

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title: CEO REPORT AND CONVENER UPDATE**

**Prepared by: GRANT MOIR, CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**Purpose:**

- I. To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

**Conservation:**

- a) **Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy:** New Challenge fund (funders: CNPA, Scottish Forestry, SNH, Woodland Trust) has been launched to help with costs in preparing an application to Forestry Grant Scheme. Details here: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/training-support/woodland-creation/>.
- b) **Cairngorms Capercaillie Project:** The project continues to pilot work in Carr-bridge exploring ways in which people can play their part in capercaillie conservation. Capercaillie are critically endangered, largely dependent on healthy pinewoods and extremely sensitive to disturbance, making them an excellent species to focus on in finding a way for people and nature to thrive together. Dr Alistair Bath has been commissioned by the project to trial a social science approach to wildlife/ human conflict resolution. He has held over twenty 1-1 interviews with key individuals in the community and is currently distributing questionnaires to the entire resident population and holding workshops to identify the community's concerns, common ground and opportunities.
- c) **East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership:** The Estate partners, with the help of Jos Milner our project officer have all now prepared muirburn plans which identify burn free areas to increase habitat diversity and protect vulnerable habitats and species. The partnership has worked with the Scottish Raptor Study Group and employed a contractor to improve our understanding of breeding raptor distribution with an overall improving picture. Wader productivity monitoring has continued this year with a report due soon. Areas for woodland expansion and peatland restoration are still being developed.
- d) **Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership:** As we enter the final year of project delivery there is still a huge amount of work on the go and the staff team have been amazing. It is a credit to them and all the many volunteers from the community that the partnership is highly regarded locally. There have been staff changes – we were sorry to see our Admin Officer Jennifer Fraser move on to

become a teacher, but delighted to now have Jenni McAllister in post. The TGLP Board are continuing to meet regularly, monitoring progress, guiding budget spend and focusing on ensuring the partnership leads to a valuable long term legacy. A very quick summary of progress on some of the projects:

- i. Stabilisation work on *Blairfindy Castle* is going very well, with local visitors allowed up the scaffolding for a sneak preview in early September.
  - ii. The *Discovery Centre* is now a well-established focal point for visitors.
  - iii. The *Speyside Way Spur* has now been completed with an opening event due on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.
  - iv. *Scalan Mills* is progressing well and on time.
  - v. A very significant amount of work on *Interpretation* of projects across the partnership, including branding for the *Dark Sky Park* is underway.
  - vi. *Riparian woodland* projects are still in the planning stage.
  - vii. A steady trickle of *training projects* are continuing to be made available through the partnership.
  - viii. As you approach Tomintoul from the North you may notice diggers operating on the River Avon at Fordmouth, this is part of a major innovative bank *green engineering* works that has started after many months of complicated project management.
  - ix. Hiring out the new rush cutter and creating more ‘wader scrapes’ are planned as part of the *Peezie project*.
  - x. Plans are being developed to create a new area of *native woodland* above the River Conglass near the Lecht road.
  - xi. Two *barriers to salmon* migration have been removed and replaced with sophisticated constructed channels.
  - xii. The *natural heritage* grant for local projects helping wildlife and administered with the help of local volunteers is very popular and likely to be oversubscribed.
  - xiii. A range of *cultural heritage* events have been taking place.
  - xiv. A successful ‘Country Fair’ was held with plans for a further one and a *Wild in the Park* event in 2020.
  - xv. An amazing film projected onto Drumin Castle, created with the *schools*, is soon to go online.
- e) **Cairngorms Nature:** The Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group will meet on 10<sup>th</sup> October to review progress on the first 6 months’ delivery of the [Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019 - 2024](#). Membership of the Strategy Group has been refreshed and representatives from the ranger profession and from estates have been invited to join alongside the [existing membership](#).
- f) **Deer Management and Moorland Management:** SNH have completed assessments of Deer Management Groups and their delivery of ‘public benefits’. A report from SNH is due soon. We are still awaiting the outcome of the Scottish Government’s Deer Working group and the Grouse Moor Management Group; both expected to report this Autumn. The Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group is meeting this October.

