

The Cairngorms National Park Elections (Ward No 1)

Candidate's Statement by GRAHAM WILLIAM BECKETT

I have been associated with the Cairngorms for over 40 years, having started my working life in Aviemore in the mid -1970s. From a University background in Physical Education and Recreation Management, I then pursued a career in Education for 34 years, running a very active department and being involved in middle management as a Senior Teacher responsible for various systems and committees, including ones concerned with risk assessments and organised recreational activities. Throughout this time I was also increasingly involved in outdoor education as a qualified Mountain Leader and Climbing Instructor. A great deal of my working and personal time was spent taking part in and running educational and recreational activities in the Cairngorms. Having retired from education, I now live in Blair Atholl where I am becoming fully embedded in the local community, fulfilling various voluntary roles, but also still working seasonally as a freelance hillwalking guide. I believe that my background in Education, Management and Mountaineering would enable me to be of considerable service as a member of the C.N.P. board. Furthermore living in a village community within the Park would give me a balanced perspective of the various needs and pressures impacting on the people and the environment of the Park and I would be well placed to represent the views of people living in the Park as well as consider the overall picture of the "whole" National Park.

Candidate's Statement by KENNY DEANS

Having lived, worked and raised a family in Kingussie during the last 40 years and been consistently involved with volunteering and development programmes across the Strath and North of Scotland I believe I have much to offer to the role of Board Member. My background is in education, youth work, community support and coaching. Collaborative working and getting the best from individuals and groups has been a feature of my experience and involvement. Being able to promote the needs of the local people within the Park Authority area and the engagement with the environment we enjoy is a central reason for my bid to become a community member. I would undertake to bring thoughtful and creative solutions to the many challenging areas with which we are faced. I have always been an outdoor enthusiast and I am proud to have established the S1 Badaguish residential experience for Kingussie High. The week focussed not merely on the various adventurous and physical activities locally but provided opportunities to consider the unique environment and the importance of conservation on their journey. I believe sustainability is not just about the environment but about society and the economy. Ensuring that sustainability is at the core of the work that we do as communities and as a Park Authority is key. There is work to do to strengthen and integrate the relationships being developed between the 'Park' and local communities to positively harness the energy, interest and pride within our national park.

Candidate’s Statement by DEIRDRE FALCONER

From a crofting family in Badenoch, I have lived, worked and raised my family here. I was a Geography Teacher in Kingussie for 15 years, and for the past 14 years managed a local award winning wedding and hospitality business. Recently semi-retired, I have additional time to further dedicate my commitment to the Board of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, which I have been a member of for almost four years.

I am passionate about our beloved landscape and its rich cultural heritage, formed by the hard work, passion and deep knowledge of generations of people. Alongside protecting this, and mitigating the effects of the climate and biodiversity crisis, we must be certain that our people have: secure jobs; homes that are affordable; infrastructure that is appropriate and in good condition, and that our residents, from our youngest to our elderly, can thrive in sustainable communities.

Over the past four years I have campaigned hard for all of these, and strongly encouraged the Pathways to Rural Work Programme being introduced to local schools. Currently I am campaigning to ensure that there is adequate and appropriate upskilling and re-training opportunities available for those in the changing job environment.

With your vote I will continue to be the local voice of people in ward 1, ensuring a pragmatic voice at the table. Please lend me your vote. Vote Deirdre Falconer

Candidate’s Statement by RICHARD JENNINGS

An outstanding natural environment that works for all our communities should be at the heart of every decision. I am committed to the long-term development of the Cairngorms National Park and making it a great place to live, work and play.

Balancing the needs of nurturing our communities, protecting and sustaining the environment and promoting long-term economic growth is a challenge. We need to approach it with an open mind, seeking new solutions to old problems and making brave decisions. I would bring over a decade of experience in affordable housing development, local authority education and planning and regeneration to the role, ensuring that we achieve goals of healthy and sustainable communities and create great opportunities for future generations. I started my career at NatureScot, supporting communities across the Solway Firth to promote sustainable development and protect the natural environment. Most recently I have worked to provide affordable housing solutions for communities across Scotland. Our national park is a wonderland of opportunity. As an outdoor enthusiast I am privileged to live in and enjoy this amazing place and I am passionate that we make wise decisions that support us all to live in, work in, protect and enjoy this place now and in the future. Our park has so much potential. As a member of the board, I will encourage sustainable investment that supports communities, protects the environment, promotes economic development and responsible access for all. I will use my professional knowledge and experience to support long-term and wise decisions.

Candidate’s Statement by BONNIE MCGHIE-CONVERY

Since moving to Newtonmore permanently in 2018, I have watched with interest the local developments that are progressively making the park area a more welcoming, inclusive, and diverse location for both visitors and residents. I am passionate about the future development and well-being of the park as a business owner and prospective homeowner. I believe that the best way to encourage positive change is to be part of it, which is why I (Bonnie McGhie-Convery) have decided to offer myself as a nominee.

As a young woman and proud member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I believe that I can bring a fresh perspective into the management of the park and will be able to offer input for some of these under-represented groups. I am also involved with the local charity Disability Snowsport UK, which enables me to consider the impact of accessibility on disabilities within the park. Through this awareness, I think that I would add great value to the board.