

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-2018 Action Summary

Woodland

This section of the Action Plan saw the highest proportion of actions attaining status of 'work completed' or 'ongoing – no further input required' – 84% in total. This partly reflects both the strong national policy context, facilitated by the Forestry Grant Scheme, and the successful, collaborative approach to woodland species conservation.

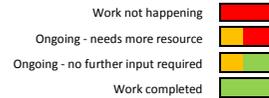
The Action Plan had an ambitious target of 5000 ha of new native woodland over the course of the five years of the plan. By comparison, Scotland as a whole had, over the same period, an annual target of 10,000 ha of new woodland. This national target would translate to 600 ha per year (or 3000 ha for five years) for the National Park, which covers 6% of Scotland's land area. Not only is 5,000 ha proportionally well in excess of this national target, but, unlike the national target, non-native tree species could not count towards it.

By the end of the five years, 4,050 ha of new native woodland had been created, and so the target had not been met. Forestry Commission Scotland considers that landowner uncertainty, heightened by referenda on Scottish independence and Brexit, may have affected confidence in making significant decisions on land use change. However by achieving 81% of the target, the Cairngorms were substantially above the national level of attainment for creation of all woodland types which sat at 64% over the five years from 2012 to 2017. Furthermore, if we consider the 200 ha of montane scrub created by Wildland Ltd, which for the purposes of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, was accounted for in the Upland, rather than the Woodland section, as well as the 375.5 ha of new woodland with a significant, non-native element created in the Park during 2013-2018, then total woodland creation amounts to 4,675 ha or 93.5% of 5,000 ha. This level of afforestation is roughly twice the national average.

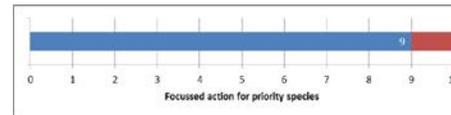
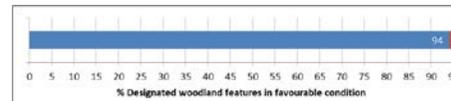
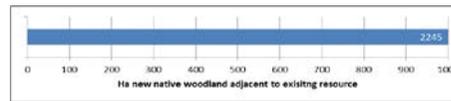
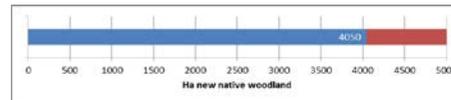
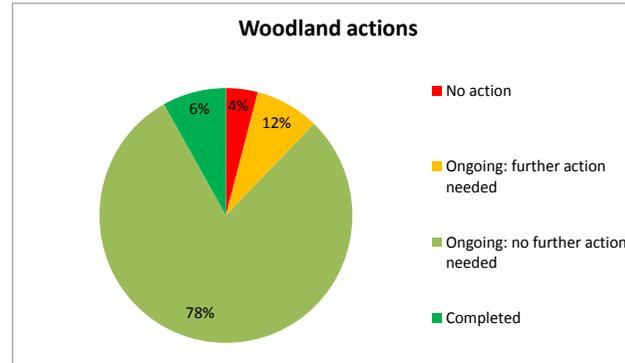
Another distinctive feature of much of the native woodland creation over this time was the method of establishment. Unusually for Scotland, large areas of new woodland have been created in the Cairngorms through unfenced regeneration, stimulated by culling deer. Of the 4,050 ha of native woodland created, 42% was established by natural regeneration. However, for regeneration to count towards the Cairngorms Nature target, its stem density and spatial extent had to be measured. It's known that there are large areas of young tree regeneration, eg at Abernethy and in Glen Feshie, which have not been recently measured and which consequently do not count towards the target. Therefore, it is quite possible that there have been more than 5,000 ha of new native woodland created in the Cairngorms National Park over the past five years.

One step taken to facilitate the strategic expansion of woodland in the Park was the production of a Target Areas map by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. This was first produced in 2015 but then updated in 2017 to prioritise a wider area of the national park by offering a 12.5% increase in the grant available for the native pinewood, native broadleaves, upland birch, low-density broadleaves, and diverse conifer options.