## **Visitor Experience:**

- a) **Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum:** First meeting of the ‘restructured’ group took place in June focussing on our 2019 Tread Lightly in Cairngorms campaign that looks at communicating responsible access on key issues; dogs, fires & camping, biking and litter. Subsequent concern about the effectiveness of consistent messaging around these issues has encouraged us to discuss this further with SNH and the National Access Forum to determine whether we can revisit the promotion of responsible outdoor access and develop clear, simple and effective national messages. We are also planning a stakeholder meeting later this year bringing together outdoor activity organisations, land managers and conservation groups to look at how we can better encourage responsible outdoor access that looks after our special sites and species.
- b) **Long Distance Routes:**
- i. **Speyside Way:** Planning consent in place & with funding from Low Carbon Travel and Transport (LCTT) Challenge Fund work started in September to complete the ‘new build’ to Newtonmore. We are anticipating an ‘official opening’ in spring 2020. Kingussie Community are also looking to upgrade the path from the village to the Shinty Club further improving the route. With funding from SNH a poorly drained section of the route between Aviemore and Boat of Garten was upgraded this summer. In addition to path construction in 2019 work on signage, interpretation and creating a start/finish point at Newtonmore is being undertaken. The route development is being led by CNPA with support from Highland and Moray Councils. In 2020/21 we will need to revisit and improve the existing route in the National Park.
  - ii. **Deeside Way:** Planning consent for the path line from Braemar to Invercauld Bridge has been granted. However, our principle community link funding support Sustrans are now only funding multi-use tarmac paths so other sources of funding will need to be secured to build this section & to date we have been unable to source such additional support.
- c) **Mountains and People Project:** The five year Mountains and People project within both National Parks in Scotland is now in its final year. A total 53km of the most used mountain paths in Cairngorms have been improved through this project. The most noticeable paths rebuilt in this final stage are Mount Keen, Aberdeenshire, and Beinn a Ghlo, Perth & Kinross, seen from A9 at Blair Atholl. The upgraded Beinn a Ghlo path is being ‘opened’ by John Swinney MSP on 27<sup>th</sup> September celebrating the work of Mountains & People project. CNPA are working with OATS to maintain a sustainable legacy at the end of the project in both path maintenance and public involvement through volunteering.
- d) **Active Travel:** The first phase of detailed, costed, designs for better active travel in **Aviemore** will be produced for the area in and around the new hospital. Further progression of the Aviemore work requires Sustrans to be confident that matched funding for the development phase can be sourced and so the main project design is on hold until this match can be found. The multi-use path in **Glenmore** supported by the Visit Scotland managed Tourism Infrastructure Fund still requires Highland Council Roads Authority permission with build scheduled for Spring 2020.

**Kingussie** and **Dalnain** communities with Sustrans support developed outline proposals for improving multi-use access in and around the communities. The Kingussie work includes linking to Speyside Way and NCN7, with Dalnain looking for a multiuse path link to Grantown that also embraces the potential to link with the proposed new distillery and any extension of the Steam Railway. Both have applied for detailed design funding to Sustrans.

