



Braemar Community Action Plan: Looking to 2030

Compiled 2025

Prepared by

Braemar Community Council in liaison with others

Supported by Marr Area Partnership (MAP) on behalf of the Park Authority.



Contents

1. Summary	3
2. The Community	5
3. The Process	7
4. Action Plan – what the community wants	7
5. Next Steps	21
6. Thanks & Acknowledgement	22
7. Appendices	23
Report on conversations with the youth of Braemar	

I. Summary

Welcome to the new Braemar Community Action Plan (CAP), a comprehensive strategy designed to foster a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable community. This plan embodies the collective vision, aspirations, and commitments of Braemar's residents, stakeholders, and local authorities, aiming to enhance the quality of life for all who call Braemar home.

This document builds on (and replaces) the original Community Action Plan of 2013, updated in 2017. The urgent need for an updated plan was highlighted in a workshop held in the village under the auspices of the Scottish Community Tourism Organisation (SCOTO) which was attended by a wide range of local groups.

This action plan seeks to address the most pressing needs and opportunities identified through extensive consultation surveys, public consultations, and subsequent discussions. The proposed actions and projects are grouped under five focus areas:

- Sustainability
- Housing
- Traffic Management
- Visitor Experience
- Climate Change

Key elements of the plan include initiatives to improve public services, boost local businesses, protect and enhance natural resources, and promote social cohesion. By leveraging our unique heritage and natural beauty, we aim to create a resilient and dynamic community where every individual can thrive.

These areas fit with the Cairngorms National Park Authority's priorities: conserving a special place for people and nature with natural and cultural heritage enhanced, attracting people to enjoy the Park through outstanding visitor and learning experiences, and maintaining a sustainable economy that supports thriving businesses and communities. This document brings together a wide range of initiatives and projects, which the Braemar community believes are achievable and would deliver short and/or long-term benefits for the village.

Changes since the 2017 Community Action Plan

Much has been achieved since the 2017 Community Action Plan was written, with many projects completed or progressed, largely led by local volunteers with help from Aberdeenshire Council, Marr Area Partnership, the local estates and the Cairngorms National Park Authority

Examples of Braemar's successes and achievements include:

- The Braemar Highland Games Visitor Centre, located within the Princess Royal and Duke of Fife Memorial Park, was opened by HM Queen Elizabeth II in 2018 and houses a café and museum explaining the history of the Highland Games and the exploits of many of the athletes who participated in them
- The Fife Arms Hotel redevelopment opened in 2018
- Strachan's restored and developed into a Village Pub – Farquharson's
- Community Gardens are now well established in the grounds of St Andrew's RC Church
- Braemar Care established

- Braemar Hydro. Generating electricity and providing funds for local projects around the village
- Braemar Castle external renovation completed and open to visitors
- Resilience Plan developed. Generator purchased for the Village Hall along with communal survival kits and better emergency communications. The work of the resilience team is ongoing to keep the plan current and the hub in a state of standby 365 days a year
- Braemar Creative Arts Festival and Braemar Mountain Festival growing in popularity each year
- St Margaret's is now a well-established centre for performing and visual arts and is regularly attracting large audiences to enjoy internationally renowned artists and musicians. Each year it hosts the popular Braemar Folk Festival and collaborates with the Fife Arms Hotel in presenting the Fashion Festival and Literary Festival
- An outdoor gym has been created in the children's play park
- Tennis courts have been re-instated near to the golf course and a tennis club has been established
- Deeside Way connecting paths – the Charter Chest Path from Lion's Face Quarry to the Keiloch was completed in 2024
- A nature trail and squirrel and bird lookout has been created in Creag Choinnich Woods and is regularly maintained by a group of volunteers
- Two community woods have been purchased by BCL
- The Youth Hostel has been refurbished and is operating again
- Business units have been created and are all in use at the Lion's Face
- Reformation of the Duff Highlanders as an additional attraction at the Braemar Gathering
- The National Trust has extended parking at the Quoich, upgraded the circular path around the Quoich and restored the Queen Victoria picnic hut

To help add to these achievements, residents were encouraged to take part in the community action plan review in 2024. Braemar Community Council sought community input through public consultation, one to one discussion and via a CAP refresh evening, attended by around 80 residents. In addition, Marr Area Partnership met with the pupils from Braemar who attend Aboyne Academy and the pupils of Braemar Primary School to hear their views of living in Braemar and what they'd like to see in the future.

There were some alternative views on the development priorities in the village but generally there is much alignment and willingness to share and support each other's projects, avoiding overlap. The community believes that there needs to be a balance between the quality of life for those who live here and the visitor experience and that that is best achieved by having a local economy that addresses the heritage, the arts, the outdoors and above all a strong community.

2. The Community

Braemar lies at the heart of the Cairngorms National Park, in the highest and wildest landscape in the UK. Surrounded by mountains, heather moorland, pine and birchwood, the village spans the rocky gorge of the Clunie Water.

For generations, the scenery and mountain air have attracted visitors who come to enjoy the outdoors and all it has to offer.

Within close proximity to over a quarter of Scotland's Munros, the area has been the inspiration for a number of writers, artists and photographers, and many visitors return again and again.

