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## CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

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**Title:** Mountain Biking Recreation Management Plan for Badenoch and Strathspey

**Prepared by:** Carolyn Robertson, Project Manager

**Purpose:** To review the aims of the Mountain Biking Recreation Management Plan for Badenoch and Strathspey, developed as part of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project, in the context of other access takers and recreational user groups

**Advice Sought:** The Forum is invited to give its advice on the following points:

1. Thinking about the delivery and communication of the Mountain Biking Recreation Management Plan for Badenoch and Strathspey, what needs to be considered regards other access takers and recreational user groups?
2. What opportunities exist to use the Mountain Biking Recreation Management Plan for Badenoch and Strathspey as an example to inspire and enable community-led action by other recreational user groups?

### **Background**

In 2020, a survey of 388 mountain bikers who ride in the Cairngorms National Park, found that almost all feel responsible for the environment they ride in and are willing to change behaviours to help protect the environment. You can read the full survey results at [www.cairngormscapercaillie.scot](http://www.cairngormscapercaillie.scot)

In response to these findings, a group of over 20 riders from the Cairngorms National Park came together to help turn this consensus into action and create a plan to help the mountain biking community to enhance and protect the environment it enjoys.

The group of riders, who represent a range of riding abilities and interests and include bike shop owners, mountain bike guides and members of the Badenoch & Strathspey Trail Association, took part in a series of action planning workshops in early 2021.

Through this process the group have become more informed about capercaillie; been able to identify potential solutions; and have agreed a goal and a set of actions to help deliver win-wins for capercaillie and the mountain biking community.

The goal and actions are now known as the Trail Feathers project. The project is funded and facilitated by the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project and Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland with support from the Badenoch and Strathspey Trail Association.

## **Mountain Biking Recreation Management Plan for Badenoch and Strathspey**

As part of the Trail Feathers project all mountain bike trails in Badenoch and Strathspey have been digitally mapped alongside capercaillie data and other environmental information, e.g. designated areas, to produce a Mountain Biking Recreation Management Plan for Badenoch and Strathspey.

The plan is designed to:

1. Enable data driven decisions about trail development, maintenance and promotion in Badenoch and Strathspey to ensure mountain biking recreation develops sustainably and sensitive habitats and species are safeguarded.
2. Enable the mountain biking community, land managers and agencies to communicate more effectively.
3. Enable greater levels of responsible access by the mountain biking community in Badenoch and Strathspey including resident and visiting riders.

To achieve these aims the plan includes the following management options:

- **Formal Trail Area:** E.g. Laggan and Glenlivet trail centres
- **Community Trail Area:** an area close to a community which serves the community's recreational needs. Agreements between the mountain bike community and the respective land manager/s may be required to ensure the area functions sustainably, e.g. High Burnside
- **Sensitive Area:** an area with additional management needs to ensure sensitive habitats and species are safeguarded. Routes may be well established and accepted or informal and unauthorised. Whilst access is already taking place by mountain bikers under SOAC, additional guidance is required which needs to be followed so that access can remain SOAC compliant and sustainable.

To date, Forestry and Land Scotland, Seafield & Strathspey Estates, Rothiemurchus Estate, NatureScot, CNPA and RSPB have been consulted on the plan individually and through the process of two open consultation sessions with members of the Trail Feathers group. Through this process the plan has been developed, and relationships and greater levels of understanding between those involved have also been achieved.