- e) **Volunteering:** We now have 26 trained volunteer rangers supporting the work of ten ranger services and other partners, contributing to date some 516 days of very valuable volunteering (nearly 2.5 years' worth of work). Training for the newest intake is now complete with a further intake scheduled to join the programme in early spring 2020. One volunteer ranger will be attending the UK Society of National Park Staff conference in Latvia that overlaps with the EUROPARC Conference in September: a very positive celebration and sharing of the role that volunteer rangers are playing in Cairngorms. To date some 135 opportunities to volunteer for nature and environment from 18 partners have been promoted on Volunteer Cairngorms web portal, on social media and to over 350 e-newsletter subscribers.
- f) **Education and Inclusion:** Following Board decision in December work developing the Europarc Youth Manifesto into sustainable engagement with young people is complete. Leader+ funding supported a partnership with Finish young people. How we support and effectively use the **Cairngorms Youth Action** team is detailed in Paper 2 Cairngorms Youth Action. Some 60 young people have completed the **Junior Ranger** programme this year, 10 attended a weekend camp at Balmoral and two went to the Europarc camp in Estonia. The **John Muir Award** continues to be popular with some 2,100 mainly young people discovering, exploring, & conserving this area and then sharing their experiences. Backbone, with support from Cairngorms National Park Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage, has launched **'Our Natural Heritage'** project supporting and encouraging black and ethnic minority groups, particularly refugees, to enjoy our special places. Late May **'Into the Mountain'** provided guided hill walks to a remote dance & choir performance linking women who walk in the Cairngorms with the mountains themselves and the work of Nan Shepherd. Media feedback was very positive. **'Writer in Residence'** projects encouraging people to creatively celebrate the outstanding culture of Cairngorms are still engaging with people. The creative outputs will be shared widely this autumn. Both projects are supported by Creative Scotland, with Woodland Trust supporting the 'Writer' programme
- g) **Information and Interpretation:** Ten local information centre (**LIC's**) partnerships are now in place across the National Park. Staff have participated in the **'Make it Yours'** training and all the centres are branded, have visitor leaflets and are promoted on our website and maps of the National Park. We will review this year's partnership with the teams in the autumn. We are also in discussion with other potential centres working with the local community council to reach agreement. Speyside Centre (former Heather Centre nr Dalnain Bridge) is due to open this autumn with clear information and interpretation about the National Park. Work is ongoing developing Speyside Way and Ballater interpretation and supporting the work of Badenoch Great Place & Tomintoul & Glenlivet.

- h) **Snow Roads Scenic Route:** The CBP secured Visit Scotland Growth Fund support that continues to use the SnowRoads to target international buyers in France, Germany, Scandinavia and North America for the first time, encouraging them to list the Cairngorms for travellers who design their own itineraries and arrange their own travel plans.

**Rural Development:**

- a) **Local Development Plan 2020:** The Board approved the submission of unresolved representations and other relevant documentation on the proposed Local Development Plan to the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) for examination by a Reporter. The documents are being collated and checked by staff and will be submitted by end of September 2019. We expect the examination to start before the end of 2019.
- b) **Planning casework:** The Planning Committee have approved a part-retrospective planning application for a hill track and an application to replace a footbridge, as well as refused an application for a recreational hut in a capercaillie wood since the last Board meeting. There are many interesting development proposals under consideration including proposed new distillery near Grantown, new housing at Carrbridge and modifications to the terrain at ski centre at Cairngorm Mountain.
- c) **Cairngorms Business Barometer:** The annual report for 2018/19 from this survey of businesses (290 responses) undertaken by Cairngorms Business Partnership highlighted a number of factors (full reports are available here <https://visitcairngorms.com/barometer>):
- i. **Barriers to growth:** The cost of staff levels are consistently rising over time while most other barriers are stable or declining
  - ii. **Business confidence:** Medium and long term confidence fell to their lowest levels since 2012/13, although short and medium term confidence was still rated above the long term average. Non-tourism businesses seemed to be more confident about the future.
  - iii. **Influence of Cairngorms National Park as a designation:** Influence is high and improving over time for attracting first time visitors and returning visitors, for profitability and on impacts on running a business,
  - iv. **External support from organisations:** Businesses said that CNPA ranking in providing general support is both high and improving over time and we are maintaining/increasing on our average in 2017/18 which was an indicator in the Corporate Plan
- d) **Economic Action Plan:** The Economic Action Plan has been consulted on since June and will end on 20 September. The Board Convener and local members have undertaken 7 days of visits with officers to businesses across the National Park over the summer, meeting directly with over 40 businesses in a very wide range of economic sectors. The CBP have held two consultation events; and officers and board members have attended two local business association meetings and met with organisations such as Federation of Small Businesses and Scottish Land and Estates, and environmental NGOs. The feedback from meetings and analysis of written

responses received will be reported to members in December with recommendations on how to finalise the Action Plan.

- e) **Cairngorm Mountain:** Staff continue to assist HIE with the challenges of repairing the funicular and planning a sustainable future for the ski area. HIE are shortly to announce plans for the development of a masterplan for the area, including significant public engagement - staff have advised on the scope of this work and on appointment of contractors. Planning applications are under active consideration for modification of terrain. Staff regularly attend the Funicular Response Group and have met recently with the Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust to discuss their aspirations.
  
