richness and diversity.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** There should be freedom of access for those recreational activities which are dependent on the natural qualities of the Cairngorms Area, provided that they are compatible in character and scale with the protection, enhancement and quiet enjoyment of the Area.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** All downhill skiing facilities in the Cairngorms Area must meet the principles of sustainability, and be subject to the most rigorous, ongoing Environmental Impact Assessments.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** Tourism and other industries (including farming and forestry) should be of a scale and type appropriate to and sustaining the environment; they should support and enhance the natural environment, support the local way of life, and spread economic benefits throughout the human communities in and around the Cairngorms Area.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:**

The well-being of Cairngorms communities depends crucially on the health of the natural environment and the economic emphasis should be based upon quality and highest possible standards and pride in local products and culture.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLE:** The Cairngorms Area needs a unified, cross-boundary planning that applies appropriate planning mechanisms and cross-compliance, to ensure that any development in the area preserves and enhances the natural and cultural features of the area and meets the principles of sustainability. This approach is best achieved through the medium of a National Park Authority.

*Nh~no,~rtgnc~ lrt Hill lt,i'lu. John lhal~lm and !'l illipn bLn,lru ~.*