



Cairngorms
National Park Authority

Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh

Annual report and accounts 2022/23

**...an outstanding national park, enjoyed and valued
by everyone, where nature and people thrive
together...**

AITHISG BHLIADHNAIL AGUS CUNNTASAN

2022/23

**...SÀR PHÀIRC NÀISEANTA, A THA A' CÒRDADH
RIS A H-UILE DUINE AGUS AIR A BHEIL IAD UILE
A' CUR LUACH, AGUS FAR A BHEIL NÀDAR AGUS
DAOINE A' SOIRBHEACHA...**



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1 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

Cairngorms National Park Authority presents this Annual Report and Accounts for the year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 in accordance with The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

The accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis as the Board and Accountable Officer believe that future liabilities will be met from a combination of cash budget allocation from the Scottish Government, future grants from partner agencies, and income from chargeable activities.

This overview outlines the purpose of the Authority and its performance during the year.

1.1 Key Personnel and Sponsoring Department

Sponsoring body

Environment and Forestry Directorate, Natural Resources Division, Scottish Government

The National Park Authority Board is made up of nineteen Board Members. Five members are elected by the community, seven are appointed by Scottish Ministers, and seven following nominations by the Local Authorities. The Board is led by the Convener and Deputy Convener.

Convener

Sandy Bremner - appointed 26 May 2023 (Convener from July 2023)
Xander McDade, Chair Governance Committee (Convener to July 2023)

Board members

Chris Beattie - appointed 1 October 2022
Geva Blackett - reappointed 1 October 2022
Peter Cosgrove - appointed 7 September 2023
Kenny Deans - appointed 23 March 2023
Paul Gibb - appointed 23 March 2023
Hannah Grist - appointed 26 May 2023
Russell Jones - appointed 1 October 2022
John Kirk - re-elected 23 March 2023
Bill Lobban - appointed 1 October 2022



Lauren MacCallum - appointed 23 March 2023
Dr Fiona McLean – reappointed 1 November 2022
Eleanor Mackintosh - re-elected 23 March 2023
Duncan Miller – appointed 9 November 2023
Steve Micklewright – appointed 26 May 2023
Anne Ross - appointed 1 October 2022
Derek Ross - reappointed 1 October 2022

Peter Argyle - resigned 30 September 2022
Carolyn Caddick - Deputy Convenor - resigned 30 September 2022
Deirdrie Falconer - resigned 21 March 2023
Pippa Hadley - resigned 30 September 2022
Janet Hunter – resigned 7 September 2023
John Latham - resigned 30 September 2022
Douglas McAdam – resigned 31 October 2023
Anne Rae MacDonald - resigned 31 March 2023
Ian Maclaren - resigned 30 September 2022
Willie McKenna - resigned 23 March 2023
William Munro - resigned 31 March 2023
Dr Gaener Rodger -resigned 31 October 2023
Judith Webb - resigned 31 January 2023

The Board agrees the overall direction of the Authority and oversees the work of the Chief Executive and National Park staff. The executive management of the Authority is undertaken by an Executive team that comprises the Chief Executive and three Directors.

Chief Executive and Accountable Officer

Grant Moir

Directors

David Cameron - Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Murray Ferguson - Planning and Place

Andy Ford - Nature and Climate



1.2 Chief Executive's Forward

I have pleasure in presenting the Cairngorms National Park Authority's Annual Report and Accounts covering its 19th year of operation, from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Toward the end of March, I celebrated 10 years as Chief Executive Officer of the Park Authority and this gave me cause to reflect on the massive change there has been over those years. The Park Authority is a very different organisation from 10 years ago and there is a tremendous amount of work being done out on the ground in the National Park across our key themes of Nature, People and Place.

The launch of the National Park Partnership Plan 2022-27 in August 2022 and the staff conference in November signalled the start of a new chapter post-pandemic. The National Park Partnership Plan is an ambitious plan setting out our approach between now and 2045. It was developed in collaboration with over 100 partners and is driving work both within the Park Authority and across the National Park as a whole.

The Park Authority continued throughout the year to deliver on our key strategic priorities. This involved providing effective and efficient public services around our statutory functions of planning and outdoor access, as well as working with a diverse range of partners to complete projects on the ground and deliver the collective National Park outcomes. We have provided these services and achieved our objectives while making our contribution to the national priorities and challenges of addressing the climate and nature's crises, building a well-being economy, delivering affordable housing and more.

We also continued our work on the development phase of the National Lottery-funded Cairngorms 2030 programme, alongside a wide range of partners. This development phase has now come to a close and we will find out in December 2023 whether we have been successful with our £43 million delivery phase application. Cairngorms 2030 is all about the National Park becoming a rural exemplar of working with people to tackle big issues such as climate mitigation and adaptation, nature recovery, rural regeneration, community engagement and sustainable transport.



There are plenty of highlights from 2022/23, from the creation of new visitor facilities to pine hoverfly reintroduction, affordable housing being delivered, and record amounts of peatland being restored.

Scotland's national parks have never been in a better place and, whilst future delivery will be a challenge given the scale of the issues we face, I am excited by the task in hand. We're fortunate to have a committed and talented staff group, a knowledgeable and connected board and an unparalleled network of partners, land managers, charities, local businesses and communities, all determined to make the Cairngorms National Park the best it can be.

We are an organisation that delivers innovation, collaboration and ambition, and I am extremely proud to be its CEO.

Grant Moir
Chief Executive and Accountable Officer
24 November, 2023



1.3 The Park Authority

The Cairngorms National Park is the largest National Park in the United Kingdom and covers 4,525 square kilometres, twice the size of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and 40% larger than the Lake District.

The Park Authority is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Environment and Forestry Directorate, Natural Resources Division, Scottish Government, established under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 with the purpose of being a model of sustainable development working towards achieving four statutory aims:

- to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and
- to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

Strategy and business model

The Park Authority has a key role in leading the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP). The Plan sets the context for close cooperation and partnership across public, private, and voluntary organisations in the Park, towards an agreed set of shared priority objectives. The National Park Partnership Plan sets out three long term outcomes for the Park and provides the overall guide for strategic alignment between public agencies, private companies and community organisations within the Park who are signatories to, and partners in, delivery of the Cairngorms NPPP.

Over the course of the last year the Park Authority has developed and extensively consulted on a new NPPP to span 2022 to 2027. This new NPPP was approved by the Park Authority's board in June 2022 and by Scottish ministers in August 2022.

The Park Authority's Corporate Plan is derived from the NPPP. The Corporate Plan for the period 2017-22 was approved by the Board and Scottish Ministers in Spring 2018. Subsequently, the Authority has operated against a transitional plan bridging the period between the end of the 2017-22 NPPP and the commencement of the 2022-27 Plan. In the wider Scottish context, the Park



Authority will also work on ensuring greater strategic alignment to ensure delivery of key national strategies, such as current and future Programmes for Government and other relevant national strategies.