- f) **Tourism Action Plan:** The Cairngorms Tourism Partnership met in late May and discussed the work of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, plans to develop a Tourism Business Improvement District in Moray and early ideas for a new long distance route linking Deeside and Strathspey. Overall, good progress is being made with delivery of the Tourism Action Plan. The visitor survey 2019/20 is now under way with interim results expected at the end of the year. It was agreed that Janet Hunter would now Chair the CTP and she has been out and about over the summer meeting stakeholders as part of taking on that role. Next CTP meeting is planned for November.
  
- g) **Affordable Housing Delivery:** A number of communities continue to actively pursue community housing projects in Dulnain Bridge, Boat of Garten, Tomintoul, Braemar and Ballater. BSW Timber and Seafield Estate have an active planning application for affordable housing near Boat of Garten. All the projects are hoping to use the Scottish Government's Rural Housing Fund to progress their plans. Next meeting of Community-led Housing Group is in late November
  
- h) **A9 Dualling project:** The CNPA maintains its objection to the Dalraddy to Slochd section on the basis that the provision for non-motorised users between Aviemore and Carrbridge is insufficient. Transport Scotland are currently leading a study to look at route options for new path provision which could allow us remove that objection if TS commit to its provision. Public engagement events are to be held in 25 Sept in Aviemore and 26 Sept in Carrbridge about these proposals.
  
- i) **Badenoch Great Place Project:** The first, community-led Badenoch Heritage Festival took place over two weeks in September, celebrating Badenoch's heritage with a very wide range of events. The Festival has been used to launch the branding proposals for the destination around concept of "Badenoch: The Storylands". Work is under way on wide range of projects including Gaelic place-names; provision of an alternative tourism route to attract people off the A9; development of a web portal to link to community websites; development of a network of community heritage ambassadors.
  
- j) **Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund:** Four applications have been submitted within the Park for this ERDF fund that is managed by Scottish Natural Heritage: by RSPB for visitor facilities at Abernethy; by Highlife Highland for youth facilities at Highland Folk Park, by RZSS for visitor facilities at Highland Wildlife Park and by a local community group for an dark skies observatory near Tomintoul. It is

understood that the scheme has been very competitive with 37 applications across the Highlands and Moray and only nine projects are likely to be offered funding. Decisions will be announced by Ministers on 23 September 2019.

### **Stakeholder Engagement:**

- a) CEO attended a range of groups/events including Environment and Economy Leaders Group, CoHI Chief Officers Group, Highland and Moray Community Planning Partnerships, Cairngorms Funicular Response Group, Scottish Land Commission Workshop
- b) CEO also had meetings with the following organisations – Entrepreneurial Scotland, John Muir Trust; HIE; Highland Council; Crown Estate Scotland; Forest Holidays, Forest and Land Scotland; Federation of Small Businesses; CBP, SEFARI Gateway, SNH, Forestry Scotland; Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust; Scottish Government; Alder Estate; Glenavon Estate; Balmoral Estate; Scottish Enterprise;

### **Communications:**

- a) **Cairngorms Nature Campaign:** Cairngorms Nature is promoted via the Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend, Volunteering Cairngorms and the Capercaillie project. To date Cairngorms Nature has over 19.9K social media followers. The LEADER funded Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend took place 10 – 13 May with over 100 events across the Park and **3,273** people (61% Park residents) taking part including 400 school children involved in the art competition and the rural skills day. Six private estates, two farms, 10 ranger services, 17 private businesses and 18 organisations and projects were involved and the feedback survey results confirm 81% of participants said the CNBW was excellent or very good, 97% would attend again and 94% would recommend it to others. In addition, 82% said they would get out into nature more often and 76% said they learnt something new. The CNBW steering group has met to discuss next year's programme of events which will take place **15-17 May 2020**.
- b) **Make It Yours Campaign:** The CNPA's 5 yearly all park visitor survey started in May this year. This involves face to face question interviews with 2,500 visitors across the National Park and builds on the previous surveys completed in 2004, 2010 and 2015. This data is extremely useful in understanding visitor motivation and expectation and focuses our work in delivering the National Park Partnership Plan. The first six month data will be available late 2019 with the final report ready for June 2020. A [summary of the 2015 data](#) is available on the Cairngorms National Park website. The 2018 STEAM data is now available and show that visitor numbers have increased by 4.7% from 2017 to 1.92M.
- c) **Active Cairngorms:** The third **Wee Walks Week** was promoted across the National Park 9<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> September encouraging us all to take a short walk for health and enjoyment. It also promoted the great local path network shared on 17 community path leaflets, and celebrated local health walks. In 2019/20 first quarter 208 Health Walks have been programmed throughout the National Park encouraging some 140 people a week to take a short walk for health and wellbeing as well as fun with company.

