

The Rothiemurchus Concordat

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Rothiemurchus Estate, which extends to some 10,000 hectares, lies between the River Spey at Aviemore and the watershed of the Cairngorms. The Estate is important in its own right in cultural and natural heritage terms. It is also of importance to the Badenoch and Strathspey area because of the visitors it attracts, the employment it provides and the contribution it makes to local community life. The continued sustainable development of Rothiemurchus Estate is, therefore, important in securing long-term public benefit.
- 2 This Concordat sets out the basis of the arrangements between The Scottish Executive; the Forestry Commission; Scottish Natural Heritage; the Highland and Islands Enterprise Network represented by Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise; The Highland Council; The Cairngorms National Park Authority; and Rothiemurchus Estate for the long term management of the natural and cultural heritage, forestry, recreation and community interests of the estate in accordance with the principles of Community Planning.
- 3 The concordat achieves this by:
 - 3.1 setting out a shared vision for sustainable development;
 - 3.2 committing each of the parties to a holistic, positive approach to achieving the vision;
 - 3.3 describing the parties, their contributions towards the management of the Estate and their shared values;
 - 3.4 setting out procedures for partnership working; and
 - 3.5 committing the parties to finding appropriate mechanisms for meaningful community involvement.
- 4 The Concordat and its annexes will be refined and reviewed as appropriate in response to changing circumstances, but serve at any given time to express the shared views of the parties.

VISION STATEMENT

- 5 The shared vision for the sustainable development of the Rothiemurchus Estate is set in the context of:
 - 5.1. The Cairngorms National Park Plan (2007) and contributes to the delivery of that plan; and
 - 5.2. the principles of Community Planning.*
- 6 In sharing the vision, all parties accept the following principles:
 - 6.1 The land, the forest and the natural and cultural heritage form an integral part of a single management unit;
 - 6.2 there is a fundamental link between the biodiversity of the Estate and the socio-economic well-being of the community;
 - 6.3 the importance of involving the interests of local people;
 - 6.4 the shared vision can best be achieved by management under a long term agreement; and
 - 6.5 the need to pursue commercial success based on sustainable development principles.

The Shared Vision

- 7 Joint working between the Estate and the public sector exists to achieve sustainable development by:
 - 7.1 sustaining a diverse and healthy natural and cultural environment and a living landscape embracing a dynamic mix of land use
 - 7.2 providing an enjoyable and informative experience for visitors;
 - 7.3 demonstrating the contribution a sensitively and dynamically managed estate can make to the economic viability and development of its surrounding area, and the well-being of the local community.

Achieving the vision

- 8 This vision will be achieved through:
 - 8.1 ensuring sustainable social, economic and environmental management in keeping with the high quality environment of the Estate and with the support of the community;
 - 8.2 conserving and, where relevant, enhancing and restoring the area's natural values;
 - 8.3 giving particular emphasis to those priority habitats and species identified as being of international and national importance;
 - 8.4 protecting and, where relevant, enhancing and maintaining the historic landscape and buildings, and the individual archaeological and historical monuments;
 - 8.5 implementing in a sensitive and sustainable way those developments identified in the approved Local Plan;
 - 8.6 ensuring a welcome for visitors to the countryside through provision of sensitively designed and managed recreation facilities, access to the countryside, and high quality information; and
 - 8.7 the rigorous application of quality assurance throughout all activities.

THE PARTIES

The Public Sector

- 9 A brief description of the public sector organisations which are party to this Concordat is provided in the appendix.
- 10 The public sector will contribute the following:
- 10.1 discretionary funding towards positive management of the environment, including visitor management;
 - 10.2 discretionary funding towards the sustainable management of the forest area for biodiversity, public recreation and the production of high quality timber;
 - 10.3 discretionary funding for business developments that can demonstrate long term viability, additionally and a positive contribution to job creation and the economy of the area;
 - 10.4 discretionary funding and advice in support of the conservation of the built heritage;
 - 10.5 facilitating participation by the community in the sustainable development and management of the Estate;
 - 10.6 expertise and authority through knowledgeable, committed staff;

Rothiemurchus Estate

- 11 Rothiemurchus is a privately owned family Estate which, although operated on business principles, benefits from very considerable public, local and staff goodwill and commitment. With public sector support, the staff have developed a mission to conserve the Estate's cultural, natural, historic and field sporting interests at the same time as creating a quality environment for people to make their living; to promote efficient and careful land use, and to enable visitors to enjoy and appreciate Rothiemurchus.
- 12 Rothiemurchus Estate sees the Concordat with the public sector as a way towards continuing this mission. The Estate will bring the following contributions to the Concordat:
- 12.1 a national attraction that benefits the wider business and local communities;
 - 12.2 ownership and management committed to achieving the vision;
 - 12.3 access to the Estate itself, its buildings, its people, its expertise and knowledge, and the investment of previous generations;
 - 12.4 the benefit of well-established links with the local and wider communities, and a commitment to develop further these links;
 - 12.5 a commitment to taking its business investment decisions in ways that are consistent with sustainable development principles;

All Parties

- 13 All parties recognise:
- 13.1 the need for the Estate as a business to be financially viable;
 - 13.2 the need for transparency, accountability and to achieve value for public money;
 - 13.3 the important role of residents, neighbours, the local community and visitors in the management process; and
 - 13.4 the importance of the Estate to the regeneration of the Aviemore and Glenmore area as a quality tourism destination.