Our strategic work includes being an active member of the Environment and Economy Leaders' Group, together with input to a range of national leadership and stakeholder groups.

Our commitment

Our vision, mission statement and values, are led by our board and staff and are central to our purpose and strategic context:

Our vision – an outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together.

Our mission – to lead the way in delivering for the Cairngorms National Park by bringing people together towards a common purpose, enhancing the Park for everyone and inspiring new generations to be Park Champions.

Our values – the Park Authority is an open, inclusive, innovative, and professional organisation that behaves with integrity. The Park Authority will also operate in an environmentally friendly way that provides leadership in this area.

Our culture – ...to be the best small public body in Scotland.

We aspire to be the best small public body in Scotland. Our staff survey results, undertaken every two years through “The Best Companies Survey”, have shown that we are a people-oriented organisation performing well. We are listed amongst the Top 100 Not for Profit Organisations in the UK, and we are also recognised by Flexibility Works as one of the Top 10 employers in Scotland because of our approach to flexible working for our staff group.

We will continue to build on our Organisational Development Strategy to imbed a high performance, high achieving and high-quality culture based on an equalities and staff focused culture. The Park Authority will continue to be innovative and quick to act and will empower staff to deliver the strategies put in place by our Board.



Aims and objectives

The Park authority's objectives for the year were formed around the themes of Nature & Climate, People, and Place:

Nature & climate

Woodland expansion

Peatland restoration

Nature restoration:

- freshwater restoration
- raptor conservation
- capercaillie conservation
- re-introduction of species

People

Creation of paths and long-distance routes

Provision of ranger services

Improvement of visitor infrastructure

Formulating approaches to active travel

Place

Monitoring the Cairngorms Local Development Plan

Delivering housing

Contributing to the development of the wellbeing economy plan

Creation of a sustainable tourism action plan

In addition to delivery of our established objectives, we continue to give strategic focus to our work towards a sustainable nature-based, economic recovery from the impacts of COVID 19 in the Cairngorms, while at the same time, delivering urgent action to address climate change. Our 'Net Zero with Nature' Strategy and our Green Recovery Strategy were approved by our Board in 2020.

Performance against these objectives was strong. Targets for woodland expansion and restoration of peatland were exceeded; extensive consultation was undertaken, both with the community and with the partners to the National Park Partnership Plan, on a range of issues from active travel and local development to nature restoration; substantial path works were carried out; ranger services were extended, and visitor infrastructure developments included a new bike trail as well as improvements to visitor facilities.



The scale of the Park Authority's workforce and sphere of operations continues to expand. Overall, the Park Authority's responsibility for funds under management, primarily made available by Scottish Government, increased from £10.4m for 2021/22 to £13.4m in 2022/23.

Looking Forward

This dynamic, responsive organisational ethos will continue. The Park Authority will continue to look at new ways to operate to deliver our commitments in the current National Park Partnership Plan. This will include continuing our success in looking for alternative funding opportunities, including applications to funds such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and sponsorship opportunities. It also includes collaborating with partners to deliver improved services. We continue to strive for more efficient, and sustainable internal working practices through delivering against our Organisational Development Strategy.

Our future funding, from Scottish Government and from external funding partners, has remained at a similar level for 2023/24, allowing us to consolidate the work of previous years. The Seasonal Ranger Service will continue for a fourth year, while we augment this support for visitors with capital investment in visitor infrastructure. Over 2023/24 we will further build our capacity to deliver peatland restoration and through this work act on climate change.

In 2021/22 we secured approval from National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for the Heritage Horizons Cairngorms 2030 Programme. Our implementation of the Development Phase of this programme, alongside a wide range of partners, has continued through 2022/23, and represents a further significant step change in the Park Authority's scale of operations. This Development Phase has invested £3.8m, inclusive of £1.7m of NLHF funding, across more than 20 projects in scoping, trialling, and finalising plans for the 5-year, £42m delivery phase that we expect to commence in 2023/24. Projects cover conservation, rural regeneration, access, and sustainable transport amongst other areas of work.

Our budget for the 2023/24 financial year, approved by the board in March 2023, provides total funds under management for the year ahead of £13.6m. Our next 4-year Corporate Plan, spanning 2023 to 2027, was approved by the Board at its meeting on 24th March 2023.



Performance monitoring

The various aspects of the Park Authority's performance – financial, organisational, and operational - are reported over the course of the year to the Authority's Board and its sub-committees. These reports are available on our website.

By the nature of the Park Authority's role, in seeking to lead collaborative effort to tackle the big issues for the Cairngorms, performance is rarely entirely controllable by the Park Authority. Rather, achievement of objectives requires effective leadership and influencing, and collaboration and engagement with our partners, combined with our direct investment of finance and staff resources, to address our priorities.

Risk management

Risk management and consideration of issues arising that may impact the delivery of our strategic corporate priorities are central to our management activities within the Park Authority. The Management Team reviews strategic risks at least quarterly, and we have developed and embedded risk management practices, together with project management processes, to take full cognisance of these core aspects of effective organisational and strategic control arrangements.

The Park Authority has developed a Strategic Risk Management Strategy and associated Strategic Risk Register, which, in tandem with our corporate performance and monitoring system, details the key issues and risks around delivery of our Corporate Plan together with the strategic objectives and key performance indicators set out in that plan. The Board receives detailed reports and comments on key issues and risks twice annually, with the Board's Audit and Risk Committee reviewing strategic risk management between these Board meetings.

Significant projects also have their own embedded risk registers and risk mitigation plans, for example, we have established separate risk registers to support the delivery of the Heritage Horizons Cairngorms 2030 Programme. More information on risk and internal controls can be found in the Governance Statement within this document and in our Risk Management Strategy.

The key risks faced by the Park Authority included:



- **Financial resources:** in-year adjustments to funding provided by Scottish Government; difficulties in planning future programmes within the context of potential financial constraints.
- **Human resources:** increased workload and high activity generated from concurrent programmes of activity - corporate plan and large-scale projects.
- **Technical issues:** cyber-security issues with associated threats of fraud and theft.

PERFORMANCE REPORT: PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

This section provides information on the performance of the organisation over the year ended 31 March 2023, our aims and priorities, our achievements and financial results.

1.4 Strategic Aims and Priorities 2022/23 and beyond

We contribute to delivery of the long-term outcomes in the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022-27 (NPPP) through working to achieve our agreed Corporate Plan strategic objectives.

Our strategic aims and priorities are set out across the three themes of Nature and climate, People, and Place. Each of these themes sets out a number of priority outcomes in line with the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan. Corporate Services and Communications support the main themes and their outcomes. The Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers in August 2022.

