

Dear Planning and Architecture

I am responding to the NPF4 Call for Ideas both as a professional planner and more specifically as someone caught up in issues related to second home ownership in the Highland Council area.

Essentially, our case is that for various family reasons we were required to invest in a second home as part of a legacy left to my daughter. It had to be something within easy reach of Linlithgow by public transport for use of my daughter and her teen / young adult friends, and family members. We then acquired a railway cottage in Kingussie within Cairngorm National Park which we are happy with and use regularly. However from reading the local papers (Strathspey Gazette, Press & Journal etc) and visiting for a few years it is clear that there is an entrenched conflict between affordable housing for locals and second homeowners. Something like 20-25% of the properties in Cairngorm National Park are second homes.

As a planner I was aware of this situation before we purchased our cottage however there were no holiday property options available for second homeowners beyond caravans and park homes. There will always be folk with money seeking a second home in the country, near their birth or kinship place, or for investment. This situation is likely to increase with more stay-cationing as a result of climate change and now the economic downturn caused by Covid-19.

Having grown up in Canada and spent much time in France, I find it odd that there is no similar offering to the ski / recreational villages at Whistler and various alpine resorts in the Jura, Savoie etc. It is common for inhabitants of many apartment based cities like Edinburgh & Glasgow in Europe to have holiday accommodation in mountain and lakeside locations often reached by TGV and SNCF trains, though admittedly the older resort locations can be more car-based.

I feel strongly that the conflict between second homes and local housing markets needs more thought to find the win-win solutions:

- Could the investment that goes into rural areas from second homeowners be directed to assist local markets through say building types which offer access to housing in rural areas whilst providing better security and community for second homeowners i.e. Edinburgh colony style housing; low-rise flats with a mix of flats for locals and holiday flats?
- There are numerous railway stations in easy reach of the central belt – could small allocations of holiday / accessible housing be considered in these more sustainable locations?
- Why are there no bespoke holiday properties with balconies etc near any of the stations in Aviemore the supposed premiere ski / recreational destination in Scotland? Near other stations in CNP?
- Why is no effort put into directing this inward investment into rural areas away from the local housing to unlock this issue as a strategic option?
- Why are park homes and caravans considered to be the sum total of the aspirations of Scottish people in terms of holiday homes provision by both planners and developers? Should the holiday home market not offer a range of levels to suit a range of incomes?

On another note, there are housing issues in Whistler & British Columbia but this is largely due to other factors – primarily foreign investment - and you might be interested to look at the BC Speculation and Vacancy Tax and associated provincial government programme to combat the housing crisis there.

Kind regards

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