

policy woodlands of the Strathspey valley and the peaty waters of the River Spey itself. The wooded flanks of the Cairngorms Mountains form a crucial setting to the open and bare mountain massif, whilst the lower straths are significantly enhanced by the rising forests and their mountain backdrop. Equally, to the west of the River Spey, the rising flank of the Monadhliath range forms a mountainous backdrop to Strathspey and forms the western setting to An Camas Mòr.

- 4.4.6 Man made elements of the landscape are an important aspect of the general character of the area, and the farmland of the straths and lower hills, the estate policies of mixed woodlands and parkland trees and the historical built heritage of the area are all particularly distinctive.
- 4.4.7 This rich diversity of landscape types creates an area of considerable scenic attractiveness, which has been celebrated from the 19th century onwards. The area continues to act as a magnet to visitors for a wide range of passive and active recreation activities.

## **4.5 Site Protection**

### **Cairngorms National Park**

- 4.5.1 The Cairngorms National Park was designated in 2003 by the Scottish Parliament because it satisfied the conditions for a National Park as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.
- 4.5.2 The Act in Section 1 sets out the aims of a National Park and in Section 2 the conditions for designation of an area as a National Park:
  - a That the area is of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage:
  - b That the area has a distinctive character and a coherent identity.
  - c That designating the area as a National Park would meet the special needs of the area and would be the best means of ensuring that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in relation to the area in a coordinated way.
- 4.5.3 The Act in Section 1 sets out the four aims of a National Park:
  - a To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
  - b To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
  - c To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
  - d To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

- 4.5.4** The four aims must be achieved collectively and in a coordinated way.
- 4.5.5** The National Park covers 3,800 sq km which is approximately 5% of Scotland's land area. Approximately 16,000 people live in the National Park, 25% of the area is designated as being of European importance for nature conservation, it contains extensive mountain areas and significant stretches of two of Scotland's major rivers and numerous listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments.

### **An Camas Mòr in the Context of the Protection of the Area - Spey SAC**

- 4.5.6** The River Spey and its most important tributaries are designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EC Habitats Directive. This European designation reflects the clean nature and the physical and chemical changes that occur from source to the mouth of the river. The designation lists the qualifying interests of the SAC as; Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey, otter and freshwater pearl mussel. The River Spey is one of the most important rivers in Western Europe for freshwater pearl mussel and although stretches have been severely affected by pearl fishers, a recent survey has indicated a sizeable population with breeding occurring. This species of mussel has declined drastically throughout much of its global range.

### **An Camas Mòr in the context of the National Scenic Area (NSA)**

- 4.5.7** The Cairngorms Mountains NSA extends from Glen Feshie in the west to Glen Builg in the east; from Pityoulish & Ryvoan in the north and the Geldie Burn in the south. It embraces the principal summits of the bulky Cairngorms Plateau and the woodlands and forests that cloth its lower slopes and flank the greater and lesser watercourses. It is designated an NSA because it meets the criteria of "unsurpassed attractiveness which must be conserved as part of our national heritage".
- 4.5.8** The Cairngorm Mountains NSA was designated in 1980. The intention eventually is to subsume this designation within the National Park Plans once they are adopted to safeguard and enhance the NSA interests. The part of the citation relevant to An Camas Mòr refers to the forest around the plateau foot and in Rothiemurchus the mixture of native pine and birch woodland carpeted with a rich ground flora. Within the An Camas Mòr boundary the ancient woodland in the south east part of the site would be conserved. Other parts of the site are less important for the NSA citation. The proposed development would not affect the integrity of the NSA.

## **4.6 Protected Species**

- 4.6.1** The surrounding area contains the protected species, both those protected at an International and a National level. It also contains many bird species which are specially protected at an International and a National level. Particular habitats in the area are listed under the Habitats Directive and are known for their