Nature – a carbon negative and biodiversity rich National Park with better functioning, better connected and more resilient ecosystems.

Outcomes:

1. Moorland is more diverse,
2. Woodland is expanding,
3. Peatlands are restored,
4. Rivers are reconnected,
5. Species are recovering,
6. Farming is carbon neutral.



People – a wellbeing economy that works for all the people of the Cairngorms.

Outcomes:

1. Communities are empowered,
2. Wellbeing comes first,
3. Green jobs are growing,
4. The Cairngorms is a Park for All,
5. Volunteering is on the rise,
6. Young people stay and thrive.

Place – a place that people want to live in, work in and visit that works for all.

Outcomes:

1. Housing is more affordable,
2. Transport is more sustainable,
3. Communities are connected,
4. Visitor facilities are first class,
5. Cultural heritage is celebrated.

Support themes

The delivery of the themes and priorities is supported by the Communications and Corporate Services teams. Our Communications team works with visitors, communities, and stakeholders to raise the profile of the Park and create a connection and commitment to care for it. Our Corporate Services team ensures the delivery of effective, efficient, and sustainable services in addition to promoting the highest standards of governance, both within the Park Authority itself and also in working with community and voluntary organisations involved in delivery of NPPP priorities.

Corporate services

The aim of the Corporate Services team is to deliver effective, efficient, and sustainable services, promoting the highest standards of governance to support delivery of the Corporate Plan and Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan by the Park Authority and our community and charity partners. We also play an active role in the Environment and Economy Leaders' Group.



Priorities:

- Implement the Organisational Development Strategy and embed the organisational and cultural improvements to make the Park authority the best small public body in Scotland.
- Ensure that our accommodation and its infrastructure support the delivery of the Organisational Development Strategy.
- Deliver ongoing service improvement, including appropriate shared services development and operation, to the Park Authority, other public bodies and the community and charitable organisations we support.
- Promote and support the highest standards of governance and management, including equalities actions, within the Park Authority, other public bodies and the community and charitable organisations we support.

Communications and engagement

Communicating with a wide range of stakeholders – from local residents to visitors, businesses and land managers – is vital for the work of the Park Authority. It supports the work being undertaken across the organisation to deliver on the Nature and Climate, People and Place priorities outlined in our National Park Partnership Plan. Our role is to raise the profile of the National Park and create meaningful connections between key audiences and the landscape of the Cairngorms. We are seeking to build a community of people who actively support and care for the National Park and who benefit from doing so.

Priorities:

- Deliver the Communication and Engagement Strategy and increase awareness, engagement and involvement with the National Park.
- Coordinate engagement for our Cairngorms 2030 programme and tell the story as it progresses, helping stakeholders see their role in tackling the nature and climate crises.
- Ensure high quality internal communications that help deliver the key priorities of the Corporate Plan.
- Celebrate a diverse range of perspectives and experiences in our communications, helping the Cairngorms become a 'Park for All' where everyone is welcome.



1.5 Key Issues and Risks

Strategic delivery

Delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan will test the potential for enhanced approaches to conservation and the protection of endangered species, including delivery of outcomes on wildlife crime.

Financial resources

The Scottish Government's continued and heightened concerns on forward stability of current financial allocations presents the risk of in-year adjustments, and uncertainty over future year funding levels. The opportunity to access UK Government funding to replace EU losses is unclear and the impact of wider changes to agri-environment schemes also remains uncertain. Constraints on public sector finances may restrict our capacity to allocate sufficient resources to deliver the corporate plan.

Human resources

Delivery of externally funded projects has become an intrinsic part of our operational planning so that we maintain the capacity of the organisation to achieve project outcomes, while working in an increasingly competitive and restricted recruitment climate.

Technical issues

The Authority recognises dependency on information technology for effective and efficient operations. The incidence of cybercrime increases the need for investment in both security measures and resourcing of IT services. Business continuity planning remains a focus.

1.6 Financial Performance Summary

This section provides a summary of the Park Authority's financial performance for the year against the Board approved budget and grant-in-aid awarded by the Scottish Government.

The Park Authority is expected to manage its budget in accordance with its Financial Memorandum and the Scottish Public Finance Manuals, and to deliver an outturn for the financial year within Scottish Government's budget limits. The commentary and tables below show how the budgets agreed by the Board have been applied during the year with comparisons to previous years' income and expenditure.



Income

The main source of our funding for the year was grant-in-aid funding from our sponsoring body, the Environment and Forestry Directorate, Natural Resources Division, of the Scottish Government.

We also acted as Accountable Body for the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) supporting significant ongoing projects: the delivery phase of the Capercaillie Framework and the development phase of the Cairngorms 2030 Project (Heritage Horizons).

The grant-in-aid settlement represents an agreed budget with our sponsoring department with an agreed level of funding support representing the Park Authority's allocations of Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) which covers all expenditure net of income from all other sources. DEL is further split between cash allocations to meet operational cost (resource or RDEL) and capital expenditure (capital or CDEL) and non-cash allocations. The non-cash allocation covers depreciation and impairment of non-current assets, which are capitalised tangible and intangible assets and now include, following the introduction of IFRS 16, right-of-use assets (rental properties, leased vehicles and leased office equipment) carried in the Statement of Financial Position at the year end.

The grant-in-aid settlement for 2022/23 was again favourable and increased in total by £1.671m with uplifts for both peatland restoration, a capital increase of £0.806m (though an increase of £1.732m was originally offered and reflected in the budget) and a capital increase of £0.178m for conservation, specifically for nature biodiversity and recovery. Funding received in 2021/22 to reduce the impact of COVID19 on activities within the Park (£0.5m) was not provided again in 2022/23. However, an additional £0.5m was received to support visitor management in the Park.

The following income and expenditure account provides a summary of our actual financial performance, cash, and non-cash, for the year against the final budget. This final budget equates to the original budget, presented to the Board on 25th March 2022, with the addition of a £0.350m capital grant for nature recovery.



