
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CAPERCAILLIE FRAMEWORK: PHASE I REPORT

**Prepared by: Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience;
Will Boyd Wallis, Head of Conservation and Land Management;
Justin Prigmore, Cairngorms Nature Officer.**

Purpose

- a) To consider and endorse the phase I report of the Capercaillie Framework;
- b) To approve the proposed project scope for phase 2;
- c) To consider the implications for the work of CNPA and our partners.

This paper addresses strategic challenges for the National Park in relation to reversing the national decline of the capercaillie and the integration of management required. CNPA is leading work with partners to develop a management approach that will have long term implications for partnership and organisational planning and delivery. The Board's consideration will mark the completion of phase I (analysis and recommendations) and inform the shape of phase 2 (implementation).

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) **Consider and endorse the phase I report of the Capercaillie Framework;**
 - b) **Approve the proposed project scope for phase 2;**
 - c) **Consider the implications for the work of CNPA and our partners.**
-

CAPERCAILLIE FRAMEWORK: PHASE I REPORT – FOR DECISION

Strategic Context

1. Capercaillie are a high profile species synonymous with the Cairngorms and its forests. A national conservation priority, capercaillie also generate significant wildlife tourism interest and are particularly associated with Strathspey.
2. Management to improve the capercaillie population is one of the central conservation challenges in the Cairngorms National Park. In the UK capercaillie are found largely in pinewood habitat in Scotland, with an overall population that has declined from an estimated 20,000 birds in 1970 to 1,285 at the most recent national winter survey in 2009/10. The Cairngorms National Park is now the remaining stronghold for capercaillie, with at least 75% of the national population. Their breeding success in the Cairngorms is critical to the future presence and expansion of the species in Scotland.
3. Protected through the EC Birds Directive and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, CNPA and partners have responsibilities to protect the species. Beyond that, securing and enhancing the capercaillie population in the Cairngorms is a strong headline around which to engage conservation effort in the National Park.
4. The interaction of capercaillie conservation with issues of habitat and species management, recreation management and development planning means this work is significant to delivery of all three outcomes of the National Park Partnership Plan and will be a significant influence in other strategy development including *Active Cairngorms* and the Local Development Plan, as well as informing the strategic direction of the next Partnership Plan.
5. Capercaillie are a 'qualifying interest' in seven Special Protection Areas in the Cairngorms National Park. The way the birds move between these sites and use other undesignated woodland, means we must approach their conservation at a landscape or population scale. In practice this means managing their habitat in Strathspey as a connected whole to secure the current population, and looking ahead, enabling expansion through the connections from Strathspey to Deeside, Perthshire, Donside and Moray.

Purpose of the Framework

6. It has become clear that while there is much good management going on and potential for more, there is a need for this to be better co-ordinated at a metapopulation or landscape scale. The way habitat management, recreation management and development planning interact and co-ordinate is critical.
7. The capercaillie framework is designed to provide overarching direction and data at several levels that will inform multiple strands of work and be continually updated. The phase I report provides an overview of the data, analysis and recommendations of phase I. Underpinning this, one of the outputs of phase I is a significant set of working data including maps collated for the first time that will be used in

implementation. For example, while the maps in the report provide the Park-wide picture, more detailed data at the scale of individual land holdings will be used in taking forward implementation.

8. The Framework will be used by a range of organisations:
 - a) To work with land managers and communities to co-ordinate habitat and recreation management on the ground. This will include:
 - i. Supporting woodland expansion in key areas
 - ii. Reviewing the coverage of ranger services in key areas
 - iii. Changing and adapting path networks where necessary
 - iv. Engaging with residents and visitors using key areas of woodland
 - b) To prioritise effort and resources for woodland expansion through SRDP and other projects;
 - c) To inform development planning and co-ordinate the mitigation associated with development in individual communities;
 - d) To help develop the strategic direction for the next National Park Partnership Plan and Local Development Plan.

The Phase I Report

9. The key messages from the report are:
 - a) The Cairngorms National Park is the remaining UK stronghold where significant management effort has helped to maintain a viable capercaillie population;
 - b) There is significant potential to further secure and enhance the population in the Cairngorms, to the point at which it could support expansion into other areas of Scotland;
 - c) In the long term, climate change remains a key factor in the likely success of the population in Scotland, but there are significant opportunities for management to increase the resilience of the population.
 - d) In the long term, habitat expansion and improvement are key to the species future;
 - e) In the short term, a range of other factors that reduce productivity should be addressed, building on existing initiatives;
 - f) Increasing the extent of good, connected, undisturbed habitat is key – this can be done by both expanding the area of woodland and by reducing disturbance through recreation management;
 - g) By targeting woodland expansion, recreation management and development mitigation, there is significant potential to increase the extent and quality of habitat for capercaillie.
10. For the first time, the Framework gives us an overview of how habitat, recreation and development management action in the Park can be co-ordinated to best effect. It shows where woodland could be expanded to best effect for capercaillie and where the focus for recreation management should be.

Scope for Phase 2

11. The Report sets out 23 recommendations, all of which include important measures to help halt the decline of capercaillie. Phase 2 will put in place the mechanisms to

deliver these in practice. The success of phase 2 requires co-ordination of the resources we and our partners have at our disposal, targeted in locations where the most benefit may be achieved.

