

COMMUNITY FACILITIES, SPORT & RECREATION

Lhanbryde School

Introduction

- 6.1 Over the years there has been increasing difficulty in meeting the requirements of community infrastructures. The role of the Council, still a major provider of facilities, has increasingly sought partnership with service agencies. e.g. The Community Care Plan with the Grampian Health Board and Moray Health Services and the Housing Strategy with Scottish Homes.
- 6.2 The Council works with these public agencies to secure vital social facilities, involving voluntary and charitable organisations as well as the private sector. Similarly it seeks support in a number of leisure and cultural facilities - particularly sport and recreation (via the Scottish Sports Council) and the Arts (via the Arts Council). For this, a separate Leisure Strategy is being prepared. While tertiary education is now separately administered by the Moray College, most primary and secondary education is the responsibility of the Moray Council. Nursery education is supported by private sector involvement.

National Context

- 6.3 National Planning Policy Guideline 11 'Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Spaces' requires a strategy which assesses demand in relation to existing provision, so that need can be identified. Figure 13 outlines the indicative needs identified by the Council, but further work is required to develop a more refined position. It will be for the Local Plan to identify where existing facilities should be retained, and new sites for development.
- 6.4 The Structure Plan aims for community facilities, sports and recreation are as follows:
 - to seek adequate provision of community facilities and to develop partnership with agencies which have a common interest.
 - to manage the recreational use of open space in built up areas, and of environmentally sensitive areas of the countryside
 - to seek contributions to new, or upgraded, community facilities in the Council's capital plan, by developers whose proposals impact upon their usage

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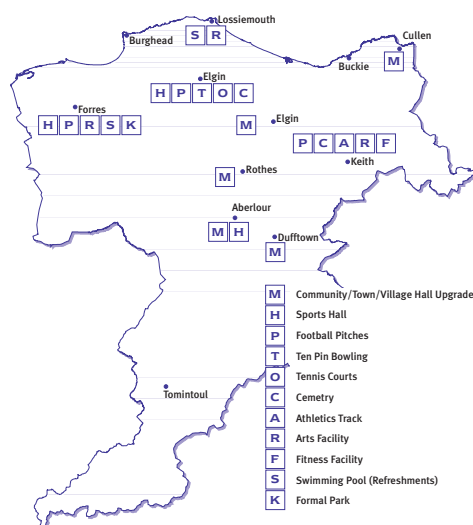


CO-ORDINATED COMMUNITY FACILITY, SPORT AND RECREATION PROVISION

Aim: To seek adequate provision of community facilities and to develop partnership with agencies which have a common interest.

6.5 The Council now works closely with other agencies involved in the health, culture, leisure and social care, of the community. Its own capital programme of works is required to recognise the ability of alternative providers to meet needs and draw in funding from national sources via public agencies, charities, the lottery and the private sector. There is scope to promote further co-ordinated provision of new or improved community facilities and to that end, the Council is prepared to enter into partnerships with financial commitment.

Figure 13: Indicative needs for Sports, Recreation and Community Facilities



**Policy S/CF1:
Community Facility, Sport
and Recreation Provision**

- The Council will seek a strategic approach to community facility, sport and recreation provision by:**
- i) assessing needs (including social needs) and local demand (including latent demand)**
 - ii) promoting wider use of existing facilities in both public and private ownership**
 - iii) promoting joint funding of new facilities, or improvements to existing**
 - iv) providing new facilities and improving facilities as resources permit.**

The Local Plan will identify community facility, sport and recreation sites for protection, enhancement and new provision.

The range of facilities in any community are a measure of its vitality and standing. Many facilities occupy potentially prime locations for alternative uses such as housing. In some cases community provision may be outdated, or under used, as when a replacement has been provided in another location. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate to consider alternative development, but, in general, existing facilities should be retained.

As well as identifying suitable locations for new community facilities in the Local Plan, guidelines will be required to set out expectations in terms of design, and layout of new or modified facilities, and, where appropriate, these will be incorporated into the Local Plan.

Town and Village Statements will identify where local facilities are under provided, or in need of upgrading to meet the demands of that community. Sites designated for community facilities in Proposals Maps will be presumed to be protected from redevelopment unless replacement is included in the development proposal

The Council will presume against development which removes an existing community facility unless it is in need of replacement, or an alternative provision is being made as part of the development proposal.



Inchberry Hall by LDN Architects, Forres

**Policy L/CF1:
Designation
of Community Facilities**

**Policy L/CF2:
Replacement
of Community Facilities**

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**Policy S/CF2:
Recreational Open Space in
Built up Areas**

**Policy L/CF3:
Recreation
in Built-up Areas**

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MANAGING RECREATION ACCESS

Aim: To manage the recreational use of open space in built up areas, and of environmentally sensitive areas of the countryside.

