



## For information

**Title:** Corporate plan delivery update

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### Strategic context

1. The Park Authority's Corporate Plan for 2023 to 2027 sets out the organisation's planned contributions toward achievement of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP). The corporate plan establishes the Park Authority's agreed strategic corporate objectives for the period to 2027.
2. Our Performance Report included in the annual report and accounts presents progress over the course of the first year of our corporate plan in delivering against these strategic objectives. By nature of the Park Authority's role – seeking to lead collaborative effort in tackling the big issues for the Cairngorms – our performance measures are rarely directly controllable by the Park Authority and certainly not by the Park Authority alone. Rather, they require the necessary collaboration and engagement of the Park Authority and our partners. In this way, they act as measures of the effectiveness of our leadership and influencing abilities, combined with our own direct investment of finance and staff resources, in tackling these priorities.

### Purpose

3. This paper draws the performance report for 2023 / 24 against our corporate plan objectives specifically to the board's attention. This takes a more focused look at the Park Authority's delivery toward agreed strategic objectives in the context of the wider update on Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan delivery considered by the board at its previous meeting. [240913Paper2NPPPAnnualUpdate.pdf](#)
4. The paper also presents the Park Authority's draft annual report and accounts to the board, following the approval of this document by the Board's Audit and Risk Committee. The external audit is not yet complete at the date of issue of this paper, with the audit certificate remaining to be signed. However, this remains a timely point in the process to present the draft accounts and annual report to the board.



The external auditors have reported to the Audit and Risk Committee on 27 September that their review is substantially complete and there are currently no matters of which the auditors are aware that would require modification of our audit opinion, subject to the satisfactory resolution of the outstanding matters. Officers have not received any notification of any issues since that date.

## **Recommendations**

5. The Board is asked to:
  - a) To note the draft annual accounts for 2023 / 24
  - b) To note the status of delivery toward Corporate Plan objectives as set out in the Annual Report
  - c) To consider any actions needed to address delivery of those Corporate Plan objectives highlighted as at increased delivery risk.

## **Strategic policy consideration**

6. Approval of the Annual Report and Accounts and the external audit of the annual accounts is overseen by the Audit and Risk Committee on behalf of the board, as set out in the terms of reference for the board's committees. The draft accounts, which remain subject to clearance by the Auditor General for Scotland and laying in Parliament, are presented at Annex 1 to this paper.
7. The Annual Report for 2023 / 24 includes a performance report, set out in pages 36 to 47 of Annex 1, which presents an overview of the Park Authority's performance in delivery against our strategic objectives. A dashboard analysis indicates whether progress has been broadly on track and meeting expectations (rated 'green'); or has experienced delay or some shortfall against objectives which can be remedied before the end of the corporate plan period (rated 'amber'). A 'red' rating would be used for any strategic objectives unlikely to be substantially complete by the end of the corporate plan period. There are no strategic objectives classified as red at this stage.
8. Attention is drawn to the fact that the assessment of delivery against strategic objectives is as of 31 March 2024. As such, some time has passed from the overview of corporate delivery position now presented. The Park Authority will seek to deliver future performance update reports to board closer to the end of financial and operational years in question. Those objectives highlighted at some increased risks



have been drawn out in the “Supporting Information” section of this paper and updates provided on current status.

## **Stakeholder engagement**

9. As noted at the outset of this paper, given the nature of the Park Authority’s role – seeking to lead collaborative effort in tackling the big issues for the Cairngorms – achievement of our corporate objectives typically requires the necessary collaboration and engagement of our partners. The assessment of progress against objectives is made in context of the collaborative work undertaken between the Park Authority and our delivery partners. Fuller information on the partnership delivery has been provided in the previous board meeting update on National Park Partnership Plan delivery.

## **Strategic risk management**

10. Our strategic risk register has been developed to support delivery of the strategic objectives covered in the performance report. There are no new risk implications arising from the overview of corporate plan delivery as of 31 March 2024.