The quality of existing woodland habitat across the Park was enhanced through advice given to estates by project officers of the RSPB-led Capercaillie Project and the Woodland Trust-led PAWS Restoration Project. Targets were met for nine out of the ten woodland species identified in the Action Plan for conservation action. The one species for which the target was considered not to have been satisfactorily met was the pearl-bordered fritillary. Although some work was done by both FCS and Butterfly Conservation Scotland, there were difficulties in engaging with sufficient numbers of land managers to provide habitat management advice.



ACTION		Jun-18
Identify strategic expansion and enhancement areas	1.1(a) Conduct spatial targeting exercise	
	1.1(b) Create and maintain inventory of high biodiversity value woodlands	
	1.1(c) Review deer management plans and burning regimes in strategic areas	
Encourage and support expansion & enhancement	1.2(a) Promote strategic expansion & enhancement to land managers	
	1.2(b) Establish external funding opportunities	
	1.2(c) Support land managers in making funding applications	
	1.2(d) Provide advice and guidance as part of consultations	
	1.2(e) Support conservation nurseries	
	1.2(f) Raise awareness and provide advice on disease threats	
	1.2(g) Promote natural regeneration, with suitable deer management	
Improving biodiversity value in existing woodlands	1.3(a) Increase connectivity of capercaillie habitat & expand into areas of quiet recreation	
	1.4(a) Plant riparian woods in upper river catchments	
	1.5(a) Promote aspen conservation and work with landowners to link existing stands	
Improving biodiversity value in existing woodlands	1.6(a) Promote UKWAS certification and recommended in-forest management	
	1.6(b) Showcase NNRs and the NFE as exemplars of forest management	
	1.6(c) Work with and support land agents developing forest plans	
	1.6(d) Produce Cairngorms National Park specific good forestry practice guidance	
	1.6(e) Trial cattle grazing in woodlands	
	1.7(a) Promote the restoration of PAWS	
	1.7(b) Encourage and provide advice and guidance on continuous forest cover	
	1.7(c) Promote stand restructuring and thinning	
	1.8(a) Identify sites for creating or expanding bog and wet woods	
	1.8(b) Block drains, re-wet areas and remove non-native conifers	
1.9(a) Encourage and advise on aspen enhancement in birchwoods		
1.9(b) Review grazing management in high value areas for birch and aspen regeneration		
SPECIES	ACTION	
Capercaillie	1.10(a) Identify different habitat management effects & implement best practice	
	1.10(b) Produce visitor management strategy and guidance to minimise disturbance impacts	
	1.10(c) Improve fox and crow control and investigate the influence of pine martens	
Scottish wildcat	1.11(a) Implement the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Group plan	
Twinflower	1.12(a) Establish new management trials, monitor existing trials and disseminate results	
	1.12(b) Undertake rolling programme of monitoring sites on a 3-5 year rotation	
	1.12(c) Identify sites and implement translocation trials	
One flowered wintergreen	1.13(a) Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	
	1.13(b) Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	
	1.13(c) Establish habitat management trials and experimental translocations if appropriate	
Green shield moss	1.14(a) Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	
	1.14(b) Actively manage for deadwood creation in sheltered, humid areas	
Pine hoverfly	1.15(a) Monitor populations at known and recently created sites	
	1.15(b) Create artificial breeding habitat at current and suitable adjacent sites	
	1.15(c) Continue captive breeding programme and augment new populations	
Pearl bordered fritillary	1.16(a) Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	
	1.16(b) Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	
	1.16(c) Management at existing sites and create new habitat adjacent to existing populations	
Dark bordered beauty	1.17(a) Monitor current populations at selected sites annually	
	1.17(b) Enhance conditions for suckering aspen and create new habitat next to existing	
	1.17(c) Investigate opportunities for translocations	
Kentish glory	1.18(a) Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	
	1.18(b) Liaise with land managers to encourage management for regenerating birch	
	1.18(c) Habitat management at current sites and create habitat next to existing sites	
Wood ants group	1.19(a) Produce a standardised monitoring protocol for wood ants	
	1.19(b) Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	
	1.19(c) Identify key sites and provide habitat management advice to land managers	
	1.19(d) Provide deadwood and enhance the field layer in adjacent sites	