A cohesive and supportive community of around 450 inhabitants, the village is known around the world for the annual Braemar Gathering. The event attracts around 15,000 people on the first Saturday in September each year and has the patronage of His Majesty The King.

Braemar is on the tourist route from Perth to Aberdeen, which climbs over the Cairnwell Pass, the highest through-road in the country, (now dubbed the 'Snow Road') and follows the River Dee along its picturesque valley. Surrounded by unspoilt and sparsely populated countryside, it is nevertheless within an hour and a half's drive of three major centres of population, namely Perth, Dundee and Aberdeen.

Almost all Braemar is now designated as a conservation area. The village is compact, with a mix of grand Victorian houses, modest cottages, narrow roads and lanes, retaining a unique character.

Community Organisations

There are a significant number of community organisations/groups which work for the benefit of the community and are almost entirely run by volunteers.

These include: Braemar Community Council (BCC), Braemar Ambulance Group (BAG), Braemar Care (BC), Braemar Creative Arts Festival (BCAF), Braemar Community Ltd (BCL), Braemar Castle Ltd (BCal), Braemar Community Hydro (BCH), Braemar Local History Group (BLHG), Braemar Primary Parent Council (BPPC), Braemar Royal Highland Society (BRHS), Braemar Royal Highland Charity (BRHC), Braemar Highland Games and Visitor Centre (BHGVC), Braemar Tennis Club (BTC), Braemar Tracks and Paths Group (BTAP), Braemar Tourism Group (BTG), Braemar Village Hall (BVH), Castleton Hall Association (CHA), St Margaret's Trust (SMT), Braemar Mountain Rescue Team (BMR)

Community Assets

Halls & Buildings

St Andrews RC Church
St Margaret's
Village Hall
Castleton Hall
Medical Centre
Primary School
Kindrochit Court Sheltered Housing

Heritage

Braemar Castle
War Memorial

Outdoor and Recreational

Bowling Club	Country Dance Group
Yoga	Keep Fit Group
Walking Group	Highland Dance classes
Junior Highland Games	Tennis club
Local newspaper group	Book clubs
Local History group	Choir
Ukelele group	Lunch club
Knitting group	Bagpipe classes
Braemar Scouts group	Golf club

Services

Resident GP	Emergency service provided by First Responders
Locally retained members of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	
Recycling	Public Toilets
Community Noticeboards	

Local Businesses

There are many local businesses, across many sectors, operating in the area:

Garage and Service Station
Pharmacist
Newsagent
Butcher
Baker
Convenience store
Art Gallery
Sporran maker
Mountain Sports Shop
Choice of eating establishments ranging from coffee shops, casual bar meals and restaurants
Gift shops
18 hole golf course
Glenshee Ski Centre
Fife Arms Hotel
Mar Lodge Estate
Mar Estate
Invercauld Estate

In addition, there are a number of services and tradespeople who serve the wider area. There is a growing number of artists, musicians and creatives in the area together with an increasing number of people who work from home for a proportion of the working week.

3. The Process

Involving People & Refining Ideas

With a view to updating the Braemar Action Plan of 2017 the Braemar Community Council sought input from the community through public consultation, one to one discussions and via a CAP refresh evening. Thanks go to the 80 residents and businesses in Braemar who attended the refresh evening who contributed so meaningfully to the exercise.

In addition, Marr Area Partnership, along with Action for a Fairer World, met with the pupils from Braemar at Aboyne Academy and the P4-P7 pupils at Braemar Primary in November 2025 to hear their views on living in Braemar. The results from the pupil engagement are found in Appendix I.

CAP document production

All of the comments and pieces of information given by the public during the public consultations were collected and incorporated into this report, which will be used as the basis for ongoing community development in the village over the next few years, with support from the community's organisations and all other relevant stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sector.

4. Action Plan – what the community wants

Project Themes and Priorities

The Community Action Plan (CAP) sets out the community's vision for the medium and longer term (up to 10 years) itemising priority outcomes and actions which are shown in the relevant tables below.

It is important to note that some of the projects are already underway, and others will take significantly more time to plan and execute. Much of this is dependent on community engagement and support from a small community.

BRAEMAR: A SUSTAINABLY THRIVING COMMUNITY

To ensure the community of Braemar continues to thrive in a way that is self-sustaining

For a community to thrive, or simply survive, it must be sustainable. The fabric of a community is woven from many individual threads and the sustainability of a community is the result of many factors coming together to create a sustainable whole.

Sustainability requires thriving local businesses, provision of healthcare primary, emergency and care in the community, adequate infrastructure capacity to meet the present and future needs of the community, good communications, a thriving cultural and social life, and much else besides.