Income and expenditure			
	Outturn	Budget	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income			
Grant-in-aid Resource funding	7,472	7,472	-
Grant-in-aid Capital funding general	600	600	-
Grant-in-aid Capital funding peatland recovery	2,214	2,962	(748)
Grant-in-aid Capital funding nature recovery	350	350	-
	10,636	11,384	(748)
Other generated income*	898	182	716
Community Led Local Development (CLLD)	366	-	366
Cairngorms Capercaillie project	474	915	(441)
Heritage Horizons	1,031	2,753	(1,722)
	2,769	3,850	(1,081)
Total income	13,405	15,234	(1,829)
Expenditure			
Staff and board costs**	5,071	4,624	447
Running costs	796	809	(13)
Operational plan costs	2,818	2,834	(16)
Peatland capital spend	1,945	2,962	(1,017)
Community Led Local Development (CLLD)	366	-	366
Nature Recovery capital spend	348	350	(2)
Cairngorms Capercaillie project	474	915	(441)
Heritage Horizons	1,031	2,753	(1,722)
Total expenditure	12,849	15,247	(2,398)
Surplus/(deficit) on cash activities	556	(13)	569
Depreciation (non-cash)	321	-	321
Outturn taken to Taxpayers' reserves	235	(13)	248

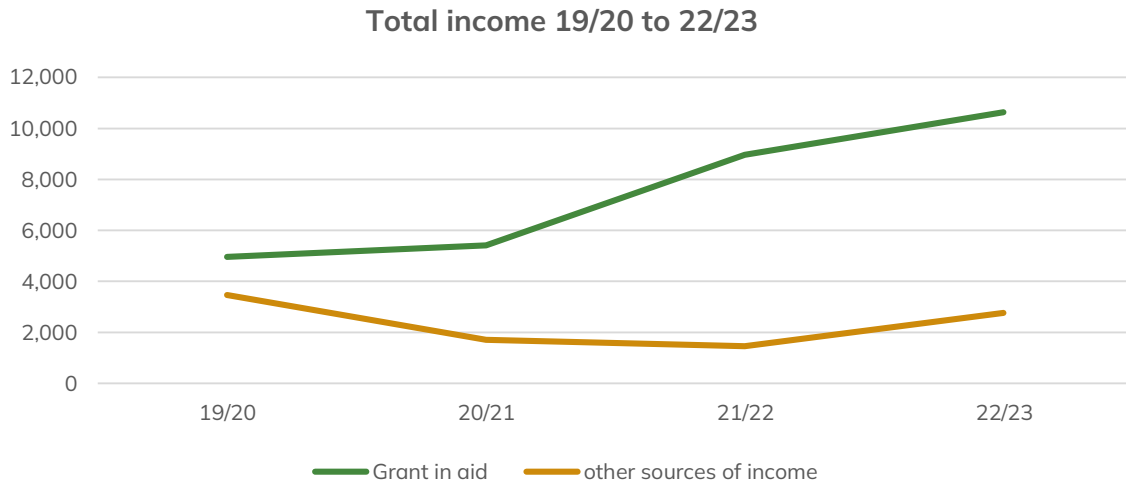
*includes project staff costs recovered

**includes project staff costs

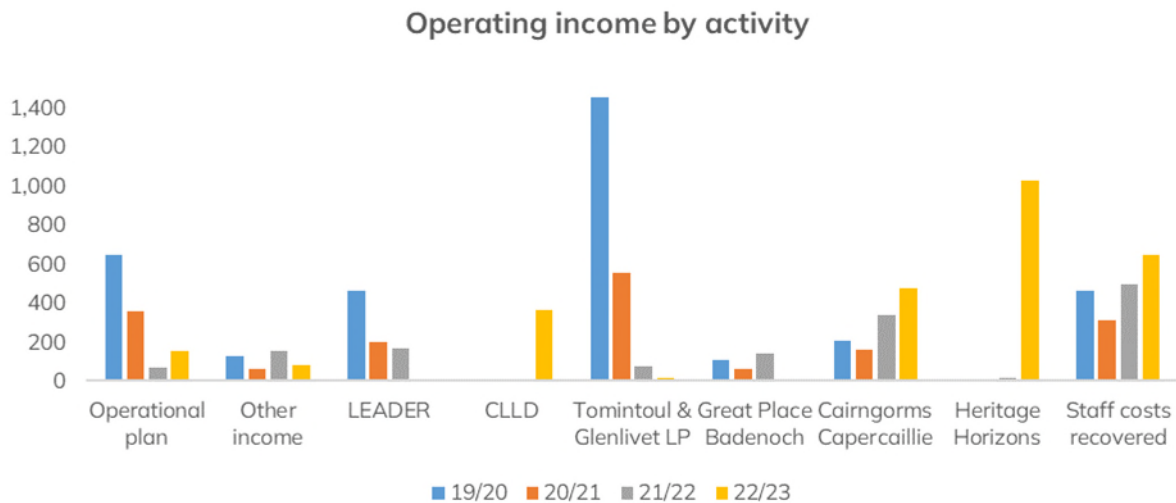
Income from all other sources, primarily partner funding, also increased over that received in 2021/22. Project income increase by £1.313m, with ongoing projects (Cairngorms Capercaillie and Heritage Horizons) gaining momentum after the disruption caused by COVID19 in the prior year, and increased activity in the development phase of the Heritage Horizon project. However, activity on Heritage Horizons has extended into 2023/24 and consequently expenditure was delayed.



Overall total income has grown by 158% in total since 2019/20, with grant-in-aid growing by 214%, as is shown by the graph below:



The sources of other generated income are variable depending on the progress of projects during a financial year and changes to the emphasis and objectives in the corporate plan. For the four years since 2019/20, the split of the income, including completed projects, significant ongoing projects and operational plan activity is:



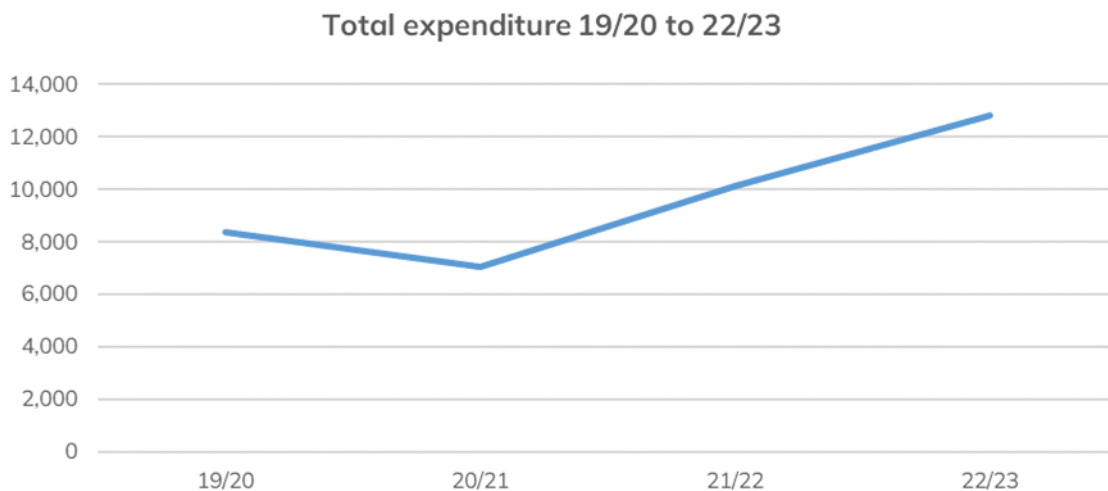
Income from operational plan activities has consistently reduced over the period, reflecting the change in emphasis towards significant ongoing projects supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the realignment of objectives in this transitional year (before the next Park Partnership Plan) and towards Cairngorms 2030.