- d) **Corporate Communications:** The [National Park Partnership Plan Annual Review](#) was published in an e-storybook format and has been viewed 354 times between 14 June – 5<sup>th</sup> July. Our digital promotion included 6 posts and one video on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube which resulted in:
- i. Reach of posts on Facebook: 2,782, engagement\*: 418, engagement rate: 15%
  - ii. Impressions of posts on Twitter: 7,048, engagement\*: 679, engagement rate: 10%
  - iii. Total view videos: 900
- (\*engagement includes; likes, comments, shares, clicks on post and video views.)

The [Economic Action Plan consultation](#) was launched on 26 June and will run until 20 September. The CNPA's Annual Report 2018/19 will be submitted to Ministers and published on our website in autumn 2019.

To progress our Gaelic Language Action Plan we are looking to recruit another Gaelic Language research student through the [Adopt an Intern](#) process to work on a project to help promote Gaelic Experiences in the Park through our digital communications. The [online 'Gaelic as an Asset' Toolkit](#) was published in July and a joint Gaelic Education project with Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority was promoted with local schools in August. The education project has prepared a resource booklet which provides a guide to common place names in Scotland with suggested activities for schools, groups, and individuals which can be used to support a class project.

### Organisational Development:

- a) **Office Extension Project:** Now that the extension has been occupied for a full year, and staff have adapted positively to working in the open plan space, we are moving our focus to “phase 2”, which involves improving facilities in the old part of the office. We have provided a brief to the architects setting out our requirements for improving meeting space and suitable staff break-out space in the lower floor of #14 and hope that work will commence this financial year. We are also reviewing the possibility of improving cycle storage facilities to promote active travel to work.
- b) **Staffing update:** Since June, staff turnover and recruitment has been as follows:
- i. *Planning Team:* - we have recruited Nina Caudrey to the permanent Planning Officer (Development Planning) post to replace Dan Harris who was promoted into the management role. Andrew Teece has also joined us in the fixed term Planning Officer (Development Planning) post to cover Katie Crerar's maternity leave. Robbie Calvert has been recruited in to the fixed term Graduate Planner post, replacing Luke Vogan. The Planning team are now fully resourced.
  - ii. Vicky Anderson has joined the Authority in the Strathspey Farmland Wader Officer post. This is a new fixed term post, funded through the Strathspey Wetlands and Wader Initiative
  - iii. Rachael Bisset's fixed term contract as the Finance Support Officer Graduate Internship ended on 30<sup>th</sup> June. Amy Mackenzie has returned from maternity leave and resumed her role as Finance Assistant.