Priority: Utilities Infrastructure

Objective: Upgrade local infrastructure so that there is sufficient provision to meet the needs of Braemar's current and future population

- Upgrade electrical, water and internet infrastructure to meet future demand

Priority: Resilience

Objective: To ensure everyone, especially those who are vulnerable, can cope with winter storms and other extreme weather events

- Continue to keep village resilience plan current
- Investigate feasibility of installing solar panels with battery storage on roofs of village halls
- Establish snow warden scheme

Priority: Local Business

Objective: Ensure economic viability by full use of available business premises

- Encourage local businesses to utilise business premises available in and around Braemar
- Encourage property owners to provide sufficient premises to meet the needs of local businesses
- Ask local businesses to display their winter/summer hours of operation on community facebook page

Priority: Health and Wellbeing

Objective: Ensure the health and wellbeing of all members of the community

- Work with Scottish Ambulance Service to ensure adequate ambulance cover
- Continue and expand search for a replacement GP for when Dr. Cruickshank retires
- Create a men's shed (potentially in the fire station) to encourage older men to socialise with their peers to enhance their mental health

Priority: Braemar Care

Objective: Ensure that the frail and vulnerable members of the community can continue to live in Braemar

- Develop sustainable funding model
- Grow care capacity by recruiting an additional 2 carers per year
- Improve carer competency, particular focus on dementia and palliative care
- Make SVQ training available to those who wish
- Establish a bridgehead dementia care service in Braemar

- Expand services e.g. shopping, pet care, child care
- Train volunteers in first aid and Raizer use
- Expand and sustain patient transport service

Priority: Public Transport

Objective: Improve and maintain public transport provisions and connectivity

- Investigate feasibility of a bus service to connect Braemar to the South
- Play an active role in the Bus Forum

Priority: Local Services

Objective: Ensure there is adequate access to Post Office counter services and banking services and that everyone is aware of hours of operation

- Review current Post Office services provided by Green's
- Inform public of operating times for Post Office
- Bank of Scotland to review banking provision every 6 months
- Ensure adequate banking facilities at Post Office

Priority: Community Halls

Objective: Maintain and upgrade the two community halls in Braemar

- Paint outside of Village Hall
- Create accessible toilets and improve entrance to Village Hall
- Look into feasibility of reinstating regular screenings of films in Braemar Village Hall
- Find new user groups for both halls to help in upkeep and sustainability
- Install new heaters and lighting in the Castleton Hall and source funding for upgrade of kitchen

BRAEMAR: HOUSING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

To ensure provision of high-quality housing which is affordable to rent/purchase by local people

The last formal Housing Survey was undertaken in 2014 which identified a significant need for affordable housing (to rent or buy) albeit this was couched with concerns over the impact of development having regard to the character of the village and its conservation status.

In the intervening decade there has been a considerable increase in economic activity within the village as a consequence of the success of the Fife Arms and other commercial developments which have added to its desirability as a place to live and visit. This has had an inflationary effect on house values, further increasing the affordability gap between market value and a price affordable by young people who are critical to the future success of the village.

The Local Development Plan (LDP) approved by the National Park in 2021 recognised the necessity for affordable housing, imposing a requirement of 45% for settlements such as Braemar. However, at present, there seems little prospect of a developer building spec-built housing in such a remote location. Furthermore, the site allocated for affordable housing in the centre of the village which had the benefit of planning permission has proven to be undeliverable by the community company due to costs. At present, discussions are ongoing with a Registered Social Landlord in an effort to progress development.

There have been several private houses developed by self-builders on plots released by subdivision of larger gardens or on the small number of open spaces within the village identified in the LDP as providing opportunity for infill development. One larger site (H2) remains undeveloped, however, there are concerns this may not be realised due to infrastructure constraints in terms of sufficient power and increased flood risk requirements to take account of future climate change.

Consultations undertaken in the course of preparing this Community Action Plan have concluded that delivery of affordable housing as part of a wider private development is unlikely to be a successful strategy in a settlement such as Braemar where volume housebuilders are absent and build costs are higher due to location. Accordingly, it is considered there is scope to investigate an alternative model to developing affordable housing, however such will be reliant on minimising site costs which may require relaxation of some prescribed standards where strict adherence would result in uneconomic costs.

In addition to considerations about affordable housing provision, some comments have been received with respect to accommodation suited to occupation by the elderly. This is a further aspect which could be given consideration when undertaking a housing needs assessment.

The LDP is again being reviewed providing landowners with an opportunity to promote land for possible future development. A Local Place Plan could be developed to further consider proposals identified within the Community Action Plan with a spatial context. With appropriate consultation this could potentially provide an opportunity to identify areas suitable for affordable housing and other uses.

Priority: Housing Needs Assessment

Objective: Undertake/commission survey to determine the number, size and tenure of required housing

- Obtain data to support housing needs assessment and determine how to best undertake the necessary analysis/interpretation

Priority: Provision of affordable housing

Objective: To enable delivery of affordable housing

- Support Braemar Community Ltd in their aspirations to deliver the consented site in the village for affordable housing for rent
- Set up a group of individuals/stakeholders to progress the objective to deliver affordable housing suited to identified groups

Priority: Development of Local Place Plan

Objective: Develop a Local Place Plan to support development proposals within the village identified in the Community Action Plan with a spatial context

- Set up a group of individuals/stakeholders to progress this objective

BRAEMAR: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

To improve road safety for all residents and visitors

For some years now local residents and business proprietors have expressed concern about traffic flow along Mar Road and in particular the congestion caused by inconsiderate parking at various locations. Braemar Community Council, having talked to Police Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council, agreed to deploy parking cones at peak times during the tourist season and these proved to be very successful. This however, for reasons both legal and practical, is not a sustainable solution.