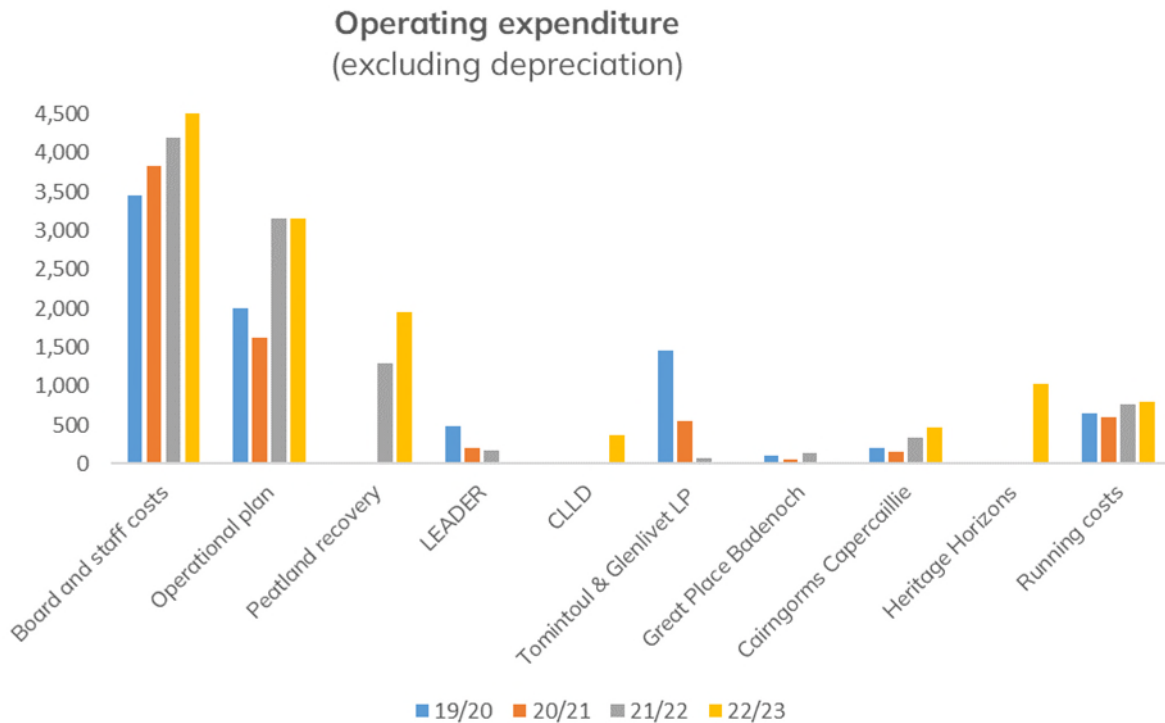


The LEADER programme has been replaced by the Scottish Government funded Community Led Local Development (CLLD) programme, which commenced during the year and the results of which are included in operational and other generated outcome totals. While the Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership closed in 21/22 there is a five-year management and maintenance period ending in early 2026/27, with minimal spend in the year. The delivery phase of the Cairngorms Capercaillie project will end in 2023/24, as does the development phase of the Heritage Horizons project. From minimal spend in 2021/22 the spend and matched recovery for Heritage Horizons in 2022/23 was £1.03m.

Operating expenditure

Overall, the increase in income is matched by an increase in expenditure, irrespective of source.





Staff costs, including Board fees, net of recoveries, accounted for 33% of total income (2021/22 35.4%). As a percentage of the grant-in-aid received this was 41.6% (2021/22 41.1%).

By agreement, the Scottish Government reduced resource grant-in-aid in the autumn of 2022 by £0.117m to assist in meeting continued financial pressures. This reduction was subsequently reversed, and while we were able to utilise this late funding adjustment, unfortunately we were not able to commit it fully, resulting in a small resource surplus for the year of £0.018m.

We exceeded our target for hectares of peatland restoration during the year, but these were delivered at a lower cost than originally anticipated, and consequently, we were unable to utilise the full capital award drawn down for peatland recovery. This resulted in a substantial capital underspend on the peatland award of £0.269m.



Non-cash

A non-cash budget of £0.510m was allocated by Scottish Government for 2022/23 (21/22 £0.340m) to cover depreciation of capitalised intangible and tangible assets and right-of-use assets.

Reconciliation of cash spend surplus

	£'000
Surplus on cash activities	556
Capitalised tangible, intangible and right of use assets	(267)
Actual cash surplus	<u>289</u>
Represented by	
Underspend on Peatland recovery capital grant	269
Underspend on resource grant	18
Underspend on nature recovery capital grant	2
	<u>289</u>

Transfer to Taxpayer's funds

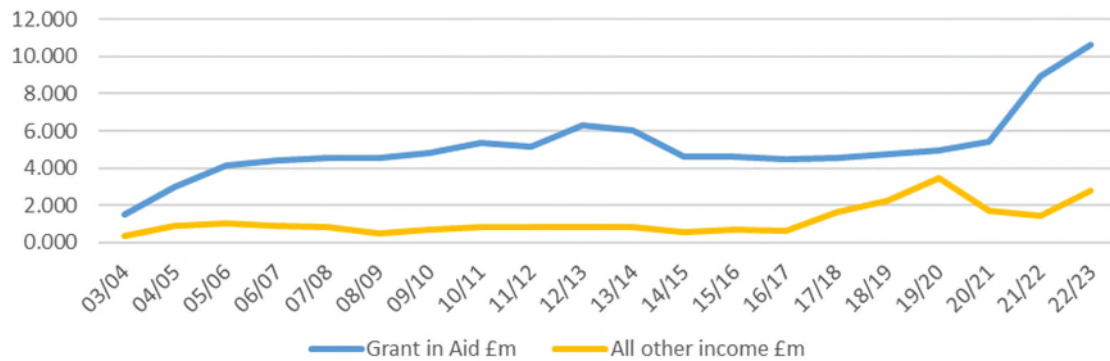
We are transferring £0.235m for the year (2022: £0.106m) to Taxpayers' equity, summarised in the table below, which is considered another excellent outturn.

