



For Discussion

Title: Park Authority Governance Committee Communications update

Prepared by: Olly Davis, Head of Communications

Purpose

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

Recommendations

The Governance Committee is asked to:

Review activity across a range of communications channels in the past three months and discuss the identified priorities for Q4 of 2023.

1. Key comms deliverables / achievements

a) Websites

- From an initial longlist of 50 agencies, six submitted full tender documents and were scored on criteria including audience insight, accessibility, design approach, project management, sustainability and technical expertise. This longlist was then narrowed down to a shortlist of three for interview and, after an extremely competitive process, we are pleased to have appointed Fife-based agency Whereverly to deliver the contract. Whereverly have recently worked on a visitor welcome app for Loch Lomond, the Scottish Islands Passport website and app, a 'Scotland Starts Here' website for the south of Scotland and the North Coast 500 and Badenoch: The Storylands apps. We anticipate the first phase of the build will take around 12 months, with the contract lasting five years in total. As part of the tender exercise, we measured the footprint of the existing site and will be looking to significantly reduce this as part of the build. Areas such as localised, 100% renewable server hosting; site structure; image / video compression and use of



content delivery networks (ie storing content nearer our users) should all help with this process.

- [A new Commonplace site](#) has been developed to support the work of the planning team and formation of the next Local Development Plan. As with our other Commonplace sites, this site is structured to facilitate engagement from the public and will initially gather feedback via interactive map, followed by a series of more detailed questionnaires later on in the year.
- The [Cairngorms 2030 microsite](#) received a final update ahead of our application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This includes sharing the results of our consultation efforts and a clear timeline for the next few months. An incredible 4,000 people engaged in nearly 150 consultation activities during the development phase. We will also begin updating the [Partnership Plan microsite](#) over the next few weeks to reflect the first year's worth of updates on our progress.
- Our new Digital Project Coordinator Adam Alexander joined on 30 May. Adam previously ran his own website agency in Aviemore for 13 years but has now taken over management of our suite of websites, as well as being our day-to-day lead on the new website development project. He has also been working on a series of practical improvements of the existing site to ensure it meets the latest General Data Protection Regulation requirements.
- Following our visitor welcome app research project with the University of Edinburgh (see May 2023 Governance Committee update), we are working with colleagues at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, Perth and Kinross and East Lothian Councils and the university to explore a collective funding bid for app development, likely in 2024. A meeting is taking place in mid-August with [CivTech Scotland](#), a Scottish Government programme that supports digital innovation in the public sector. We are also exploring potential funding streams through VisitScotland and Scottish Government's 'Let's Do Net Zero' initiative.

b) Social media and blogs

- The Cairngorms Nature Festival consumed a great deal of time and capacity but was a huge success by digital standards. The team took a strategic approach to platforms, messaging and online spend, reaching more than 600,000 people (up more than 200,000 from 2022) and receiving almost 30,000 engagements (up 17,000 from 2022) throughout the period, with a significant increase in user-



generated and partner content. This led to a record attendance of nearly 2,000 people across 100 events.

- As part of the Nature Festival, we created multiple posts (see eg [our countdown to the festival on Facebook](#)) which wove Gaelic translations of nature-themed words into the body of content. This builds on learning from previous years where we have attempted Gaelic-only content, which suffered from low engagement due to the relatively small number of fluent Gaelic speakers in the National Park. These new posts performed significantly better and were well received by audiences. [Gaelic assets](#) and post copy was also provided in our partner toolkit for the event, circulated to 63 partners across the National Park.
- Over the past six to nine months we have been working closely with VisitScotland to try and find a way forward on national fire messaging. In the warmer weeks of late May and June we were acutely aware that visitor-facing comms from different partners varied significantly, with different wildfire threat levels, visitor advice and core content shared through various public sector and partner channels. This is in stark contrast to the other areas of the #RespectProtectEnjoy framework (where key messages and materials are clearly aligned) and presents a real issue on the ground. The Head of Comms and colleagues in VisitScotland have taken forward specific conversations with Scottish Fire and Rescue Scotland and we have agreed that they will now take a lead on this issue. They will also ensure materials around fire safety risk are standardised and shared with all partner agencies at the same time, allowing us all to take our steer from the same source.
- Our visitor management messaging (see eg [this post](#)) has been reviewed and updated ahead of the busy summer season, building on the success of our responsible enjoyment campaign last summer. These assets have been complemented by new 'alert' style graphics to highlight specific areas of concern, from fires to floods and road closures. These will be trialled at the next appropriate occasion and their success evaluated in the lead up to the October holidays.
- Alongside this, we are working with the Cairngorms Business Partnership (through the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project) to help businesses play an active role in encouraging their customers to enjoy the National Park responsibly. The final content, which was informed by a visitor survey of over 1,000 people and feedback from 155 businesses / land managers, consists of 38 tailored social media assets and a series of 'explainer' videos, featuring standup comedian and regular Cairngorms visitor Ed Byrne. The assets have been shared with over 400 businesses