The CNPA 2030 Project, supported by Sustrans, has proposed various changes to the street design in order to assist pedestrian, cycle and wheelchair traffic through the village. These are currently the subject of public consultation.

The Braemar Royal Highland Charity (BRHC) has made the Games Field available for car and coach parking and has installed temporary signs to encourage its use.

Aberdeenshire Council plans to implement a 20mph speed limit throughout the village.

Priority: Parking

Objective: To reduce congestion in key areas

- Improve the design and layout of Mar Road to limit parking in key locations
- Review and improve the design and marking of Council car parks
- Investigate the possibility of a car park outwith the village
- Continue to deploy cones to restrict parking at peak times
- Continue to provide parking space in Games Field

Priority: Signage

Objective: To improve signage indicating approved parking areas and speed limits

- Review deployment of signs around the village
- Improve signs pointing to parking areas

Priority: Speed Limits

Objective: To implement new 20mph speed limit throughout village

- Carry out public consultation on proposed 20mph speed limits
- Implement agreed 20mph speed limits
- Enforce 20mph and 30mph speed limits

BRAEMAR : VISITOR EXPERIENCE

To ensure that visitors to the village, together with residents, can continue to enjoy the attractions, facilities and natural beauty of the area

This section of the Plan is informed by the SCOTO (Scotland Community Tourism) report (published in January 2024) and its recommendations resulting from a workshop held in November 2023 with representatives of a range of businesses and community groups from Braemar. This workshop focussed on community-led tourism. We also include suggestions made during our public meeting in October 2024 and asked the many groups and also the local businesses involved in visitor experiences in Braemar and the Braes of Mar to contribute their current and future plans. We include all of these as they are critical to the community but realise that the focus in our Action Plan should be on those actions the community itself can lead and direct and those are listed at the top of each theme.

Braemar has continued to be a thriving tourist destination albeit with some considerable changes since the last CAP of 2017. The opening of the Fife Arms Hotel as a five star, high-end tourism destination has brought many new visitors and attractions to the village. At the same time, its closure as a budget hotel combined with the temporary closure of the Invercauld Arms pending refurbishment, the permanent closure of Moorfield House and the loss of Braemar Lodge through fire has led to a loss of more affordable hotel accommodation. Coach tourism is now restricted to short visits to the village, not overnight stays. There has been a substantial loss in bed and breakfast accommodation with several establishments having closed or changed into staff accommodation for the Fife Arms. Provision for single night accommodation is now limited. We therefore very much welcomed the re-opening of the Youth Hostel in July 2024 after refurbishment and the provision of cabin/pod accommodation at the caravan park. There is a considerable offering of holiday lets in the village and the introduction of the short term let licencing scheme seems not to have had a negative impact. Most holiday lets are available for weekly lets only.

In common with the rest of Scotland, Braemar has seen a marked increase in motorhome/campervan (MH/CV) tourism and the village and its central car parks can feel overrun during the holiday season with MH/CV. MH/CV are welcome at the Braemar Caravan Site, at the Linn of Dee car park and at Glenshee, but a dedicated camper site ('aire') is not yet available. Waste disposal for those camping in the wild is available at the Braemar Caravan Park, but uptake could be improved and advertised more clearly. Creation of an aire, potentially community-run, should be explored.

The village and its visitors benefit from an ever-increasing number of festivals, concerts and farmers markets, events organised largely through the Fife Arms, St Margaret's and the Tourism Group. Visitors are also welcome to join villagers at regular village group events, such as for example the monthly meetings of the Braemar Local History Group. A single "Notice board" and "Box Office" (ideally digital) could help with advertising, ticket sales and coordination of scheduling and help visitors to know "What's On".

While some eateries have opened up during the past years, others have closed and some have had irregular openings. At present there are several good options during the day, but provision for evening meals is restricted to 2 restaurants and one take away. We would like to see more dining options in the evening and would welcome additional take-away street food carts, especially during the holiday season.

The newly (2025) community-acquired Clunie Meadow is being developed as a community space with new paths enabling a circular walk around the East side of the village. It will offer an opportunity for visitors and locals to find a place to have a picnic, enjoying fabulous views into the Dee valley, away from the busy centre of the village. The community garden is also open to visitors and hosts picnic benches. In general, there is a desire to encourage visitors to disperse more throughout the village and making use of the parking facilities on either end. This may be achieved through improved signage (see also Focus Area 3: Traffic Management).

Many small businesses have been created offering bespoke tours and experiences focussing on nature, photography, wild swimming and sauna, stargazing and aurora gazing, but there remains room for others, for example around mountain biking, art and craft, wellbeing, food and cooking and activities for younger visitors.