	£,000
Total cash grant-in-aid received	10,636
Less net expenditure	(10,080)
Less depreciation	<u>(321)</u>
Transfer for year to Taxpayers' Equity	<u>235</u>

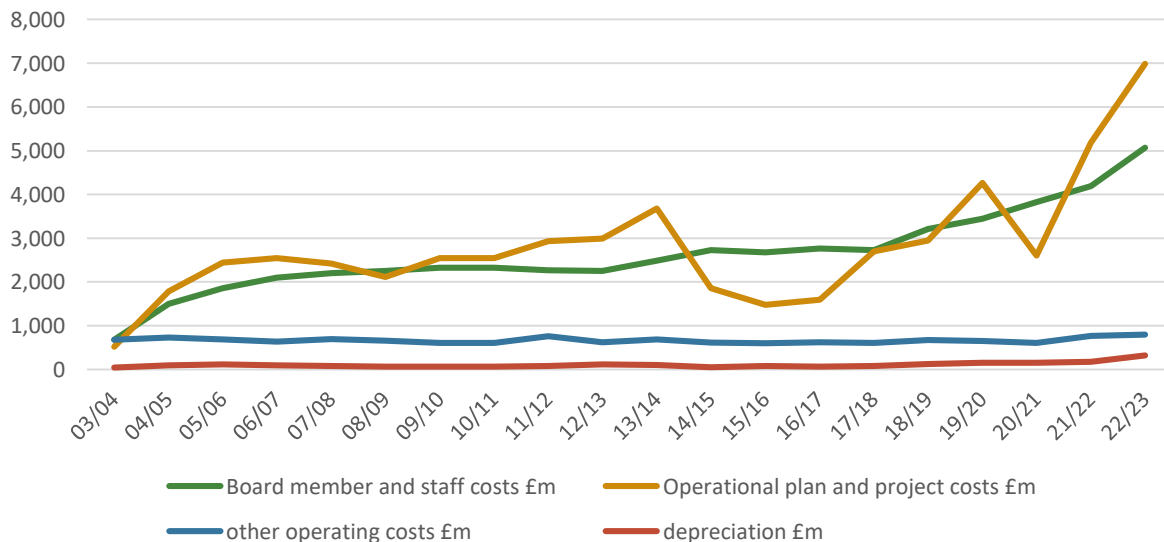
20 years on...

The report and accounts for 2022/23 are the 20th since the establishment of the Park Authority. The establishment date was 25 March 2003 with the Park Authority becoming fully operational, taking on all its statutory powers, on 1st September 2003.

Total **income** in the first year was £1.927m and is now £13.405m.



Total **expenditure** in the first year was £1,915m and is now £13.170m.



In the 20 years since its establishment, £126.75m has been invested in the Park (£102.91m from grant-in-aid and £23.84m from all other sources).

Staff numbers have grown from 35 (noted in the accounts at 31 March 2003) to 111. Of those 35, seven, including one Director, remain in post. One of the original board members has served continuously throughout the two decades and one of the original staff members joined the Board in September 2023.

The success and achievements of the Park Authority, its partners and staff will be celebrated throughout 2023/24.

Changes in non-current assets

Movements in non-current assets are shown in notes 9, 10 and 11.



Charitable donations

There were no charitable donations made in the year or in the previous year.

Relationship with suppliers and partners

Our supplier payment policy complies with the terms of the Better Payment Practice Code. During the year to 31 March 2023, the time taken to pay creditors achieved an average of 9.11 days (2022: 9.07 days) against a target of 10 days (2022: 10 days), with 73.16% (2022: 67.4%) of payments being made by the target date.

Anti-bribery and corruption

The Park Authority has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against, fraud, bribery and corruption reflected in clear policies on conduct expected from staff and on hospitality.

During the year a cyber-based fraud was identified, which resulted in a financial loss of £15,665. Once the fraud was identified all bank transactions were paused and only recommenced following an internal investigation and revision of policies and procedures. There were no reports of fraud in 2021/22.

Ministerial Direction

There were no ministerial directions received from Scottish Government in 2022/23.

1.7 Operating Performance Summary

As set out in the preliminary sections of this report, the Park Authority has made significant, positive progress in the realisation of our strategic objectives in this interim year between the four-year Corporate Plans for 2018-22 and 2023-2027. The Park Authority's Board receives quarterly updates from the Chief Executive on activities and performance to supplement the corporate performance reports linked above. The most recent such report is available at:

[CEO report 8 September 2023](#)

All quarterly update reports are published on our website to allow ongoing, open public awareness of the work of the Park Authority. We have distilled the key highlights and outstanding issues in the delivery of our strategic aims in the following sections of this Annual Report.



2022/23 Activity Highlights

Nature and climate

Woodland expansion

Our woodland expansion target of 5,000 ha over a five-year period was met, with the approval of 5,195 ha of new woodland by July 2022 – 43% of this expansion was delivered through natural regeneration, of which 96% consisted of native species. Our delivery through supporting the Forestry Grant Scheme and our Woodland Challenge Funding continued, with significant interest coming from land managers in woodland expansion funding, complemented by wider action on deer management.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan

The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (2019–2024) is delivered by a wide range of partners including Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs), land managers, academic and public sector organisations. Progress towards the three main aims of landscape-scale conservation, action for priority species and involving people is overseen by the Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group.

Peatland restoration

Capital funding in grant awards to land managers for peatland restoration totalled £1.945m. 15 projects were completed in 2022/23, with an estimated 1,080 ha of peatland brought into restoration. This exceeds the target of 905 ha, and the achievement of more than 1,000 ha is a notable milestone for the Park Authority.

Nature restoration

The Park Authority continues to support and encourage coordination between Catchment Management Partnerships on the Spey, Dee and Esk. These partnerships have been successful in attracting over £0.5 m from the Nature Restoration Fund towards the design, delivery and monitoring of freshwater restoration in the Park.

Working with partners the Park Authority has developed a raptor conservation strategy and begun recruitment for a Raptor Conservation Officer. This strategy and project will work towards eliminating raptor persecution as a barrier to the recovery of raptors. New approaches to tagging raptors are being trialled with the help of our partners.



Significant work has taken place in engagement with land managers, fisheries, residents, and agencies over the Park Authority's proposal to release beaver into the upper Spey catchment later in 2023. Informal engagement with land managers and residents took the form of drop-in sessions in communities.

Plans are underway for the release of wildcats into the National Park in summer 2023. The Park Authority is represented on the Saving Wildcats project board and delivery group. The Park Authority is working closely with The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland on two further captive breeding and release programmes this year: pine hoverfly and Dark Bordered Beauty moth, an extremely rare moth found in only four sites in the UK - three of which are in the Cairngorms National Park.