Wetland & Wet Grassland

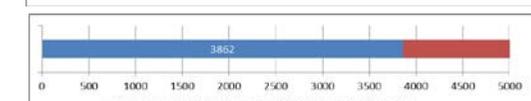
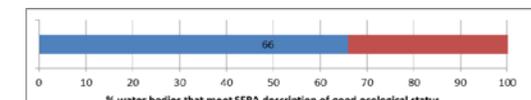
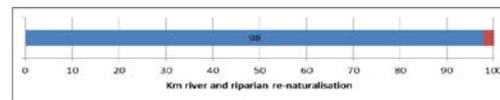
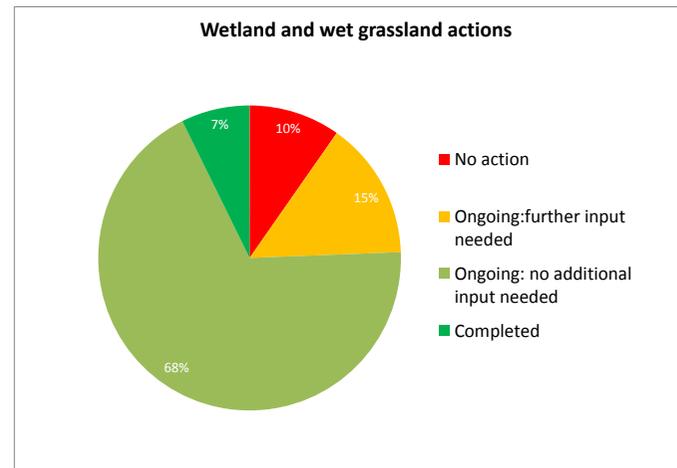
75% of actions were completed or considered to be ongoing with no further input required. Work to halt the decline of farmland waders in the national park continued. The Strathspey Wetlands and Waders Initiative helped to bring 6,000 ha of farmland into active management each year for waders. The five-yearly Strathspey Breeding Wader Survey indicated that, although numbers of waders were still below those recorded in the baseline year of 2000, there had nevertheless been significant increases since the previous survey in 2010. Lapwing numbers remained stable, while numbers of oystercatcher, redshank, snipe and curlew were all up. In fact snipe numbers were the highest of all previous surveys, including the 2000 baseline survey.

98 km of river and banks were renaturalised. This included many kilometers of riparian woodland planting to stabilise banks, encourage organic matter into the aquatic system, and to create shade to help combat rising water temperatures for sensitive species such as freshwater pearl mussel and Atlantic salmon. Artificial modifications to channels are the main reason why a third of water courses in the national park do not attain good ecological status. This proportion is, however, shrinking with ambitious projects to re-profile banks on the South Esk and remove embankments on the River Dee helping to restore the natural dynamism of our rivers and reconnect them with their floodplains.

The target to contribute to the 'Create a Million Ponds' was not met, as the Strategy Group felt that, relative to competing Cairngorms Nature demands on time and resources, this was not a priority. Of the six wetland & wet grassland priority species, targets were not met for two of them - scarlet splash fungus and the northern damselfly, for which the British Dragonfly Society were unsuccessful with a funding bid aimed at taking species action forward.

Work not happening ■
 Ongoing - needs more resource ■
 Ongoing - no further input required ■
 Work completed ■

