



## For Discussion

**Title:** Laggan hydrology project update

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### Purpose

1. This paper updates the Performance Committee on the delivery of the Laggan hydrology engagement event as a component of delivery of the Spey Catchment Management Plan. The paper is presented at the request of the Committee Chair, as an aspect of the board's role in scrutiny of project delivery where this may have wider impacts on strategic risk management.

### Recommendations

2. The Performance Committee is asked to:
  - a) Note the update on the project
  - b) Consider whether there are any significant risk implications arising from project delivery to date.

### Strategic context

3. The event was part of a programme of work delivered in partnership with the Spey Catchment Initiative (SCI) to pursue agreed strategic outcomes established by the following board strategies.
  - a) National Park Partnership Plan objective to restore and connects river to thriving wetlands and floodplains as part of a wider restoration of the National Park's freshwater systems, helping mitigate the impacts of climate change.
  - b) National Park Partnership Plan action to deliver Catchment Management Plans.
  - c) Corporate Plan objective to support Catchment Management Partnerships and Fisheries Boards.

### Strategic policy consideration

4. There are no new strategic policy questions posed by this update.



5. The role of the Committee is to seek assurance that significant projects and programmes of activity delivered by the Authority or supported by the Authority as lead applicant on behalf of a partnership, are delivering against agreed strategic objectives and strategies. This update allows the Committee to exercise scrutiny of project delivery on behalf of the board; to consider whether any risks are not mitigated sufficiently; and to consider whether there are any consequences of project delivery that need to be considered.

### **Strategic risk management**

6. As a project delivered through partnership and grant funding of third parties, the delivery of the project links to management of the following existing risks:
  - a) Risk 11: Reputational damage may result from:
    - i. Unrealistic expectations of what the Park Authority and its partners can achieve in the face of the significant risks presented by climate change, species extinction, flood management and fire; and/ or
    - ii. Disagreement between the Park Authority and stakeholder groups within the Park.
7. The primary mechanisms in place to mitigate risk in strategic alignment and project delivery are a Memorandum of Understanding between SCI and the Park Authority, and representation on both the SCI steering group and Board of Trustees.
8. The Park Authority was exposed to reputational risk as a result of the presentation of a hydrology report, funded by the Park Authority, by the SCI to land managers in the Laggan area. A review of the process which led to this happening highlighted four main areas for consideration:
  - a) Presentation of the report was delayed from point of completion, at a time when stakeholder relationship management was focussed on the release of beavers into the upper Spey catchment and presented much later.
  - b) Presentation was in a public forum before specific, targeted land manager engagement had taken place.
  - c) The report was not presented to senior management in advance of publication where issues of strategic risk could be analysed, particularly relevant as this was a Park Authority funded piece of work.



- d) Project management, discussion and decision making at an operational level did not identify strategic implications for consideration by executive teams.

## Implications

- 9. The SCI is uniquely placed as the lead body for management and delivery of the Spey Catchment Management Plan, one of the key strategies and plans underpinning delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan.
- 10. The SCI has extensive knowledge and experience of the river, surrounding land use and working with land managers. It is best placed amongst organisations working in the Spey Catchment to lead on project delivery and stakeholder engagement relating to delivery of the Catchment Management Plan.
- 11. Working in partnership with SCI is a highly effective use of Park Authority staff and financial resource. Through working in partnership, all partners are subsequently represented through the activities of the SCI, directly and indirectly. Direct involvement by the Park Authority in project planning and delivery by third parties is managed to be proportionate to risk profile, as one of many factors.

## Recommendations from the review:

- 12. To strengthen risk management process when working with third parties in similar situations, the Park Authority will, where considered to be proportionate:
  - a) Include in the terms and conditions of grant funding a requirement for community and land manager engagement as part of project planning
  - b) Incorporate community and land manager representation into project management structures
  - c) Support project management on operational working groups in escalating matters of strategic importance to appropriate governance structures
  - d) Exert higher degrees of control over pieces of work funded and commissioned by the Park Authority

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