The Park Authority continues to act as lead accountable body for the partnership delivering the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project, and through this work, which is funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), contributes to the delivery of the Capercaillie Framework. Capercaillie habitats are hybrid spaces where people and nature coexist. Involving people to secure wider ownership of solutions and treating conservation as a socio-economic issue as well as an ecological one is now critical to prevent extinction in Scotland. The project complements the ongoing, ecologically focussed work being done by agencies and organisations with a people focussed approach, empowering communities of place and interest to develop and take ownership for their own ideas as to how they can play their part in capercaillie conservation. Results of the national survey and genetic study will be available in summer 2023.

Our work with Deer Management Groups (DMGs) to deliver public interest priorities has continued. Strategic Land Use Plans for three DMGs in the Park have been presented for consideration, with the aim of developing delivery plans based around how estates can benefit from natural capital.

People

Paths and Long-distance Routes

Substantial new path works have been completed on the Speyside Way, including those in Anagach Woods, and a new community led section at Kincaig, which the Park Authority supported. Access issues are being addressed with the replacement of "rambler" style gates with more accessible ones. The Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland considered revised design options for the re-routing of



the Braemar to Keiloch Path; this path is intended to be built during 2023/24 and will form part of the extended Deeside Way in due course.

Ranger Services

With the benefit of continued funding, we have enhanced our Ranger Services. Our team of full-time rangers has been supported by youth and trainee rangers, and by a team of seasonal colleagues. The Park Authority Rangers have commenced a new path assessment process using a mobile path mapping application that populates the Cairngorms National Park Authority GIS. A gathering of all Ranger Services in the Park took place in early March at Glen Tanar to agree on common ways of working and priorities. Recruitment of Seasonal Rangers took place during January/ February with the first Seasonal Rangers starting work on 13 March to prepare for Easter, and a further intake starting in mid-April.

Tourism Infrastructure

The Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan was approved by the Board in November and submitted to VisitScotland at the end of 2022. Work is now under way to identify projects that can be delivered in the short term. Six projects have been supported to a value of nearly £350,000 through the Visitor Infrastructure Improvement Programme. This includes two path improvement projects on Rothiemurchus Estate, creation of a new blue bike trail at Laggan Wolftrax, refurbishment of Burnfield Toilets in Grantown with motorhome waste disposal facilities, Cairngorm Mountain Sense of Arrival project and Glen Doll overflow carpark improvements. A new car park for access to Beinn a' Ghlo in Atholl is now complete, delivered by the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland.

Volunteering and Health Walks

A new intake of 30 Volunteer Rangers took place in late 2022 with training provided in the early part of 2023. The new volunteers will be out from late March initially "buddying up" with Volunteer Rangers who have been part of the programme for three years or more. The programme of Health Walks led by local volunteers has continued over winter. A very successful and well-attended Health Walk leaders' gathering and training day was held in Grantown in early February.

Youth Action Team

Nine people from the Cairngorms Youth Action Team attended a national youth residential event in Orkney in February. This aimed to build the youth voice to inform policy and governance as well as developing Youth Funds in Local Areas



to support youth-led projects. With the Cairngorms Youth LAG members having already been involved in managing youth funds via the Cairngorms Trust, they were seen by other groups as being leaders in the field and were involved in presenting on this to the other teams.

Active Travel

Work on the series of Active Travel projects has continued with draft concepts having been provided by the specialist consultants for the Active Aviemore and Badenoch communities projects. Five public engagement sessions were held to get community feedback on the ideas put forward with those in remaining areas due to be held in April/ May. Draft reports on the Active Travel network plan, E-bike plan and the Deeside Active and sustainable Transport plan have been received. A second workshop with stakeholders was held to consider a range of options from the initial engagement events and to further develop the Glenmore Transport Plan.

Place

Local Development Plan

Following adoption of the Cairngorms Local Development Plan (LDP) 2021 in March 2021 the Park Authority has been carrying out a two-year monitoring exercise and will report on this in September 2023. The National Planning Framework 4 came into force on 13 February 2023 and is a now formal part of the development plan. Work has begun on preparing the evidence report for the next LDP.

Housing Delivery

The Park Authority are continuing to support Cairngorms Business Partnership and several social enterprises with housing delivery projects. A series of meetings with Communities Housing Trust and Rural Housing Scotland has taken place to promote key developments, and liaison continues with those communities who are developing community-led housing projects. Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust are close to launching their 12 new affordable homes as part of a five-year community-led project which saw them purchase, demolish, and develop the former secondary school site in Tomintoul.

Wellbeing Economy Project and Economic Steering Group

Engagement events and online workshops were held during the year, as part of our work, in Partnership with Wellbeing Alliance (WEAll) Scotland, towards



development of cornerstone and business indicators. Findings were presented to the Wellbeing Economy Working Group and Economic Steering Group in December. This work is crucial in developing the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan in 2023. The key themes identified include Transport, Community, Health, Nature, Skills and Business.

Sustainable Tourism Action Plan

In December, the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan was submitted, alongside the National Park Partnership Plan and supporting documents, to Europarc in application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. As part of our assessment for the Charter, we will have a verification visit from a sustainable tourism expert from Romania and arrangements for that are currently being discussed, with a likely timescale of mid-May.

Communications and engagement

Communicating with residents, visitors, land managers, businesses and other stakeholders is vital for the work of the Park Authority and for the wider reputation of the Cairngorms National Park. It supports the work being undertaken across the organisation to deliver on the Nature and climate, People, and Place objectives set out in our National Park Partnership Plan.

Our role is to raise the profile of the National Park and create a connection and commitment to care for it with identified audiences, so they actively support the National Park and benefit from doing so. In particular, we deliver communications campaigns and activity that encourage audiences to adapt their behaviour and help the National Park achieve its net zero targets.

Amongst our priorities this year has been delivery of the Communication and Engagement Strategy to increase awareness, engagement, and involvement with the National Park. In order to achieve this, we have engaged a wide range of stakeholders in the work of the National Park and Park Authority, ensuring they have a voice and that their priorities are reflected in the materials we produce.

We have also coordinated communications and engagement activity for Cairngorms 2030, ensuring that this five-year, Lottery-funded programme delivers on its stated outcomes and engages identified target audiences.

We continue to deliver and support activity that ensures that everyone – no matter who they are, where they come from, what their beliefs or their needs are



– is welcome in the National Park. This includes widening participation from a range of under-represented groups for whom specific barriers to engagement exist.

Corporate Services

Organisational Development (OD) Strategy

Over the last 12 months, the Organisational Development (OD) Strategy has focussed on supporting staff through the changed working environment that the pandemic prompted, around hybrid working and hot desking, and ensuring staff welfare in this working environment. Going forward, an OD Programme Board has now been established to coordinate the development of revised Organisational Development Strategy during 2023/24 on the basis of several staff surveys, drop-in sessions, and collaborative feedback opportunities that have been implemented over the last year. Key themes for the OD strategy that have emerged from this collective feedback are around Infrastructure, Data Management, Staff Skills, Staff Resilience and Wellbeing; Organisational Culture and Values, Internal communication.