PARTNERSHIP VALUES

- 14 In working together towards environmental sustainability and economic viability, the parties agree to adopt the following partnership values:
- 14.1 to work constructively and collaboratively to progress the shared vision;
 - 14.2 to be honest and open with each other;
 - 14.3 to adopt a positive and mutually supportive approach to the partnership;
 - 14.4 to listen, respect and respond to the views of others, including partners, the community, neighbours and other stakeholders in accordance with the principles of Community Planning;
 - 14.5 to recognise that the management of the Estate in accordance with the Concordat will be of material benefit to the wider area; and
 - 14.6 to continue to refine the shared vision.

PROCEDURES FOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 15 In working together in partnership the parties agree to adopt the following procedures:
- 15.1 the parties to the Concordat will meet together at least annually to review its implementation and consider the need for amendment;
 - 15.2 the public sector organisations will ensure that appropriate support is provided to the Estate in an effective, efficient and timeous manner;
 - 15.3 the Estate will make available each year copies of its business plan to provide an indication of the overall direction in which it is moving, and alert the public sector organisations to potential requests for support;
 - 15.4 any commercially confidential information provided by the Estate to any of the public sector organisations will be treated as such and only made available to staff on a 'need to know' basis;
 - 15.5 the public sector partners will meet singly or jointly with the Estate, or each other, as required to ensure that funding is agreed timeously to further the shared vision, and that their policies and procedures align; and
 - 15.6 the parties will endeavour to communicate effectively and, in particular, ensure that they provide as soon as possible information that may have implications for the successful operation of the Concordat.
- 16 Community planning is a dynamic process to produce a shared vision for the improvement of an area, and agreed partnership mechanisms for the delivery of sustainable and practical priority actions that address the social, economic and environmental needs of the local community.

ROTHIEMURCHUS AS A RESOURCE

Introduction

- 17 The Cairngorms area is quite remarkable. It is the United Kingdom's foremost area of international importance for nature conservation; it has some of Scotland's finest woodland landscapes and wildlife; it is the largest block of wild high land in the country; and the best area for sub arctic terrain and wildlife in the European Union outside Sweden and Finland. The old woods of pine and birch on the Spey and Dee date back thousands of years; and throughout the area, the landforms, lochs, rivers, moors and marshes are of outstanding quality.
- 18 The area is home and a work place to those living in the Straths around the high hills, and is unique for its combination of language and dialect, archaeology, history, and folklore, which stand out in any company. It is renowned for the quality of its livestock, and every year thousands of visitors from home and abroad come to walk, climb, ski, stalk, fish, and to appreciate and enjoy its many attractions.
- 19 The Rothiemurchus Estate occupies a pivotal position at the core of the Cairngorms area, and is important both for its outstanding wildlife and landscape, and the significant contribution it makes to the local community, and the economy and cultural heritage of Strathspey.

Natural Heritage

- 20 Rothiemurchus Estate represents a patchwork of habitats; farmland, woodland, moorland, mountain, lochs and rivers. As a measure of its spectacular location, the whole Estate is included within the Cairngorms National Scenic Area. In 1954, just over half was declared within the Cairngorms National Nature Reserve (NNR). Since then, with subsequent legislation, the importance of this Estate to our natural heritage has been further recognised through designation of most of its sites as Sites of special scientific Interest (SSSI) , classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and proposed as a candidate special Area of conservation (cSAC).
- 21 Rothiemurchus is perhaps best known as one of Scotland's largest and most important remnants of Caledonian pine woodland. It is also notable, perhaps in a more specialised context, for its bog woodland, its wet and dry heathland, its alpine lochs and for the diverse and specialised range of species found associated with these habitats. The remoter parts of the Estate particularly provide a haven for a diverse range of predators and prey; mammals, birds, plants and invertebrates which all form part of Rothiemurchus' biodiversity. Of particular note is the assemblage of upland waders on the moorland and montane zones, the pinewood species of capercaillie, crested tit, Scottish crossbill, wood ant and twinflower and riparian species such as char, salmon and otter.
- 22 The beauty of Rothiemurchus has attracted visitors since Victorian times. In the intervening years the importance of its position close to the main railway has been reinforced by the importance of its location as a gateway to the Cairngorms where hundreds of thousands of people now come every year for a wide range of activities. Visitor numbers have particularly increased steadily since the mid 1960s and the use of the Estate as an environmental education resource has been continually developed since then. The natural and cultural resources of the Estate offer a rewarding and enjoyable experience to all visitors to the Estate.