The SCOTO report encourages the various groups in the village to work together more to create an integrated strategy to promote Braemar as a destination for visitors. This would include using agreed branding, logos and the already existing “BraemarScotland” website, define unique selling points and create new experiences for visitors including with other visitor destinations nearby (e.g., Balmoral, Ballater). There is scope for advertising such activities as “A Day (or Weekend) Out’. We will liaise with other businesses in the Cairngorms National Park and, with support of the Cairngorms National Park, create possible itineraries for visitors, linking together activities and catering stops to allow visitors to make the most of their time here. The BTG will seek a follow up meeting to discuss progress made since the first SCOTO workshop and agree on the next priorities.

Priority: Attractions and Activities

Objective: To maintain and develop further a varied and high-quality range of attractions and activities

Braemar Castle

- Fully reopened in 2025. Aims are to develop further activities and new exhibits in the castle itself
- Create activities around wellbeing and a kitchen garden in the grounds
- Research possible repairs to curtainwall and once solution has been identified, raise funds and complete the restoration

St Margaret’s Braemar

- Start emergency repairs to the tower (funding in place)
- Purchase new sound system to improve overall experience for audiences
- Continue to run year-round programme of concerts and performances with a minimum of one performance per month
- Continue to host the Braemar Folk Festival and pre-games and Christmas concerts
- Advertise the venue for private events, such as weddings and other celebrations, art exhibitions, workshops and during festivals
- Be a source of up to date information about the history of the building and the whole village via a permanent exhibition that is open every day during the summer season

Clunie Meadow

- Create a space for residents and visitors with circular paths that are easy to navigate for users of all ages and abilities

- The meadow has potential to be a dementia friendly space integrating people of all ages in a “village green” atmosphere
- Encourage learning about nature and regeneration

Tracks and Paths

- Maintain and continue to improve and expand tracks, paths and signage around the village to enable a wide range of users of varying abilities to enjoy walking, running, cycling or skiing
- Add new benches and improve, through leaflets and QR codes, information to users
 - o The current repair focus is on the path through Birkwood, a better and safer link between the Old Military Road and Callater and linking existing paths to Linn of Dee

History Walks

- Encourage visitors to use the newly created self-guided tour around the village with QR codes to provide oral and visual information
- Serve as an example for information dissemination on other walks
- Create a website with archive material free to access for all (expected to go live in August 2025)
 - o Continue to hold monthly meetings during the winter months that are open to visitors

De commissioned phone boxes

- Collate ideas for future purposes for three decommissioned phone boxes

Braemar Box Office

- Investigate feasibility of a digital “What’s On In Braemar” ideally with booking facilities for ticketed events. This would also bring together the many individual businesses offering bespoke visitor experiences

Fife Arms Hotel

- Continue to organise signature festivals and add new ones to drive footfall to the village and build on the area’s growing reputation for cultural tourism
- Continue to support concerts and performances held in St Margaret’s and other venues in the village
- Help to inspire the next generation of artists, writers and thinkers through international networks, creating educational opportunities

Braemar Church

- Preserve the building by roof repairs and repointing
- Repurpose through existing planning permission, the former church for public benefit, serving as an extension of the Fife Arms hospitality and a complimentary space to other venues in the village
- Develop the grounds to form a sculpture garden

Mar Lodge Estate

- Continue high-end refurbishments of the Lodge apartments
- Seek planning permission for the renovation of Porter’s Lodge (to be completed in next 18 months)
- Start a second phase of footpath improvements to the East Quoich footpath
 - o Devise and carry out survey to understand user demands of the Linn of Dee with a view to developing proposals for improving facilities

Tennis Pavillion

- Explore the feasibility of restoring/renewing the existing pavilion which is in a very poor state of repair to allow its useful service for storage/welfare.

Glenshee Ski Centre

- Expand summer activities focussing on its Base Café, a popular stop for tour buses, rallies and as a destination on Snow Roads and North Coast 500 routes.
- Build a new toilet block for visitors that will also serve the MH/CV hook-ups
- o Keep operating the Cairnwell Ski Lift year-round (weather permitting) to allow walkers and mountain bikers (with their bikes), access to the higher paths

Braemar Mews

- Encourage improvements to make the building more user-friendly, street facing and enhance EPC rating

Priority: Accommodation

Objective: To monitor, and where possible, influence, the offering of a variety of accommodation for a range of budgets

Braemar Caravan Park

- Seek planning permission to extend to the South, with additional pitches and more pods and to improve accommodation to exiting pods

Existing Camper sites

- Liaise the landowners and businesses that offer paid for overnight camper stays on car parks near Braemar to monitor use, help improve facilities and discuss potential issues. This is to feed into research for a possible community aire

Community aire

- Investigate whether a community aire can be created in or near the village
- Start discussions with landowners and organise site visits to recently created community aires in Scotland

Survey of existing rentable accommodation

- As part of the housing survey (see focus area “housing”), identify the number of holiday rentals and second homes in the village. Together with the information from B&B’s, hostels and hotels, this will inform current availability of “rentable beds” in the village

Priority: Catering

Objective: To encourage providers and continually monitor catering opportunities for visitors and residents. Ensure there are options for all budgets

Restaurants

- Encourage existing restaurants to have clear opening times, advertised on the “Where to Eat” mail sent out to BTG members to hand out to visitors
- Encourage restaurants to stay open

Pop up and food carts

- Investigate suitable sites for occasional food outlets to increase food offerings especially during weekends and during the summer season.