## **Implications**

11. Our annual operational plan and budget is established to give a balance of investment which will collectively achieve our strategic objectives. The evidence from 2023 / 24 performance assessment suggests that the balance of investment has been appropriate in support of the successful delivery of the Park Authority’s wide range of strategic objectives.
12. The Park Authority continues to deliver against these strategic objectives over the course of 2024 / 25. The Resources Committee has reviewed the position of current year budget management and noted that we remain on track to deliver a range of initiatives and investments further progressing these objectives within a balanced budget position.
13. The implications for corporate delivery into 2025 / 26 will be considered from December 2024 informed by the Scottish Government’s budget.



## Success measures

14. The performance report dashboard comprises a key element of the Park Authority's corporate performance framework and success measures. This gives a high-level strategic overview of progress being made toward achievement of agreed corporate plan objectives.
15. In presenting the draft accounts for 2023 / 24, the Park Authority's annual success measure is to achieve an outturn position within a range of an overspend of no more than 1% to an underspend of no more than 2%. The net position achieved in the year of only £4,000 overspend represents an overspend that amounts to only 0.03% of grant-in-aid received. In cash terms, net income of £329,000 against total income of £14.562 million represents a 2.3% surplus. This is accounted for in the main by higher cost recoveries from external sources than originally budgeted.
16. The Park Authority's accounts for 2023 / 24 represent the 20<sup>th</sup> year since establishment of the Cairngorms National Park. Our report at page 23 highlights that total income in the first year was £1.927m and is now £14.562m.
17. Income of £14.562m represents the highest level of annual income receipts by the Park Authority since its creation.

## Supporting information

### Update on corporate objectives with escalated risk assessments

18. The majority of strategic objectives are assessed as on track for delivery as expected by the end of the corporate plan period, March 2027. Updates on the status of those elements of corporate performance assessed as at some heightened delivery risk are provided below.

A6	Gamebird management	Ensure that all pheasant and partridge shoots adhere to best practice and that all gamebird releases are sustainable and do not negatively impact on native biodiversity.	
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19. Data collection has been delayed but is now underway. Data on game bird releases within the Park should be available by end 2024. The methodology for PhD research



into the impacts of these releases has been agreed. Research is due to start late 2024.

A13	Species recovery	Ensure species thrive in the National Park with key assemblages across the Cairngorms within the semi-natural landscape.	
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20. The final report on Cairngorms Nature Action Plan was published on the Park Authority website in October 2024. Reporting against Species Recovery Curve targets shows: 14 - achieved target; 13 - significant progress made; two - target not met. Over 80% of the actions were completed, demonstrating high levels of activity and a positive trend in creating sustainable populations. However, inexperience with using the Recovery Curve in the Park resulted in some over ambitious targets being set, and external factors not accounted for. The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2025 – 2030 will adapt target setting accordingly and provide a more accurate measure of progress in subsequent stages of reporting to the end of the corporate plan period.

21. Beavers were reintroduced to the upper Spey catchment in 2023. The Park Authority and NatureScot joint capercaillie emergency plan was published in September 2024.

B1	Working age population	The proportion of young and working age people in the National Park increases relative to the total resident population, which remains stable.	
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22. The risk assessment relates to availability of data and analysis. A Local Development Plan Evidence Report is in preparation and early engagement with key agencies and stakeholders started. National Records of Scotland 2022 based mid-year population estimates for Scotland and Local Authorities was published 26 March 2024. Data for small areas (allowing a National Park estimate) was to be published from May / June 2024 allowing further analysis to be taken forward.

C1	Access to housing	Ensure that there is sufficient affordable housing stock to enable people to live and work within the National Park.	
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23. Highland Council Short term let control Area established March 2024. Perth and Kinross Council investigation establishment of Short Term let control area in Highland Perthshire. Affordable and mid-market housing developments underway at Carrbridge, Dulnain Bridge, Aviemore and Kingussie.

C2	New housing	Deliver new housing in the National Park and ensure as much as possible is secured for key workers and / or to resolve affordability issues.	
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24. Affordable and mid-market housing developments underway at Carrbridge, Dulnain Bridge, Aviemore and Kingussie.

C3	Housing and community benefit	Work with communities to ensure that the majority of land allocated for development around villages and towns in the National Park is controlled by communities or public bodies to help manage long-term development needs.	
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25. Community groups have been exploring community housing projects in Strathdon, Braemar, Dulnain Bridge and Grantown-on-Spey.

**David Cameron,**  
**05 November 2024**  
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