across the National Park via CBP's mailing list and a member of their staff will support the roll out of the campaign with businesses over the coming months.

- Also on visitor management, we are partnering with Ramblers Scotland for a third successive year on a responsible access campaign for young people visiting the Scottish countryside. The campaign was co-created with a diverse panel of young people from across Scotland and includes films on leaving no trace, [avoiding fires](#) and reducing wildlife disturbance. With around 1/3rd of the campaign still remaining, we have reached over 1.8m people through TikTok and Snapchat and over 100,000 people have watched the videos from end to end. The campaign originally ran through Instagram as well; however, the team took the decision to move away from this platform as the audience was predominantly over 30 (above our target of 18 to 24-year-olds).
- A comprehensive content plan and schedule has been created ahead of the formal engagement process on beaver reintroduction to the National Park, supported by video interviews featuring a range of different perspectives and partners. These videos will be uploaded in bulk to our YouTube when the formal engagement process begins in mid-August to stimulate discussion and encourage people to attend our in-person workshops.
- In collaboration with the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project and local business Bark + Ride, [a video](#) – intended to appeal mainly to local dog walkers – was produced to promote responsible ways of enjoying the National Park with dogs during the sensitive breeding months for capercaillie. It generated over 9,000 views across all channels and was shared widely within the dog-walking community locally.

c) **Press and media**

- Changes to the Convener and Vice-Convener positions were a big focus for our media efforts this quarter, with our [overarching media release](#) supported by blogs from [Sandy](#) and [Xander](#) covering their respective reflections and hopes for the future.
- There was also significant interest in [our approach to managing wildfires](#) and tackling irresponsible camping – particularly in and around Glenmore – and on traffic management issues around the edge of Loch Morlich (including from STV and the Press and Journal).



- Other media highlights during the period include positive news from the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project about [lek count numbers](#), [affordable housing development in Grantown](#), [£630,000 funding for a new active travel route](#) and the announcement of new [Scottish Government-appointed board members](#), following the direct elections the month before.
- We also continue to share more personal perspectives from across the National Park via our Cairngorms Voices platform. Over the past couple of months we have featured the [work of our Equalities Advisory Panel](#), [artist residencies at Inshriach Bothy](#), [behind the scenes with a wildcat keeper](#), and one of the farmers taking steps towards net zero as part of Cairngorms 2030.

d) Public and stakeholder engagement

- The team attended the first of a series of engagement events in May, kicking off at the Atholl Gathering. Over the course of the day they and the ranger team spoke to over 200 adults and 70 children, with displays on our conservation efforts, planning and community activity, alongside seed bomb and a butterfly craft activities for kids. Learnings from this event have helped informed our approach to the Grantown Show on 10 August (which will include beaver engagement with farmers) and the Lonach Gathering on 26 August. We are also working on a series of drop-in roadshow events in communities across the Cairngorms, starting later in the year.
- Highland Pride took place in Inverness on 19 July and the Park Authority took a stand for the very first time, highlighting our work with LGBT Youth Scotland on our LGBT Charter and listening to the LGBTQ+ community on how we can make the National Park more inclusive for everyone. The event was attended by over 2,000 people from across the region and we received uniformly positive feedback for being there, including from staff of NatureScot and Forestry and Land Scotland who were not present but hope to attend in future years.
- In mid-August we will submit our final application for the delivery phase of Cairngorms 2030. A key strand of this is a five-year Activity Plan, which sets out our overarching strategy for engaging audiences across 20 core projects, as well as how programme engagement will be resourced and funded. A key learning from the development phase was that we needed to centralise public engagement activity within an in-house team (rather than entrusting this to 17+ consultants as happened in the earlier phase). If successful, this will see us recruit an Engagement



Officer, two Engagement Coordinators and a Communications Coordinator to steer our public engagement activity over the next five years.