- Engage with local businesses who may be able to deliver such “street food”
- Liaise with organisers of major events that pass through the village to ensure sufficient provisions on such dates

Priority: Appearance of village

Objective: To present Braemar to visitors in the best possible way

Planning conditions

- Engage in the planning process, encourage conservation of the character of the village through use of local materials and architectural features

Improve signage

- Design and instal better signage and better road layouts (see Traffic Management priority) to reduce nuisance parking and direct visitors to their destination; including the tourist kiosk at the Mews, waste disposal at the Caravan Park and to the Clunie Meadow

Planters and flowers

- Purchase new planters (maintenance light, weather resistant, light and moveable) to enhance the appearance of the village

Notice boards

- Maintain and curate the many notice boards in the village. This should enable events to be advertised clearly and may reduce the use of lamppost advertising

Tourist information

- Fit a solar panel on the tourist information kiosk on the Mews
- Explore the use of the volunteers wearing BTG gilets to help as “walking tourist info persons” to signpost places and activities to visitors

Priority: Advertising Braemar

Objective: Generate materials both in paper form as well as online to advertise Braemar as “Heart of the Park”

Website

- Update the Braemar Scotland website and reconsider the link with Visit Cairngorms
- Encourage BTG members to keep their information updated to ensure the village presents in attractions and accommodation accurately

Village map

- Update and reprint the village map annually
- Ensure copies of the map are available to BTG members, distributed through the touring information kiosk and St Margaret’s Church

Create curated itineraries

- Liaise with other destinations in the Cairngorm National Park Authority to create curated itineraries in printed and online form

Visitor strategy

- Organise a SCOTO update session to monitor progress against the key action points from the report issued in January 2024

BRAEMAR : A CLIMATE CONSCIOUS COMMUNITY

To encourage the community to be more aware of what can be done to mitigate the impact of climate change on our lives

While Braemar's contribution to total global emissions is minimal, the impact of climate change on the community has been significant over the past decade, therefore it is in the community's best interest to support efforts to mitigate climate change where possible.

The United Kingdom accounts for approximately 1% of global emissions and has established itself as a world leader in emissions reduction among developed nations successfully cutting emissions by 50% since 1990. On a per capita basis, Braemar contributes only 0.0006% of the UK's total emissions. However, the area has experienced several notable climatic events in recent years, including:

- Increasingly wet summers
- Diminished snowfall during winter, particularly over the past four years, adversely affecting the ski centre and related businesses.
- Storm Frank (2015) – severe flooding, power outages, and disruption to phonelines.
- Storm Arwen (2021) – prolonged power outage lasting several days

Although climate change has not been a central focus in previous Community Action Plans (CAPs), various initiatives led both by the local community and nearby estates have aimed to reduce emissions and promote sustainability.

Invercauld Estate

Since 2017 three peatland restoration projects have been completed on Invercauld Estate including two in the Culardoch area to the north-east of Braemar. These have helped protect bare peat from erosion, a key contribution to carbon emissions. These projects have had funding support from Cairngorms Peatland Action grants from the CNPA, a Peatland ACTION delivery partner which reports to the Scottish Government.

Invercauld Estate manages extensive woodlands around Braemar and has been felling mature trees and replanting to maintain optimal carbon sequestration and timber production. As older trees absorb less carbon, they are harvested at peak maturity, with their timber used to store carbon in buildings and other uses. This allows younger trees to restart the growth cycle. The estate also promotes species diversity for biodiversity and has seen significant natural woodland regeneration, especially northeast of Braemar.

The Estate has worked with the River Dee Trust in the planting of thousands of riverside (riparian) trees along the banks of the Dee, Clunie, Baddoch and Callater. These trees are intended to provide shade (as well as insect life) for these water systems to cool water temperatures which have generally been rising as a result of climate change.

Mar Estate

Since 2017, Mar Estate, working in conjunction with Cairngorms National Park Authority and Peatland Action, has conducted four peatland restoration schemes, with the aim of restoring degraded peat through a process of re-profiling peat hags and rewetting of exposed peat. This has been done over an area of circa 650 acres and is projected to prevent over 50,000 tons of carbon being emitted into the atmosphere over the life of the project.

Braemar Hydro Scheme

The Braemar Hydro Scheme is a Community Benefit Society, formed to construct a 100kW hydro scheme on Mar Estate. Braemar Hydro generates clean, low carbon electricity from the Corriemulzie Burn on the outskirts of Braemar. Surplus income from the enterprise goes to a community benefit fund to be used for projects and worthy causes in the local community. Over the lifetime of the project it is envisaged that the scheme will generate £500,000 for the community benefit fund.

Mar Lodge Estate

There has been continued peatland restoration - having completed 4 years of peatland restoration work and next year will begin a 5 year programme of work restoring approximately 100ha of degraded peat each year - carbon emissions reduction, increased carbon storage, erosion prevention, flood mitigation, improved water quality and biodiversity benefits.

Montane woodland restoration - carbon sequestration, refuge habitat creation for species displaced through climate change, erosion prevention and flood mitigation. By regenerating woodland higher up the hills, creating replacement habitat for cold-loving species like black grouse.

