



For discussion

Title: Bringing beavers back project

Prepared by: Sarah Henshall, Head of Conservation

Purpose

This paper presents the latest delivery updates on the Bringing back beavers project.

Recommendations

The Performance Committee is asked to review delivery updates and consider:

- a) Progress towards the project's objectives.
- b) Any strategically significant impacts on delivery of the Cairngorm National Park Authority's Corporate Plan and National Park Partnership Plan.
- c) Any material impacts on the Cairngorm National Park Authority's strategic risk management.

Performance Dashboard

Project vision: A healthy population of beavers in the Cairngorms National Park, bringing maximum benefits for wildlife and people. This includes supporting land managers and communities to live alongside beavers.

Performance Measure: Progress towards the project's objectives	Rating	Commentary
Raise awareness and increase understanding of beaver ecology, behaviour, positive and negative impacts and interaction with landscapes and wildlife in the National Park.	Green	<p>The Park Authority supported the first releases with radio interviews, website information, videos and blogs.</p> <p>Beaver Project manager has given 14 talks, attended by around 300 people in total, including an event at Boat of Garten Hall attended by over 130 people.</p> <p>Park Authority staff regularly patrol where beavers are, promoting responsible access and providing information.</p>



<p>Release beaver families into the Upper Spey catchment to create a founder population to establish a thriving, sustainable population.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>On 12 December NatureScot granted the Park Authority a five-year translocation licence to release up to 50 beavers into the upper Spey catchment over the five-year period.</p> <p>In the first release year (Dec 2023- April 2024) a total of 18 beavers were released across three sites.</p>
<p>Supporting the implementation of a mitigation scheme in the National Park, ensuring issues are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner in such a way that land managers and communities are supported to live alongside beaver.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>The Park Authority's monitoring and mitigation plan sets out how the Park Authority will provide additional support for land managers in the National Park.</p> <p>An Upper Spey Beaver Management and Mitigation group has been set up to share information, support land managers living alongside beavers and share experiences from the Park and elsewhere. No negative impacts requiring mitigation have been reported to date.</p> <p>Pre-emptive tree protection is in place at several sites identified as having a high likelihood of impacts on biodiversity, business and property. Flood bank surveys will be completed July 2024 and repeated annually.</p>
<p>Maximise opportunities for environmental and socio-economic benefits from beavers.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>The Park Authority has worked with Rothiemurchus estate to create a 7km beaver trail at Lochan Mor. The trail provides an easy, circular walking route with interpretation and an opportunity to see beavers responsibly.</p> <p>The Park Authority has run two training sessions, attended by 24 outdoor access providers and wildlife guides in the National Park. A wildlife guiding company is now running a programme of beaver tours.</p>
<p>Implement a research and monitoring plan to provide an evidence base for the positive and negative impacts of beaver.</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Following each release, feeding stations, cameras and site patrols are used to intensively monitor beaver activity for the first 6 – 8 weeks.</p> <p>Cameras remain in situ and weekly site visits closely monitor lodges, in/out flows, infrastructure sites and sites of high biodiversity value. Regular surveys, including canoe surveys, record feeding signs, lodge building and territory marking activity.</p>



		The Park Authority has been able to respond quickly to sightings and field signs, informing landowners of activity on their landholding within days of the first report.
--	--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Strategic Background

1. In June 2022 the Park Authority Board agreed that the Park Authority take a lead role in making an application for beaver translocation. The Park Authority’s strategic objectives of relevance to the reporting presented with this paper are:
 - a) The National Park Partnership Plan action to ‘Facilitate beaver translocation in the Cairngorms National Park’ and the associated Corporate Plan objective to ‘lead on beaver reintroduction’.

2. Strategic risks of relevance to consideration of the programme reporting presented with this paper are:
 - a) 1 Resources: public sector finances constrain capacity to allocate sufficient resources to deliver corporate plan.
 - b) 11 Reputation: Disagreement between the Park Authority and stakeholder groups within The Park.

Performance Overview: Delivery Against Strategic Objectives

3. The project has successfully secured a translocation licence and delivered the first phase of releases. Positive progress has been made against all project objectives in line with the project timescales and within budget expectations. The Park Authority continues to take lead role in releases, land manager engagement, monitoring, and implementing the management and mitigation plan.

4. The project supports wider delivery of National Park Partnership Plan actions for species recovery, ecosystem restoration, future farming and developing a more complete understanding of the National Park’s species, habitats and ecosystems.

Performance Overview: Risks Under Management

5. Staffing and resourcing: The current high demand on staff resource associated with surveys, monitoring and land manager engagement, is predicted to continue throughout, and beyond, the five-year licence period. The monitoring and mitigation plan is centred on the Park Authority’s ability to react quickly and effectively. Current staff capacity, with the support of rangers and partners, is sufficient to achieve



project objectives. Future requirement for mitigation and management are likely to require a re-evaluation of Park Authority resource. The project is also considering the use of volunteers to mitigate resourcing risks.

6. Current and projected capital spend for surveys, monitoring and pre-emptive mitigation is within operation plan budget allocations. Potential additional capital requirements relating to flood embankment repair is within the envelope of the Park Authority's capital budget.
7. Reputational risk. The Park Authority has established two groups to support better stakeholder relationships with the farming and crofting community. The [Cairngorms Agricultural Advisory Group](#) (CAAG) and the Upper Spey Beaver Management and Mitigation group.
8. CAAG has a remit to act as a direct line of communication between the Park Authority and the farming and crofting community, supporting collaboration and fostering a wider understanding of, and more engagement with, Park Authority activities within the agricultural sector.
9. The management and mitigation group comprises land managers who are directly impacted by beaver activity and/or have beaver territories on their land. The group has a remit to ensure an adaptive approach to the on the ground application of support available to farmers and crofters, informed by first-hand experience.

Conclusions: Performance Overview and Matters Meriting Strategic Review

10. There are no matters of strategic significance which merit escalation at this time in the opinion of senior managers leading the Cairngorms National Park Authority's linkage to the areas of activity covered by this paper and associated reports.

Sarah Henshall
Head of Conservation
sarahhenshall@cairngorms.co.uk