- iv. Abi Ball resigned from the Strategic Routes Project Officer post. This post is not being replaced currently.
- c) **Youth Employment:** : On-going commitment to supporting Youth Employment, as follows:
- i. *Internships:* - Rhiannon Holden's internship to collate accurate information on where there are currently hill tracks across the National Park has come to an end but produced extremely useful material. We are now currently recruiting two further internships – one to collate research for a project bringing Gaelic Heritage to life for non-Gaelic speakers; the other to digitise unmapped woodland and trees in the Cairngorms National Park. Both internships are likely to start before Christmas
  - ii. Over the summer we supported a young person on a volunteer programme within the IT department, through Project Scotland.
  - iii. Reece Musgrave, our IT Apprentice has been one of only four young people shortlisted for the Highland Business Awards Young Apprentice on the Year Award. The winner will be announced on 27<sup>th</sup> September.
  - iv. *University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) Partnership:* - We have supported the delivery of career talks aimed at the Environmental Science students; we supported two work placements involving UHI students; several CNPA staff are supporting the UHI mentorship programme.
- d) **Organisational Development Strategy 3:** We have now developed the next stage of our Organisational Development Strategy – ODS3, which has been consulted with the Board's S&RC and staff through the SCF. We are in the process of creating working groups to deliver this strategy. The Best Companies Survey will be launched in September/October this year, and the survey results will feed in to the evolving ODS3.
- e) **Shared Services:** Shared services as follows: -
- i. Continued work to provide HR support the Scottish Land Commission has included the development of new policies, the development, staff consultation and submission of the 2019/20 pay remit, which has recently been approved and implemented.
- f) **UKNP:** With the national charity now established, National Park Partnerships, in conjunction with the charity Trustees, have begun to seek charity funding from national organisations and national campaigns which would not otherwise be accessible by individual or smaller / regional groups of national parks. The initial bids for funding have been submitted over July and August. With respect to wider sponsorship activity undertaken by National Park Partnerships (NPP) the position for each NPA to be at worst cash-neutral in terms of comparison of each Authority's annual contribution when compared with the cash return from corporate sponsors and funders for the 19/20 financial year. The value of clothing from Columbia is additional to this.
- g) **Cairngorms Trust and LEADER:** The Cairngorms LEADER Programme allocation of £2.97 million is now fully committed, with an estimated total project value of £3.807 million excluding organisations' "in-kind" match funding in terms of

staff and other existing resources contributed to project delivery. These in-kind costs are ineligible for the current programme and therefore do not feature in project values. The Cairngorms Trust, as the Local Action Group for the LEADER Programme, has bid for an additional funds to support two further cooperation projects and a community project. We hope to hear the outcome of this bid by mid-October. The Trust is leading on a sustainable rural transport cooperation project, alongside Kilkenny LEADER (Ireland). The first stakeholder group on this project met in August with a follow up to come in early October. This project aims to implement improvements in community and active travel provision. The Trust has also made its first awards from charitable funds to support community projects following adoption of two campaigns and opening a small grants scheme of up to £1,000 supporting community led projects.

- h) **Board Governance Group** – The Board Governance Group met on the 9<sup>th</sup> August and the main issues discussed were Board Skills Matrix, Board Appraisals & potential Board CPD sessions. There was also an update on budget discussions with Scottish Government.

**Grant Moir**

**September 2019**

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## **Board Convener Update – For Information**

Grant Moir, Willie McKenna and I attended the launch of The Cairngorm Story at Cairngorm Mountain last month. This new exhibition is a very positive addition to the offering on Cairngorm. I had a productive discussion with James Stuart, Convener of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, about possible areas for future collaboration between the two National Parks. We also updated each other on the ongoing work in our respective Parks and agreed to share information on a number of projects.

### **Economic Action Plan**

Over the summer recess I have been out speaking to businesses across the Park with Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development, and a number of the directly elected Board Members. This was a very useful and insightful seven days, and a number of new issues were raised with us for future consideration. The feedback we received was fairly upbeat, but identified key challenges facing each of the local communities that were acting as barriers to growth. Murray Ferguson will report further on the responses in his December report on the Economic Action Plan. However, everyone we spoke to was very positive about seeing the Park take a proactive approach to speaking to businesses and we have taken this feedback on board to consider how we might continue this in the future.

### **Governance Group**

The first meeting of the Governance Group was convened in August and we agreed that all future agendas would be circulated to all Board Members so that if any Member has specific thoughts on any of the items under discussion they can raise them with the Convener in advance. As this is an informal group and there is not a formal minute we also agreed that a brief summary of the topics discussed would be included in the CEO/Convener report and Grant has included an update in his report. Any actions for governance improvements will go through the appropriate Board Committee or to the Board itself and as stated in the Terms of Reference this group will provide advice on any suggested changes.