Carbon footprint reduction - ongoing programme of actions to reduce our carbon emissions and footprint - moving towards electric vehicles and tools where possible, use of electric bikes rather than vehicles, eco products, solar powered equipment etc.

Priority: Visitor Waste Recycling

Objective: Increase village recycling

- Replace existing village disposal bins with dual purpose bins i.e. general waste, recyclables

Priority: Garden Waste Recycling

Objective: Increase village recycling

- Investigate village demand for local garden waste recycling

Priority: Renewables

Objective: Reduce reliance on fossil fuels

- Carry out feasibility study to investigate the options and economics for the installation of a solar array
- Carry out feasibility study to investigate the options and economics for the installation of a biofuel plant using waste oil from local catering companies
- Install a 150kW wind turbine located at Glenshee ski centre
- Install a ground source heating system for heating the new toilet block and hot water supply for the Café at Glenshee Ski Centre
- Replace diesel powered vehicles and petrol powered tools with electrical equivalents at Mar Lodge
- Install solar panels on new workshop at Mar Lodge

Priority: Sustainable Transport

Objective: Reduce car usage in the village and improve accessibility for pedestrians and users of wheeled transport, prams, wheelchairs, walkers

- Redesign street, pavement and junctions throughout village centre

Priority: Reforestation, tree management and peatland restoration

Objective: Increase carbon capture, improve water quality, increase biodiversity and habitat connectivity and help mitigate flood risk

- Continue with reforestation and woodland management programmes
- Continue with peatland restoration projects

Priority: Riverside (riparian) woodland creation

Objective: Flood mitigation, erosion prevention, improved water quality, reducing river temperature, habitat connectivity and biodiversity benefits

- Protect existing fragments of riparian woodland thus allowing them to regenerate
- Create further planted riparian woodland schemes

Priority: Climate Café

Objective: Provide a regular forum for people to share ideas

- Create programme of talks and discussion sessions for people to meet and share ideas about energy efficiency and green energy solutions

5. Next Steps: Delivery

Steps to deliver the Braemar Community Action Plan

The next steps to start working with the action plan will be subject to some discussion within Braemar's community organisations, but broadly involves **collectively**:

- Agreeing what priorities will be taken forward initially
- Agreeing to adopt the Values and Principles laid out below
- Drawing up a more detailed delivery action plan for each prioritised project, identifying aims, actions, milestones, who needs to be involved, key deliverables.
- Communicating progress with the community
- Reviewing progress on a regular basis
- Revisiting the action plan as required

Values and Principles

The following values and principles will underpin the way in which this action plan is rolled out and implemented:

- 1) A plan for all – it is the responsibility of the whole community (individuals and groups) to unite and work together for project ambitions to be realised
- 2) Transparency – all ideas should be planned and researched openly with a commitment to co-production where groups contribute to the ideas as they develop
- 3) Partnership – working together with a shared agenda will be at the heart of any activity arising from this plan
- 4) Inclusion – everyone is invited to participate and everyone benefits, regardless of age and ability
- 5) Impact – the success of this plan will be judged on activities which has a positive influence on people and communities
- 6) Involvement – ensuring the community is meaningfully involved in decisions that affect their lives

The priorities fall into two main groups and will require to be tackled in a different way:

- projects which, although some are mid to longer term, are possible for the community to take forward themselves, with some minimal support from the relevant key agencies or support organisations.
- large, complex issues around employment, housing, transport, business support and infrastructure, where the community will require a great deal of long-term assistance from various public, third and sometimes private sector organisations to take these forward and make a notable difference.

6. Thanks & Acknowledgements

Thanks for all their involvement and hard work in helping to make the process a success must go to:

Braemar Community Council together with all individuals and groups who contributed to the consultation process.

Marr Area Partnership (MAP), an independent community and volunteering development charity, supported Braemar community with production of this community action plan and commissioned Action for a Fairer World who met with school children and whose findings are appended hereto.

Community Action Planning (CAP) is carried out in partnership by all the Cairngorms National Park communities on a regular basis at the community's request.

Funding to MAP to facilitate the communities' CAP process was provided by the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

7. Appendices

Appendix I – results from engagement with Aboyne Academy and Braemar Primary Pupils

Braemar Community Plan - ideas from Children and Young People

Background: In Autumn 2025 Action for a Fairer World (AFW) was asked by the Marr Area Partnership to seek the views of children and young people so these could be fed into local plans for the Braemar area. AFW undertook this as part of Just Transition Communities Project (JTCP) a NE Scotland Climate Action Network (Nescan) initiative funded by the Scottish Government.

Children's Rights and participation: Children and young people are members of their communities and as such their views need to be taken into account. This is a requirement under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and it ensures children have a greater sense of belonging to their community. Children and young people also offer a different perspective to adults and incorporating their views helps ensure community plans work better for everyone.