AREA OF WORK	ACTION	Jun-18
Enhancing and increasing wet grassland habitat	2.1(a) Write an action plan for the Strathspey Wetland and Wader initiative (SWWI)	■
	2.1(b) Deliver targeted PR campaign to raise awareness of the value of wet grasslands among	■
	2.1(c) Promote wader/wetland management as part of funding applications	■
	2.1(d) Promote wader and wet grassland friendly practices to members	■
	2.1(e) Develop action plan for wetland & wader initiative in Strathdon and Glenlivet	■
	2.1(f) Identify important wader areas in upper Deeside, Angus glens and Highland Perthshire	■
	2.1(g) Support land managers with funding advice for wetland and wet grassland creation	■
	2.1(h) Deliver a programme of events to demonstrate good practice	■
	2.2(a) Draw up farm plans and create new wader feeding areas	■
	2.2(b) Work with land managers to reinstate water sources	■
Increasing and protecting wetland habitats	2.2(c) Remove scrub and coarse vegetation with rush topping machinery (& other methods)	■
	2.2(d) Support partnerships such as CMGroups, Futurescapes and SWWI	■
	2.3(a) Identify potential new wetland sites or sites now lost that can be restored	■
	2.3(b) Create wetland and SUDS as mitigation or compensation work	■
	2.3(c) Encourage and fund opportunities for improving and restoring wetland areas	■
	2.4(a) Protect wetland sites from development, hydrological and management change	■
	2.5(a) Reinststate/naturalise new sections of previously modified burns	■
	2.5(b) Maintain & reinststate coarse woody debris, where it will improve river diversity	■
	2.5(c) Identify where woodland management can be part of natural flood management	■
	2.5(d) Develop Sustainable Flood Management projects & promote to communities	■
Maintain status and increase area of freshwater habitat	2.5(e) Develop and trial innovative floodplain restoration projects	■
	2.6(a) Improve water bodies to meet the SEPA description of 'good ecological status'	■
	2.6(b) Trial woodland management to reduce runoff, soil erosion, and sediment delivery	■
	2.6(c) Ensure developments & abstractions don't impact on 'good ecological status' and	■
SPECIES	2.7(a) Extend the 'Create a million ponds' project into the National Park.	■
	2.7(b) Encourage pond creation as part of Farm Visits	■
Lapwing	2.8(a) Continue to monitor populations and investigate reasons for decline	■
	2.8(b) Advice & training to land managers & agents on land management for lapwing	■
Scarlet splash fungus	2.9(a) Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research to	■
	2.9(b) Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	■
Northern damselfly	2.10(a) Find out more about status & requirements via surveys, monitoring & research	■
	2.10(b) Maintain and enhance where necessary sympathetic management at known sites	■
	2.10(c) Create new ponds within 1km of known breeding sites	■
Northern silver-stiletto fly	2.11(a) Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research to	■
	2.11(b) Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	■
	2.11(c) Take account of this species in response to applications	■
Freshwater pearl mussel	2.12(a) Raise awareness of the species' protected status & impacts of wildlife crime	■
	2.12(b) Monitor reintroduction sites and augment populations if necessary	■
	2.12(c) Through CMP and RBMP processes, reduce erosion and limit sediment input	■
	2.12(d) Research and promote best practice control methods for Ranunculul species	■
	2.12(e) Survey the River Avon for suitable sites for a reintroduction project	■
Northern February red stonefly	2.13(a) Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research to	■
	2.13(b) Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	■
	2.13(c) Take account of this species in response to applications	■