**Xander McDade**  
**Board Convener**

### **External Engagements (5<sup>th</sup> June – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019)**

In addition to scheduled Board meetings and internal meetings, I have attended the following external engagements in my capacity as Convener of the Board since our last Board meeting.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Venue</b>
5/6	Meeting with Sir Peter Luff, Heritage Lottery Fund, and Grant Moir	Boat of Garten
8/6	Mountaineering Scotland Conservation Strategy	Birnam
18/6	Meeting with Carol Evans, Woodlands Trust and Steve Micklewright, CEO Trees for Life	Pitlochry
7/7	Visit to Strathspey Steam Railway	Aviemore

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Date	Engagement	Venue
8/7	Economic Action Plan – meeting with businesses in Kingussie with Murray Ferguson	Kingussie
9/7	Economic Action Plan – meeting with businesses in Aviemore with Murray Ferguson and Willie McKenna	Aviemore
22/7	Economic Action Plan – meeting with businesses in Grantown with Murray Ferguson	Grantown-on-Spey
23/7	Economic Action Plan – meeting with businesses in Tomintoul with Murray Ferguson and Eleanor M	Tomintoul
1/8	Economic Action Plan – meeting with businesses in Braemar with Murray Ferguson and Geva Blackett	Braemar
2/8	Economic Action Plan – meeting with businesses in Ballater with Murray Ferguson	Ballater
8/8	Economic Action Plan – meeting with businesses in Blair Atholl with Gavin Miles and Deirdre Falconer	Blair Atholl
8/8	Meeting with Cllr Shiers and Gavin Miles to discuss former Spittal of Glenshee Hotel	Spittal of Glenshee
15/8	The Cairngorm Story Launch	Cairngorm Mountain
9/9	Meeting with James Stuart, Convener LLTNP	By telephone

### Board Member Updates

**Geva Blackett** - In July I was asked to host a day for 22 high ranking officials from Hainan Province who were interested to learn more about the Park. Having a pretty free rein, I decided to demonstrate how one small community – Braemar - was helping deliver all four of the Park's statutory aims. First stop was Glenshee chairlift and café where a trip up the chairlift to admire the view was included. Our visitors, via the official interpreter, had an explanation about the challenges facing one business in the park trying to deliver the 4<sup>th</sup> aim (the economic one) with climate change and the multitude of interested parties involved in planning applications riding high on the list. One of the senior delegates was the Chief Engineer for the province and he was absolutely fascinated in how the human waste was disposed of so far up the hill, so a trip to the septic tank proved a 'high' point of that part of the day... at least for some.

From there we visited the Games Park where our visitors were piped into the centre and allowed to look round so they got a sense of the cultural importance of the Gathering – and what it entails, as well as seeing the Royal Box. Lunch at the Fife was followed by a fascinating trip round part of Invercauld, hosted by Angus McNicol and his team, where the viewpoints we stopped at provided conversations around agriculture, forestry, moorland and montane and their challenges as well as some stunning landscapes;

I had been asked to organise a trip to a Fish Farm and as there are none around here I felt a trip to the Old Brig at Invercauld to meet with Edwin Third from the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board was probably a better bet – discussions were had around the different environmental designations on the river (a Natura 2000 Special rea of Conservation for

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salmon, otters and freshwater pearl mussels) and on the surrounding land (Ballochbuie – a Natura 2000 Special Protection Area for capercaillie and the Scottish crossbill) as well as the challenges facing our wild salmon in particular.

We wound up the day with a visit to Braemar Castle and a quick tour around! Someone found some swords and our guests soon started to relax and enjoy themselves after a pretty action and information packed day... All in all the day was a huge success and the feedback was excellent, well worth the effort everyone involved put in to the day.

**Carolyn Caddick** – Janet Hunter, Derek Ross and myself attended a day on Atholl Estate to learn more first-hand about deer stalking from the stalkers on the estate. It was an excellent day and we learnt many things around heather beetle, deer management and estate management.

**Anne Rae Macdonald** - wrote an article on farming in the Cairngorms National Park for Walk Highlands at the end of August.