12. The Project Team has started work on the project plan for Phase 2 to include prioritisation, timescales, costs and partner resources required.
13. The scope of phase 2 includes:
 - a) Continuing and improving current management
 - b) Engagement with individual land managers and communities to develop site specific management action for habitat, recreation and development planning;
 - c) Funding Options
 - d) Communications
 - e) Research and Monitoring
14. We propose the main focus of Phase 2 should be using the data from Phase 1 to engage with individual land managers and communities at priority locations in order to develop tailored packages of management action. This is resource intensive, requiring significant time for engagement, consultation, development of proposals and securing necessary funding and implementation means.
15. For example, during Phase 1 maps were developed to show where the expansion of capercaillie habitat expansion could be most beneficially targeted to improve the capercaillie dispersal throughout its existing range and into new areas and how this relates to recreation networks and development proposals. During Phase 2, these maps will be used to encourage more habitat to be created where it will have most impact, ensure recreation management helps protect rather than further fragment key areas and co-ordinate the mitigation of potential effects identified in the Local Development Plan.
16. Continued understanding of the need and benefits of co-ordinated effort on capercaillie conservation amongst the public, land managers, NGOs and agency partners is critical. A communications plan will be prepared to ensure key messages are delivered in a way which is effective and consistent across partners and the public.

Implications for CNPA and our partners

17. The project team will develop a project plan with specific resource implications as the first step of phase 2. The core resource for co-ordination of this work through the Cairngorms Nature team is built into to our current corporate planning. However, it is already clear from the scope of recommendations that implementation requires:
 - a) Co-ordination of multiple partners
 - b) Staff and financial resources beyond the scope of existing resources
18. A key role for CNPA is to lead discussions on the resourcing implications for our organisation and others in the National Park Partnership. This should include:
 - a) Engaging Scottish Government in the implications and benefits of this work and the need for co-ordinated support across public bodies;

- b) Engaging partners in co-ordinating deployment of existing resources;
- c) Considering options for significant project funding through mechanisms such as LIFE projects;
- d) Considering CNPA's own prioritisation of resources;
- e) Engaging the support of communities, visitors, land managers and NGOs.

Implications for CNPA-led work

Cairngorms Nature	The Framework will continue to be a priority action for the Cairngorms Nature team and connect with wider targets in the Action Plan for woodland expansion and enhancement and our contribution to the 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity.
Active Cairngorms Strategy	The Framework data has already informed development of the draft Active Cairngorms strategy and will be significant in shaping its delivery re infrastructure and recreation management.
Ranger Services	Ranger services have a key role to play in implementing the recommendations and we will be reviewing how best to deliver and resource this with ranger services during 2015.
Local Development Plan	The Framework will inform development of the Main Issues Report for LDP 2 as well as delivery of mitigation work associated with planning permissions.
National Park Partnership Plan	The Framework will help shape the strategic direction and spatial strategy for the next National Park Partnership Plan.

Strategic Risk Management

Risks to Delivery:	
Risk	Risk management
Insufficient financial resources to fund management action	Project team to co-ordinate existing resources and consider options for external funding
Insufficient staff resources to work with land managers and communities	Project team to co-ordinate deployment of staff across partner organisations
Misperceptions or confusion about implications for land managers, communities, recreation groups	Communications plan to accompany implementation including clear consistent messages and regular engagement with key interest groups
Lack of commitment from partners including public, NGOs, land managers, agencies, etc.	Wide engagement and involvement in the development of the Phase 2 project plan and communications plan
Decline of capercaillie continues due to climate change and/or other reasons and Framework is seen as a failure	Communications plan and encouraging open approach to communication about all factors affecting capercaillie

Success Measures

19. The primary success measure will be an increase in the number of capercaillie in all currently occupied areas in the National Park and an expansion of their current range.
20. In the long term success will be the Strathspey capercaillie population secured to the extent where there may be dispersal into other areas.
21. In the shorter term we will also assess the support for and success of the habitat and recreation management measures proposed and implemented in key locations and communities.

Hamish Trench, Will Boyd Wallis, Justin Prigmore

19th November 2014

hamishtrench@cairngorms.co.uk

Supporting Information

Project Management of Phase I

The project has been managed by a dedicated post employed by CNPA within the Cairngorms Nature team. The draft report has been prepared through a project team comprising representatives of CNPA, RSPB, GWCT, SNH, FCS and the national Capercaillie Project Officer.

A Project Board has maintained oversight of the project throughout. The Project Board is chaired by CNPA with representatives of FCS, SNH, RSPB, SportScotland and Kinveachy Estate.

Contribution to the 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity

The Framework brings renewed impetus to capercaillie conservation in its most significant remaining stronghold.

The 2020 Challenge calls for protected areas policy to be more integrated with action for wider habitats and combat fragmentation and restore key habitats (p43 'Key Steps'). The Framework does exactly this, setting out how action for capercaillie should connect management of Special Protection Areas into a wider vision of woodland expansion across the National Park. Further, it sets out how management of other land use objectives including recreation and development should also be integrated into this landscape scale picture, co-ordinating action well beyond the boundaries of designated sites.

The significant community and visitor engagement required to implement management through this framework will also contribute significantly to the 2020 Challenge's ambition to involve many more people in protecting Scotland's wildlife.