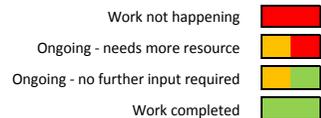


Other habitats

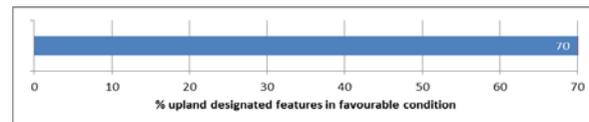
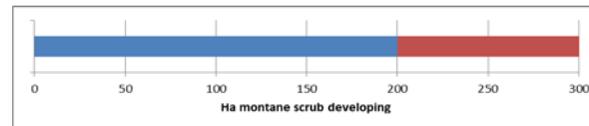
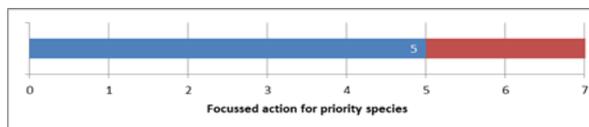
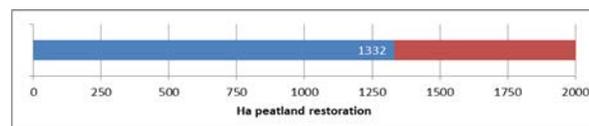
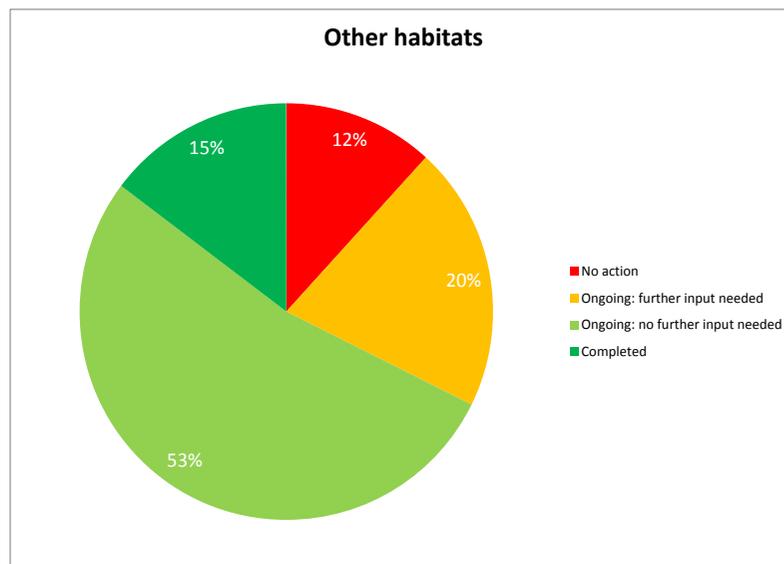
68% of actions were completed or considered to be ongoing with no further input required. Peatland restoration was either carried out on or approved for over 1,300 ha across the national park, although progress was slowed by the stop-start nature of project funding. Landscape scale surveys of montane woodland and scrub were carried out across thousands of hectares of hill ground in the core of the National Park providing a very useful baseline of what, and exactly where, the resource is and how it is responding to reduced browsing pressure. This indicated that trees and shrubs of various native species have begun to appear above ground vegetation in many areas, albeit typically at very low densities, in what seems to be the early stages of recolonization by montane woodland habitats. Ongoing monitoring of this will allow decisions to be made as to the required level of any future intervention, such as planting. However, 200 ha of montane woodland planting were initiated at Killiehuntly, which, given the more substantial stem density, represents the sole project contributing towards the 300 ha target. However, over the timescale of the Action Plan interest in, and planning for, further montane woodland expansion has mushroomed.

The recruitment of six new special constables covering the Park with a wildlife crime brief, as well as the introduction of the Civtech challenge by the CNPA to develop satellite tagging technology which downloads data in real time, were seen as innovative approaches to tackling wildlife crime affecting raptor populations. Targets were not, however, met with regard to upland grassland sites.

Of the seven species associated with the habitats in this section, there were two, small dark yellow underwing and violet oil beetle, with insufficient progress towards targets. For the former, there were difficulties in detecting it during surveys and therefore also in engaging with land managers about habitat management, while for the latter, although Buglife had initiated a recording project for the species, work was largely undertaken outside the National Park.



ACTION			Jun-18
Restore and enhance blanket bog habitats	3.1(a)	Promote peatland restoration, identify and restore sites	■
	3.1(b)	Promote the Muirburn code and importance of avoiding drainage	■
	3.1(c)	Showcase good practise moorland management	■
	3.1(d)	Source climate change/ carbon funding to support restoration	■
Restore and enhance montane scrub	3.2(a)	Establish a landscape-scale montane scrub project	■
	3.2(b)	Promote and support the creation and restoration of montane scrub in suitable areas	■
Restore the full community of raptors	3.3(a)	Trial innovative techniques to increase populations	■
	3.3(b)	Raise awareness and understanding, provide advice & training on legislation	■
	3.3(c)	Monitor wildlife crime in the CNP	■
	3.3(d)	Support collaboration to reduce conflicts in species and wildlife management	■
Identify key moorland, montane and grassland sites for biodiversity	3.4(a)	Audit and map Arctostaphylos heath	■
	3.4(b)	Audit and assess the condition of Calaminarian grasslands	■
	3.4(c)	Research the importance of uplands to wader species, particularly curlew	■
	3.4(d)	Research on rare upland invertebrates, with focus on Diptera, Lepidoptera and beetle	■
	3.4(e)	Audit, assess and map key grassland sites	■
Positive management for key upland & grassland sites	3.5(a)	Provide guidance on favourable grazing & burning for important upland & grassland sites	■
	3.5(b)	Feasibility study for roving livestock to encourage retention of open areas	■
SPECIES	ACTION		
Golden eagle	3.6(a)	Continue and expand raptor track	■
	3.6(b)	Work with moorland managers to manage mountain hare populations to benefit g.eagle	■
	3.6(c)	Leave deer carcasses or remains out on the hill	■
Alpine blue sow thistle	3.7(a)	Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	■
	3.7(b)	Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	■
	3.7(c)	Reinforce current populations and (re)introduce at new sites	■
Tufted saxifrage	3.8(a)	Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	■
	3.8(b)	Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	■
	3.8(c)	(If appropriate) reinforce existing and create new populations at historic sites	■
Powdered sunshine lichen	3.9(a)	Identify and monitor key areas & identify opportunities for translocation	■
	3.9(b)	Enhance and expand areas of juniper scrub	■
	3.9(c)	Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	■
Small dark yellow underwing	3.10(a)	Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	■
	3.10(b)	Establish demonstration projects and share best practice	■
Mining bee	3.11(a)	Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	■
	3.11(b)	Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	■
Violet oil beetle	3.12(a)	Find out more about status and requirements via surveys, monitoring and research	■
	3.12(b)	Develop I.D. Skills and identify potential habitat through work with volunteers	■
	3.12(c)	Provide site-specific habitat management advice to individual land managers	■