- Several Scottish Government ministers are visiting the National Park over the next month or so. These include Tom Arthur MSP, Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance, who is coming to Aviemore for a roundtable on the proposed visitor levy; Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, who (amongst other things) will be launching the new Nature Restoration Fund; and Marie Todd MSP, Minister for Mental Health of Scotland, who is due to visit the new outdoor dementia activity centre at Badaguish.
- In late May we welcomed Black Scottish Adventurers to the National Park. BSA are a fast-growing community of adventure-seekers who are passionate about introducing new people to the outdoors, no matter what their background. Over 90 people (aged five to 65) joined us for a walk up Meall a'Bhuachaille, followed by food and activities at Loch Insh. Many attendees had never been for a walk in the Scottish countryside before, let alone heading out into the Cairngorms National Park, so this was a great opportunity to showcase our 'Park for all' initiative. A second BSA visit is taking place at Glen Tanar on 12 August.

e) Publications and branding

- The [third issue of Cairn magazine](#) hit doorsteps at the end of July. In addition to the usual mix of community and conservation news, the magazine featured articles about the release of 20 wildcats by the Saving Wildcats project, an introduction to our new board members plus new Convener Sandy Bremner, an article about the Local Development Plan and an interview with David Toovey, a farmer who is part of our C2030 net zero farming project.
- As part of the brand refresh project last year, we applied for extended trademark protection for the suite of logos overseen by the Park Authority. This includes the main National Park, Park Authority, VisitCairngorms and 'proud to be part of' logos, as well as the osprey brandmark on its own. All five trademarks are now protected for an initial period of 10 years, which should help us address some of the copyright infringement issues we had seen over the past few years. As part of this process, we have also pulled together a licensing agreement with the Cairngorms Business Partnership for the VisitCairngorms brand, helping ensure we retain brand consistency even on third-party-run websites and materials.



- We are collaborating with the Cairngorms Business Partnership and local businesses on a series of 'stock images' for businesses to use as part of their wider promotional efforts. The images will be quintessentially 'of' the Cairngorms but also generic enough to work for multiple types of business, from people paying at a till to beds being made in a B&B. This was one of the key requirements identified by businesses in our branding workshops and we will be taking the project forward with two local photographers, one based in the west and another in the east of the National Park.
- Other publications to be developed in the last quarter include the new [Sustainable Tourism Action Plan](#), our Corporate Plan (due to be published shortly), our 'Tread Lightly' visitor leaflet translated into 11 languages, and a suite of interpretation panels for the Ballater iCentre and Local Information Centres. We continue to work closely with the team at RZSS on interpretation for the new wildlife discovery centre at the Highland Wildlife Park, which will feature the National Park prominently in its design.

2. Priority comms activity over the next three months

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.

- Onboard our new website development agency Whereverly and run a series of stakeholder workshops with key audiences (residents, businesses, land managers etc) and internal departments.
- Finalise plans for our 20th anniversary celebrations, kicking off in September. This includes the development of a podcast series featuring 20 voices from the 20 years of the National Park and a piece revisiting the anniversary orchards planted as part of our 10th anniversary celebrations.
- Attend a series of large-scale events across the National Park (Grantown Show and Lonach Gathering) and gather feedback from attendees and staff on how effective these were.
- Pull together content and circulate the November issue of Cairn magazine to all residents in the National Park.



- Building upon our learnings in year 1, explore how to take forward the delivery of the Cairngorms Nature Festival in future. How do we make the event sustainable in the long-term? How best should we utilise our limited resource to support the festival alongside other comms priorities?
- Support the Conservation team to deliver formal engagement activity for beaver reintroduction in the National Park.
- 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 CBP and VisitScotland.
- Explore (and hopefully secure) funding for a visitor welcome app for the Cairngorms National Park with partners, VisitScotland and Scottish Government.
- Pull together a draft five-year Gaelic Language Plan for the Park Authority for public consultation in December / January.
- Take forward interpretation projects at the Highland Wildlife Park and Blair Atholl Local Information Centre.