In Built up Areas

6.6 NPPG11 on 'Sports and Physical Recreation' gives clear guidance that sports fields and parks should be protected from redevelopment for housing. Pressure clearly exists, particularly on amenity land within the confines of settlement boundaries. Open space associated with schools, halls, and playing fields provides important public amenity.

The Council will generally presume against development which encroaches onto recreational and amenity ground in towns and villages.

Urban Recreation

Standards for the provision of sports fields and parks set by the Sport Scotland will be applied, and the release of any facility will only be acceptable where there is over provision or where it is adequately replaced.

Sport Scotland standards for sports fields and playing fields will be applied to local provision and there will be a general presumption against redevelopment of these and parks except in the following circumstances:-

- i) where such would not affect sporting potential and amenity value;
- ii) where there is a clearly identified long term excess of facilities in the wider area, taking into account long term strategy, and the recreational and amenity value of such provision;
- iii) where existing facilities will be replaced by new ones of an equivalent or better quality, which are more accessible to the community that was served by the original (see also policy L/H3).

In Countryside

i) Recreation

6.7 A wide range of informal recreation takes advantage of Moray's countryside including skiing, golfing, angling, walking, cycling, horse riding, field and water sports. Such sports have tourism significance. Increased leisure time and greater awareness of environmental issues are placing increasing pressure on the countryside as a source of recreation, but access cannot be achieved without detriment. Therefore, in some areas it is advisable to reduce potential conflict by encouraging and negotiating access to land and water with owners. Pressures are greatest in the countryside around the settlements, where access is often most restricted. A co-ordinated approach to countryside access and management is required across Moray to maximise opportunities for all outdoor recreational pursuits. This should not impinge on the 'freedom to roam' concept enjoyed within

Scotland. This should dovetail with existing efforts such as the Speyside Way Long Distance Footpath and the Aberdeen to Inverness National Cycle Route.

- 6.8 It is intended to integrate the cycling strategy referred to in Policy S/T9 with a co-ordinated approach to countryside access as a 'Moray Access Network Initiative' to develop a comprehensive paths/cycle route network for Moray.

Update

The Council published a consultative draft framework document for the 'Moray Local Access Strategy' in December 2000. The strategy is anticipated to be finalised in the Spring of 2001 and a partnership has been formed for its implementation.

The Council will seek to establish management agreements in relation to access to, and recreational use of, countryside areas. Where such areas are environmentally sensitive (and are designated as such in the Local Plan) a formal Management Plan, involving monitoring of impact, will be required.

**Policy S/CF3:
Recreational
Use of the Countryside**

Recreation in the Countryside

The development of outdoor recreation and activities has clear benefits to Moray's tourism economy.

Access

The 'freedom to roam' concept is unique in Scotland and it is limited to wild land and open countryside where public access can conflict with the management of private estates. Access to farmland (around settlements in particular) and, to private forests (i.e. not owned by the Forestry Authority), is also usually restricted. Access to many rivers and lochs, that would otherwise be suitable for a wide range of recreational activities, is actively discouraged.

Progress to date focuses on the Council's partnership in the Aberdeen to Inverness National Cycle route, and the objective of local cycle networks assisted by 'developer contributions.' (See Policy L/T10). The 'Paths for All' organisation have approached the Council with a view to consolidation and improvement of the footpaths network around towns. The Council is also developing a Tourist Cycle Rides initiative, part funded from the Cycle Challenge Fund.

An extension of both ends of the Speyside Way is being pursued to achieve 'Long Distance Footpath Status'. Forest Enterprise and Glenlivet Estates have an extensive network of tracks and trails for walkers and mountain bikes with further expansions being considered. Scope also exists for development of cross country ski routes.

While the Speyside Way provides free access to extensive areas of attractive countryside, and the proposed Aberdeen to Inverness National Cycle Route, once developed, should provide a 'spine' from which a local network can grow, what is required is a co-ordinated approach to access. The Council is presently pursuing a Moray Access Network/Initiative to provide for integrated access management, which is sensitive to the needs of landowners and communities as well as environmental quality.

**Policy L/CF4:
Countryside Recreation:
Access and Trails**

LOCAL PLAN

While there is a duty to ensure that unacceptable damage to the environment does not result, the Council can also ensure that random development does not prejudice their promotion.

Development proposals will not be permitted to prejudice established routes for walking, cycling, trails and cross-country skiing for which access arrangements have been agreed.

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ii) Skiing

6.9 Downhill skiing is an important recreational activity that requires special attention. It relies on natural resources, but requires a purpose built facility. The only existing ski centre in Moray is at the Lecht. Benefits to tourism and the economy are important particularly in the remoter southern half of Moray. Potential exists for expansion at the Lecht, but this should not involve further landscape or habitat degradation. The National Planning Policy Guidance on Skiing Developments (NPPG12) allows for expansion and consolidation of existing ski centres rather than the growth of new centres.