Process: Staff from AFW and the Marr Area Partnership visited Aboyne Academy and Braemar Primary School on 12th November 2025. We met with 16 secondary children (aged 12-16) and 13 Primary children (aged 7-11) who lived in the Braemar area. Each visit lasted around 90 minutes and included;

- an introductory activity aimed at creating a safe space for Children to express their views and have these listened to (article 12 of UNCRC).
- an open ended task where children spoke about what they liked or would want to keep in Braemar and what they would improve or change in the area.
- a discussion to check we had a clear understanding of what was being said and why it was important to the children

At the end of the visits AFW agreed to prepare this report to share with the children and the Marr Area Partnership to incorporate into local plans. AFW and the Marr Area Partnership will also look for opportunities for the children to receive feedback on how their ideas might be taken forward and will explore funding to support child-led initiatives. We are grateful to the children for expressing their views and to the 2 schools for arranging the visits.



What the children said

After the introductory task children in both schools were asked to post notes on a map to show what they liked about Braemar and what they would improve. They were free to speak about anything and at the end of the activity we discussed what they had said. The notes below combine the views from both schools and groups their ideas under 6 broad headings.

- **Home and community** - Children in both groups had a close affinity with Braemar, they liked living there and had lots of positive things to say about the village. Many had family and friends living close and said the village had a good community feel. Those who had arrived more recently or did not have family or local contacts said they had been made to feel welcome. For some it can feel remote at times but most liked that it was quiet and felt safe and child friendly. There was a view that it would be good to have a space for teenagers to go when the weather was bad. Older children were also concerned there was no housing for them as these were bought for holiday rentals or for hotel staff.
- **Nature** - Children in both groups liked that Braemar is surrounded by hills and open space. Children enjoyed being out and about in nature and spoke enthusiastically about seeing lots of flowers, insects and wildlife including Ospreys and deer. They were very aware of their natural surroundings and spoke with knowledge and enthusiasm about nature/biodiversity. One primary pupil was keen to see wildcats being re-introduced and others discussed how some areas damaged in a storm were now providing new habitats. Children felt that more could be done to help people be more aware of the nature in the area and what visitors in particular need to do to protect it.



- **Play** - Children liked to play in the woods and at the local parks. They enjoyed swimming in local rivers and exploring tracks and paths by foot or on bikes. Some of the tracks were bumpy with trenches for the water and there were places where tracks crossed roads where you needed to be careful, better signs and road markings might make this safer. Children felt safe and knew if they got lost or anything then Braemar had a good Mountain rescue team. Children liked the tennis courts which had a good on-line booking system but they could not be used later on as there were no floodlights. Some felt it was expensive to join but they had liked when some free sessions were offered after school. There were limited play parks and they would like to have a basketball area, adventure type equipment and things for just chilling out at. They also thought a dog exercise area would be good as it would mean there was no dog mess in their play areas..
- **Other activities** - Children took part in a lot of activities and clubs most of which seemed to take place in Ballater, Aboyne or further away so needed transport. Swimming in Ballater was expensive and although Aboyne was cheaper it was further away. Other clubs and groups always tended to involve the Braemar children needing to rely on getting a lift through to the club and they thought it might be good if every so often the club happened in Braemar and others had to do the travelling.

They also thought it would be good to have an indoor space for children to use when the weather is not good. Secondary age children in particular are, during the winter, leaving for school in Aboyne and returning in the dark so don't have much chance to meet up with friends socially. Some felt that a youth space or informal youth club every so often would be good.

- **Shopping and other facilities** - There were many things the children liked including the bakery, the chocolate shop, John Macs train (which they thought should run round more of the village), the Games Park and play park. There was a feeling that many of the shops in Braemar were aimed at tourists and there were not enough to cater for locals. Children spoke fondly of the Co-op which had closed but were not so positive about the shop which had replaced it. They felt the range, quality and stocks had declined whilst the prices had increased. They said that people mostly get groceries from Co-op at Ballater or Aboyne when passing through or there for other activities. Many also got provisions through home delivery from Tesco or Morrisons at Banchory.



- **Visitors/tourism** - Children recognised that tourism provided employment opportunities and brought money into the area, but they also felt visitors do not always respect the local people or nature. They did not like it when the village became really crowded, especially at the time of Braemar Games or when the classic cars event was on. This led to pavements being crowded, parking problems and a feeling that the village was being taken over and locals were being pushed to the side. Children did not like fields being wrecked for car parking, the heavy traffic on the roads and helicopters being used to deliver tourists to the area. They had experience of tourists being rude and disrespectful to locals and that local views were not always taken into consideration, a bucket sculpture outside the Invercauld was given as an example of this. What came across was a contrast of Braemar being a quiet peaceful village where children were safe to move around most of the time to a place which became very busy and felt less safe and child friendly when there were big events.
- **Communications** - Children did not always feel they were kept informed about what was going on in their community. They had heard stories of a swimming pool being built, the Invercauld being re-opened, 20 MPH speed limits and other things but did not know where to go to find out. There were things they would like to suggest such as where crossings and wider footpaths would help them get about, what equipment to have in parks and spaces/activities for teenagers, how the wi-fi could be improved, but they did not know who to take their ideas to. Children want Braemar to work for everyone, young and old, locals and visitors and they would be keen to tell others what they like about it and what they would like to improve.