



For discussion

Title: **Communications Update**

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Purpose

This paper presents an update of current communications activity, plus outlines a number of key priorities for the next quarter.

Recommendations

The Board Is asked to:

- a) Review activity across a range of communications channels in the past three months and discuss the identified priorities for Q1 of 2024.

Key comms deliverables / achievements

1. Websites

- a) We have now started working with Whereverly on developing a new website for the Cairngorms National Park. We anticipate the first phase of the build will take around 12 months. The initial stages have included a series of workshops with key target audiences (land managers, local businesses, residents, under-represented groups) to better understand their needs; a detailed analysis of the performance of the existing website, including its environmental efficiency; a design review exploring how the refreshed National Park brand should be applied; and exploring which content management system the website should be built on. Whereverly have also spoken to various key partners (including the Cairngorms Business Partnership) and staff members to better understand how the site should link in with pre-existing content hosted elsewhere. The team visited the National Park last month, heading out to Tomintoul to see the new affordable housing, the local information centre and new Glenlivet bike trails. Further visits are planned over the coming months.
- b) We were audited recently by the website accessibility monitoring team at the UK Government Digital Service, part of the Cabinet Office. Whilst the site performed well overall, they found some accessibility issues, including navigation problems when not using a mouse, text contrast problems and our accessibility statement not meeting the latest guidelines. We were given 12 weeks to fix these issues



and, whilst the service were prepared to wait until our new website is live, we decided to make the recommended changes now to ensure an accessible experience for all. Learnings from this process will also be fed into our new website development project.

- c) The [interactive map](#) for the next Local Development Plan is now closed for comments. The Commonplace site has received over 2,000 visitors so far and there were 41 contributions to the map over the initial consultation period. A campaign to promote the consultation had a reach of 53,525, including 1,372 likes / reactions and 885 link clicks and 38 comments. We will be discussing the relatively low conversion rate on these visitors with Commonplace over the next few weeks, but as the Local Development Plan process has a long time still to go the high level of awareness should give us a good platform to build on.
- d) The six week formal engagement period on beavers took place from 15 August to 25 September. In addition to drop-in events, the public were invited to comment via a dedicated online survey, which attracted around 500 responses, over two thirds of which were strongly in favour of returning beavers to the Cairngorms National Park.

2. Social media and blogs

- a) The beaver formal engagement process was supported digitally by a total of 64 posts across the National Park and Cairngorms Nature social media channels, achieving a reach of 84,833 (155,024 impressions), 33,688 video views, 6,300 engagements, 2,252 likes / reactions, 297 shares and 46 comments. Across social media we adopted a new approach to community management, building on learning from previous campaigns and allocating time to monitor and respond to comments in real time, adding depth to our engagement online. Whilst this can be a labour-intensive process, for high priority campaigns it can be really effective, with more meaningful conversations taking place with our key stakeholders.
- b) The Ramblers Scotland responsible access campaign came to an end on 31 August after an 18-week period. Three ads ran in total targeting 16 to 25 year olds based in Scotland across TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat. In total the campaign achieved over 8.5m impressions, 2.9m views and an impressive 160,000 video completions.
- c) Our process for issuing visitor management alerts – such as path closures and weather warnings – has now been updated and rolled out across the National Park digital channels, featuring new branded graphics. These were particularly important during the recent flooding events (see Figure 1 below) and were seen and shared by a large audience over the period. The idea here is to have a



visually arresting set of visuals that are available to all comms staff, particularly those on our duty comms rota at the weekend. These can be adapted to a variety of emergency situations and are designed to stand out from our more day to day social media content.



Figure 1 - example of our new alert graphics on social media

- d) We took part in Scottish Government's annual Climate Week at the end of September, attempting to break down some of the jargon around net zero through [an interview with our Peatland Operations Manager Emma Stewart](#). The piece explains clearly what we mean when we talk about net zero and highlights its potential impact on the National Park, demonstrating how our work contributes to broader, national ambitions around tackling the nature and climate crisis.
- e) We have been working with the Cairngorms Business Partnership and the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project to help businesses play an active role in encouraging customers to enjoy the National Park responsibly. The campaign consists of social media assets and a series of videos featuring standup comedian, author and regular Cairngorms visitor Ed Byrne. These have now been shared with CBP's members and stakeholders, and will be rolled out digitally over the coming weeks. The [campaign materials and landing page can be found here](#).

3. Press and media

- a) Public Relations activity during the period was dominated by our beaver engagement work, including the announcement of the [formal engagement period](#), a reminder for people to [complete our online survey](#) and a [summary of responses](#)



ahead of the licence application being submitted. Coverage for the project has been extensive, with articles appearing in the Daily Mail, Telegraph, Herald, Daily Record, National and Scottish Farmer, and interviews with Park Authority staff also featuring across BBC and STV News.