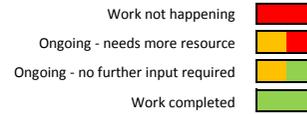


Involving People

66% of actions were completed or considered to be ongoing with no further input required. The Cairngorms Nature Farm Award has been running annually now for three years, with the 2016 winner, Ruthven Farm in Glenlivet, going on to win a national award for its nature-sensitive farming.

The target of 3,000 volunteering days was met comfortably, thanks to the input of ranger services around the Park. Furthermore, a system of volunteer rangers was established in 2017, which has since recruited 14 people who have contributed over 1,000 hours of their spare time. Annual initiatives such as the Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend and the Cairngorms Nature Young Presenter have successfully engaged with large audiences from across the National Park, the UK and beyond. Furthermore the social media reach of Cairngorms Nature has continued to grow steadily, with strong levels of engagement which compare well with other wildlife-themed social media accounts.

Delivery of the actions for community engagement and empowerment across the National Park have not been progressed as widely as anticipated but there have been some key successes in certain locations such as the high levels of community involvement in decision making in the Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership Project, as well as community hydro schemes near Kingussie and Braemar.



ACTION		Jun-18
Create, support and celebrate a network of ambassadors	4.1(a) Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement plan	■ ■
	4.1(b) Produce and manage a communications toolkit	■ ■
	4.1(c) Develop & roll-out 'Make It Yours' programme of training & support for businesses	■
	4.1(d) Host annual awards ceremony championing positive work	■ ■
	4.1(e) Deliver biennial Cairngorms Nature partnership event	■ ■
Communicate the significance of, the benefits derived from and the work being done to protect and enhance nature in CNP	4.2(a) Develop and maintain Cairngorms Nature website & social media	■ ■
	4.2(b) Improve public understanding & perception of estates' management for biodiversity	■
	4.2(c) Joint brand and position activities and projects relevant to Cairngorms Nature	■
Further develop work with young people	4.3(a) Work with schools to actively involve young people in experiencing & conserving CNP	■ ■
	4.3(b) Include Cairngorms Nature information in programmes of activity	■
	4.3(c) Promote and support skills development within volunteering opportunities	■
Support and strengthen role of visitor attractions & wildlife tourism	4.4(a) Provide training, knowledge and support on biodiversity in CNP	■ ■
	4.4(b) Produce code of conduct for wildlife watching	■
	4.4(c) Promote NNRs as flagships for finding out about Cairngorms Nature	■
Help communities find ways to engage with, realise the benefits they get from, and have a say in the management of local natural heritage assets	4.5(a) Work with communities to assess the significance and benefits of local natural heritage	■ ■
	4.5(b) Facilitate development of management plans for local wildlife sites	■ ■
	4.5(c) Facilitate awareness raising, communication and consultation with land managers	■ ■
	4.5(d) Work with communities improving biodiversity within settlements & new developments	■ ■
Provide a wide range of opportunities for people to contribute to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in the Park	4.6(a) Create volunteering hubs and co-ordinate promotion and access to opportunities	■
	4.6(b) Highlight & encourage volunteer participation in biological recording	■ ■
	4.6(c) Support local and regional naturalist groups	■
	4.6(d) Investigate options for visitor payback scheme with conservation options	■ ■
	4.6(e) Create and support existing large-scale projects accommodating volunteers & donations	■ ■