6.10 The impact of cross country skiing is generally less than that related to downhill skiing because it tends to be dispersed and does not require the same level of related facilities.

6.11 There are areas of very high conservation value (e.g. Ladder hills SSSI adjacent to the Lecht Ski Centre) in which there is a strong presumption against skiing and other developments. Such areas will limit expansion opportunities at the Lecht.

6.12 The continued expansion and upgrading of existing ski centres is subject to natural heritage constraints, access and parking requirements. It is important that ski centres such as the Lecht continue the annual monitoring of its management plan agreed between the operators and other appropriate authorities and agencies.

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Proposals for skiing and related developments at existing centres will generally be considered favourably. Outwith existing centres there will be a presumption against skiing and related developments. In both cases there will be a requirement to show that the development does not significantly prejudice significant wildlife, flora, habitat, scientific or landscape resources.

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The Council supports the improvement and expansion of the Lecht as a downhill Skiing Centre but within current boundaries in accordance with National Skiing Guidelines.

The Council is a signatory to a Development and Management Plan along with Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Lecht Ski Company which regulates the development of a defined area for skiing, and the proper management of the ski slopes.

The expansion of the ski centre is somewhat precluded by the Ladder Hills SSSI which surrounds the centre and any encroachments within this

**Policy S/CF4:
Skiing Development**

area will be subject to the approval of SNH, who currently oppose such expansion. The Development and Management Plan includes details of agreed boundaries, annual monitoring of environmental damage, annual programme of rehabilitation work and operating conditions for protecting vegetation.

It is anticipated that any future upgrading of the ski facility together with recent road improvements will increase the potential for 'package holidays' in the area with resultant benefits to the local tourist industry.

New development should take place within the existing centre leading to the intensification of its use rather than expansion. There is a presumption against expansion of development outwith the boundaries of the existing centre but should, in the future, such expansion be sought then the agreement of SNH will have to be sought to establish a new Development and Management Plan. Any development proposal will be required to demonstrate that it does not significantly prejudice:-

- i) areas classified or proposed for classification under the European Community directive on the Conservation of Wild birds or under the prospective European Community directive on flora, fauna and habitats;**
- ii) World Heritage sites, National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest; or**
- iii) National Scenic Areas and landscape areas designated in the Moray Structure and Local Plan.**

Such development must also conform with all other Development Plan policies, including those which protect the environment.

Policy L/CF5: Lecht Skiing Centre

iii) Golf

6.13 Golf facilities are generally suitable within the countryside in that they retain undeveloped spaces and do not represent an irreversible use of agricultural land. However, they should not be used to justify other potentially non-acceptable uses such as housing.

Golf is another sporting activity which attracts visitors. Moray is well provided with golf courses (14) and golf packages/multi-course tickets are promoted by the Tourist Board. Recent developments have seen a new 9 hole course open at Kinloss; a fun "par-3" course developed at Covesea, Lossiemouth; the development of driving ranges at Spey Bay and Elgin. A major development involving a golf course, hotel and houses at Malverston, by Urquhart received planning consent (subject to legal agreements being concluded).

While such facilities are generally regarded as suitable activities for countryside and edge of town locations, difficulties can occur when proposals involve environmentally sensitive sites, and the loss of natural habitat areas. Similarly buildings (such as clubhouses) can conflict with principles for buildings in the countryside.

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**Policy L/CF6:
Golf Courses
and Driving Ranges**

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Proposals for golf courses and driving ranges should avoid nature conservation sites and natural habitat areas, unless it can be demonstrated that no detrimental impacts will occur. Consideration will also be given to the potential effect on the landscape character of the area and to water courses and their potential pollution from fertilisers and chemicals, both during and after course formation. Associated buildings will require to comply with policies for buildings in the countryside in terms of siting and design, although the connection with the facility will be taken into account. There will be a presumption against proposals which involve other uses (for instance housing developments) in order to make the facility financially viable.

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CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS FACILITIES

Aim: To seek contributions to new or upgraded community facilities in the Council's capital plan, by developers whose proposals impact upon their usage.

- 6.14 Although the Council plans to provide facilities for its communities to meet local expectations, its resources are limited and many facilities operate at, or above, capacity.
- 6.15 Where new development, particularly new housing, is added to a community, the impact of such additional demand may be to put excessive strain on some of its facilities. In such areas it is reasonable to expect the development to redress that balance by contributing towards upgrading, or providing a new facility. The implementation of Policy S/F2 in the Funding Section is most likely to be triggered by development impact on the Council's community provision.

LOCAL PLAN

Commitment to Council expenditure on community facilities should be stated in the Capital Plan, and acknowledged in the Local Plan proposals for each town or village. In addition, the Implementation Chapter provides guidance on the implementation of developer contributions.