- b) In late August we worked closely with colleagues from Scottish Government, NatureScot and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority to announce a [new £550,000 Nature Restoration Fund](#). The announcement was the centrepiece of Lorna Slater MSP's visit to the National Park and was covered by outlets including STV, The Scotsman, Aberdeen Live and Scottish Farmer. We also supported Scottish Government on the launch of the nominations process for new national parks, including an interview on STV with Sandy Bremner.
 - c) Plans for a 20th anniversary podcast series were thwarted due to an unexpected price hike from our preferred supplier; however, having approached a number of participants we decided to explore alternative ways of marking the occasion. With limited notice, award winning Scottish poet John Glenday – who has written extensively about the Cairngorms, as well as working across the Highlands in his day job as an addictions counsellor – has agreed to write a poem inspired by the people and nature of the National Park. Preparatory work is underway, including a suite of interviews with individuals from across the Cairngorms. Our plan is for the poem to be filmed at the start of the month and for it to be released around the time *Cairn* magazine hits doorsteps in mid-November.
 - d) In the wake of devastating wildfires across the globe, we worked with the Press and Journal to publish an [opinion piece with Grant Moir](#) on how we can tackle the nature and climate crisis here in the Cairngorms National Park. Other media stories included the promotion of our [Local Development Plan consultation](#), two [new affordable housing developments](#) being approved, [tourist accommodation in Braemar and Tomintoul](#) getting the go-ahead, and a piece from Grant Moir to mark the [20th anniversary of the National Park](#).
 - e) We published a range of stories from people across the National Park via our Cairngorms Voices blog platform, including an [interview with Peatland Action Manager Emma Stewart](#) for Climate Week, an introduction to [the Carrbridge bike bus](#) by Sjoerd Tel, a [future of farming in the National Park piece](#) with local farmer David Toovey, and a [piece on junior rangers](#) by Pete Short.
4. Public and stakeholder engagement
- a) We continued our tour of major shows and games this summer at the Grantown Show in August and the Lonach Gathering later in the month. Across the two events we engaged with more than 500 people and local children made hundreds



of seed bombs to take home with them. Over the next 12 months we will continue to attend select shows across the National Park, with the Ballater Winter Festival next on the list on 25 November. We are also organising an informal drop-in style event in Grantown for early January.

- b) Work has started on a new Gaelic Language Plan for the Cairngorms National Park Authority, in line with our public sector Gaelic language duty. We have agreed a set of key priorities with Bòrd na Gàidhlig to increase the use of Gaelic, the learning of Gaelic and promote a positive image of Gaelic, with a draft plan likely to go out for a six-week public consultation in early 2024. Particular attention will be paid to how the Park Authority can use its influence (eg in the form of grant award letters) to encourage partners to adopt Gaelic in their everyday work.
- c) Following their successful visit back in May, we were delighted to welcome back Black Scottish Adventurers in late August, this time to explore the east of the National Park. We worked closely with partner ranger services in Balmoral and Glen Tanar to support the visit, which saw around 90 adventurers come to the area, many for the first time. Glen Tanar's Head Ranger Eric Baird even produced a short video to mark the occasion – see <https://www.instagram.com/p/CwNsEACoGeo/>
- d) As part of our staff away day in October, the team created a workshop to explore how our organisational values can be applied with a variety of key audiences. The session – which will help inform future staff inductions, too – involved roleplaying various real-world scenarios and encouraged staff to think carefully about how they would help the public in each situation. This is all part of our efforts to present a more 'human' face of the Park Authority and its staff.
- e) Linked to our Cairngorms 2030 climate learning and education project and inspired by our [10th Anniversary Orchards project](#), we have been working with Alford Academy and Grantown Grammar to create new orchards on their school grounds, with the help of pupils themselves. Weather-dependent, work is likely to take place over the next few months.

5. Publications and branding

- a) The [fourth issue of Cairn magazine](#) hit doorsteps in the middle of November. In addition to the usual mix of community and conservation news, the magazine featured articles about the 20th anniversary of the National Park, HRH The King's visit to Scalán, breeding success for birds of prey in the National Park, and an interview with the Gordon family to mark the 200th anniversary of the Lonach Highland and Friendly Society. A plain text version of the publication has also



been created for screen reader users, in line with advice from our Equalities Advisory Panel.

- b) Working closely with the Cairngorms Business Partnership and local photographer Ed Smith, we have captured a series of 'stock images' for businesses signed up to the brand charter scheme. These images are designed to be used on partner websites, promotional material and social media channels, and are entirely free for charter holders to use. Subject matter includes people enjoying coffee in a local café, beds being made in a hotel, families enjoying a day out at a tourist attraction etc.
- c) We are working with various partners on interpretation projects across the National Park. This includes the Royal Zoological Society Scotland on their new wildlife discovery centre at the Highland Wildlife Park, Balmoral Estate on their new virtual lek installation, VisitScotland on new panels for the Ballater iCentre, and Anagach Woods Trust and Castle Roy Trust on new interpretation panels in those two locations. We are also in the process of designing a series of interpretation templates that will make it easier for us to work with community groups in providing local, National Park-branded interpretation throughout the Cairngorms.

Priority comms activity over the next three months

- 6. A range of comms activities are planned over the next three months; these are summarised below. These projects will take place alongside a regular programme of Comms activity, coordinated through our centralised Content Working Group.
 - a) Completing audience research as part of our website redevelopment project and using data gathered to inform the overarching design and structure of the new site(s), working closely with our new website agency Whereverly.
 - b) Prepare a range of materials, media releases and ministerial briefings for the first releases of beavers to the National Park, assuming NatureScot approve our licence application in September.
 - c) Work with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to prepare Public Relations and comms materials to celebrate the award of delivery phase funding for Cairngorms 2030 (again assuming our application is successful).
 - d) Recruit four new team members to deliver public engagement and communications activity for Cairngorms 2030, with a particular emphasis on supporting and recruiting from under represented communities.



- e) Pull together a draft five-year Gaelic Language Plan for the Park Authority for public consultation in January.
- f) Mark the 20th anniversary of the National Park by completing and rolling out a new poem (and accompanying video) by award-winning writer John Glenday.
- g) Make plans for Park Authority attendance at various shows and games across the National Park in 2024, as well as running our own drop-in style events in communities three or four times a year.
- h) Develop a suite of resources for businesses to promote their role in the National Park as part of the rollout of the refreshed brand. Includes the development of a new merchandise range, working with Cairngorms Business Partnership and VisitScotland.
- i) Take forward interpretation projects at the Highland Wildlife Park, Castle Roy and Blair Atholl Local Information Centre.

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