The Forest

- 23 Rothiemurchus includes a major remnant of the Ancient Caledonian Forest and lies within the Forest of Spey. Scots Pine trees have been present continuously at Rothiemurchus since the last Ice Age.
- 24 The forest is home to a range of animals which are native to the pinewoods, such as capercaillie, red squirrel and the Scottish crossbill. It also provides many public benefits including woodland biodiversity, recreation and timber.
- 25 The European Habitats Directive recognises Scotland's native pinewoods as a priority habitat and much of Rothiemurchus Forest has been proposed as a candidate Special Area of Conservation.

- 26 The extent and condition of the forest has deteriorated over the centuries due to agriculture, overgrazing by sheep and deer and, during this century, providing much needed timber for two world wars. However, more than 1000 ha of new woodland is being regenerated naturally at Rothiemurchus and at the same time the nature conservation value of the existing Pinewood is being enhanced by reducing deer numbers and improving the structure and habitats within the forest. The Old Caledonian Forest now provides high quality recreation for tourists and local people.

Cultural Heritage

- 27 The Estate has a varied cultural Landscape. There are few scheduled ancient monuments but there is a range of prehistoric, mediaeval, and post-mediaeval sites some of which are likely to be of national importance and may warrant scheduling under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 in due course.
- 28 The Estate's built heritage includes: hut circles, which mark the remains of the houses of the prehistoric population; the mediaeval castle of Loch an Eilein, which is a scheduled ancient monument; the category B-listed mansion-house of Doune of Rothiemurchus with its associated buildings and designed landscape, and vernacular buildings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Examples include the category A-listed nineteenth century Croft House and the twentieth century St John's Church by Sir Ninian Comper.
- 29 The Estate records remain largely intact and are catalogued by the Scottish Records Office. Gaelic was the principal language until the twentieth century. "Memoirs of a Highland Lady" is the most popular of many publications relating to the Estate. The history of land use and settlement on Rothiemurchus can be unusually traced and proven using this information.

Community

- 30 Rothiemurchus Estate provides the setting for the eastern flank of Aviemore, as well as encompassing the smaller communities of Inverdrue and Coylumbridge. It is a significant employer in its own right and host to a number of separate business enterprises which make a major contribution to the area's tourism infrastructure. Approximately 100 households are resident within the Estate's boundaries and several community facilities are based there.
- 31 Proposals for development of a new community at Cambusmore across the Spey opposite Aviemore have been incorporated into the statutory Local Plan. This project is expected to deliver a wide range of community benefits including affordable housing, new social facilities, employment opportunities, improved public access together with wildlife/habitat enhancement and interpretation measures.

Appendix

ROTHIEMURCHUS CONCORDAT

The Scottish Executive

The Scottish Executive provides administrative support, and is accountable, to Scottish Ministers who, in turn, are accountable to the Scottish parliament. The Scottish Executive comprises six Departments: Justice; Health; Rural Affairs; Development; Education (which includes Historic Scotland); and Enterprise and Lifelong Learning.

Scottish Natural Heritage

Scottish Natural Heritage is the statutory body charged with conserving and enhancing Scotland's natural heritage, fostering its understanding and enjoyment, and working to ensure that its use is made sustainable. It has an important role in advising Government and seeks to deliver its objectives across the whole of Scotland through partnership and with local sensitivity.

Forestry Commission Scotland

Forestry Commission Scotland serves as the forestry directorate of the Scottish Government and is responsible to Scottish Ministers, advising on and implementing forestry policies. It is part of the Scottish Government team implementing the Scotland Rural Development Programme. Through Forest Enterprise Scotland, it also manages the public forest estate to deliver public benefits. The aims and objectives of Forestry Commission Scotland flow from the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006 and from the wider objectives of Scottish Ministers. As a predominately rural activity, forestry has a major part to play in delivering rural development, but also has an increasingly important role in helping to deliver other Scottish Government objectives to make Scotland a wealthier and fairer, healthier, safer and stronger, smarter and greener country.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Highlands and Islands Enterprise is the agency charged with the task of promoting and supporting economic and social development in the Highlands & Islands. Working to the three broad objectives of Strengthening Communities, Developing Skills and Growing Businesses, HIE operates through a network of 10 Local Enterprise Companies which are private sector led and provide front-line delivery of support and assistance. Moray Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise is the LEC covering the area within which Rothiemurchus lies.

The Highland Council

The Highland Council is the local authority charged with extensive statutory responsibilities including the lead role in Community Planning. It is the democratic means through which the people of the Highlands can seek to improve their social, economic, cultural and environmental circumstances by taking action within the Highlands and by representing their distinct needs wherever they require to be stated. Delivery of most functions has been decentralised to the Area Committee for Badenoch and Strathspey which is based in Kingussie.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority

The CNPA is designed to be an enabling organisation, promoting partnership working and giving leadership to all those involved in caring for the unique aspects of the Cairngorms National Park. The Park Authority ensures there is a joined-up approach to projects and initiatives within the area that help to meet the four aims of the Park.

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