Staff Consultative Forum

Our Staff Consultative Forum continues to work effectively, throughout the last year. This has remained a very valuable conduit for staff consultation, which has complemented drop-in sessions for all staff where direct conversations have been held on any questions or ideas offered by all staff.

Shared services

We have worked collaboratively with our colleagues at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority over a number of years, sharing both expertise and resources. 2022/23 saw a renewed commitment to this partnership, with the aim of developing further resilience in our respective IT provisions, sharing expertise in organisational development and finding efficiencies to the benefit of both organisations and the wider public sector. We continue to work on the development of a shared GIS provision, a project that will bring to full collaboration during 2023/24.

The Park Authority also provides shared services to other organisations and groups, in particular continuing to provide HR advice and support to the Scottish Land Commission and facilities support to a range of community partners in their delivery of NPPP and community development objectives.



Information Technology and Cyber Security

Following the major modification of our IT infrastructure over the course of the past two years, 2022/23 has seen the organisation consolidate the benefits of a hybrid working environment. Cyber security remains a high priority, with particular attention given to reducing the risks inherent in the transition to cloud computing structures.

Audit

Our internal and external audit review processes continue to confirm the effectiveness and efficiency of our management and control systems.

Sustainability and climate change

The Park Authority continues to refine our internal monitoring methodology and participate in the national model established by Scottish Government for reporting on carbon emissions generated through our business activities.

We continue to engage with the actions and reporting duties linked to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Mandatory Public Bodies Climate Change Duties. Annual Reporting was completed and submitted to the Scottish Government in November 2022. The report covers the following areas: Governance, Management and Strategy; Emissions, Targets and Projects; Adaptation; Procurement and Wider Influence; and Other Notable Activities.

Emissions for 2022/23 were calculated at 58 estimated tonnes of CO₂ (tCO₂e), a reduction of 91 tCO₂e (more than 60%) against our baseline year (2007/08). The most significant contributor to these emissions is that generated from business mileage, and we are managing this by increasing the proportion of hybrid and fully electric vehicles in our fleet.

Sustainability and climate change remain key underlying themes within our Corporate Plan and also within the National Park Partnership Plan, underpinning the strategic work of the Park Authority and all its partners in the National Park. It is an objective of the Partnership Plan to ensure that the Cairngorms National Park reaches Net Zero as soon as possible and contributes all it can to helping Scotland to meet its Net Zero commitments. We will monitor and report on the organisation's progress towards the achievement of Net Zero, and lead on empowering individual contribution to our Net Zero ambitions.



Future activities: 2023/24 Operational Year

The nature and climate crisis is at the core of the new Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan. The plan sets out how we will look after the Park and how we develop and deliver a well-being economy that works for the people of the Cairngorms whilst also restoring nature and delivering net zero. It is our duty to deliver the Partnership Plan, along with our partners, to look after and enhance this special place for the people of Scotland.

The Corporate Plan 2023-2027 describes how the Cairngorms National Park Authority will contribute to the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027. It also sets out how the Park Authority plans to achieve our aim of being ‘the best small public body in Scotland’ and how we will support Scottish Government across its policy priorities.

Corporate Plan 2023-2027

Our ambition is set out across three themes – Nature and climate, People, and Place. These are the themes of the National Park Partnership Plan, which sets out the role of the National Park Authority in helping to deliver the Plan’s objectives. This is underpinned by our corporate functions and communications and engagement work. Over 100 organisations are listed in the Partnership Plan document, and it is our intention to work in partnership with a range of organisations, communities, land managers, businesses and others to deliver real change on the ground. The Park Authority has a good track record of using its funding to leverage significant support into the Cairngorms and we will continue to do this. The Partnership Plan focuses on the big issues in the National Park and our role is to work with all to tackle those key challenges and come up with practical solutions.

Leadership from Scottish Government is clear around the nature and climate crisis, the need to have a just transition and the need to develop an economy that works for all. There is significant change likely to happen in Scotland over the coming years that will have a significant impact on the Park and how the Park Authority operates. This includes the Nature/ Environment Bill, Land Reform Bill, and Agriculture Bill, all due within this parliamentary term. There are also proposals for at least one new National Park in Scotland. The Park Authority will continue to work closely with public sector partners through working groups and through strategic engagement in entities such as the Environment and Economy



Leaders' Group, Scottish Forum on Natural Capital etc. and across the full range of Scottish Government functions.

The Park Authority will continue to look at new ways to operate as an organisation to deliver our commitments in this plan period. This includes looking for alternative funding streams, from applications to the likes of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to sponsorship opportunities, green finance and other mechanisms. It will also include working collaboratively with partners to deliver improved services on the ground.

The Park Authority wants to be the best small public body in Scotland. The Best Companies Survey has consistently shown that we are a people-orientated organisation that is performing well for its employees. The Park Authority will build on our Organisational Development Strategy and will strive to ensure a high-performance culture and take forward new opportunities where they arise to deliver for the National Park. We will also be innovative, quick to act and to empower staff to deliver the strategies that are put in place by the Park Authority board. Diversity and equality will be a key component of our work as the Park Authority.

Performance monitoring

We have set out indicators for each of the key objectives in the Partnership Plan and these will be measured and monitored across the next five years. By nature of the Park Authority's role – seeking to lead collaborative effort in tackling the big issues for the Cairngorms – these 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.

Grant Moir
Chief Executive and Accountable Officer
24 November, 2023



2 ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

The accountability report comprises:

- a statement on corporate governance, explaining the composition and organisation of the Authority's governance structures and how these support the achievement of our aims,
- a report on remuneration and staffing, and
- disclosures on matters on which the Authority is accountable to Parliament.

2.1 Corporate Governance Report

2.1.1 Directors' Report

The Directors' Report sets out the key aspects of the internal organisational change and development within the Park Authority during the year to 31 March 2023.

The Board

Board members who served throughout the year are listed on page 2. Board members' profiles can be found at <http://cairngorms.co.uk/authority/board/> where a link to members' Register of Interests may also be found.

Fees paid to Board members are noted on page 59 together with the total amount of reimbursed expenses paid in the year – these figures are not subject to audit. No pension contributions are made for any Board member.

The Senior Management Team

The Chief Executive, who is also the Accountable Officer, is Grant Moir. The names of the Directors, who all served throughout the year, are listed on pages 3 and 4.

Board Development and Governance

The Park Authority continues to recognise the importance of training and development to ensure that all staff and Board members have the skills required to deliver their role in the context of the organisation's enabling and partnership ethos. Appropriate Board training and development processes support the good governance arrangements set out in the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct.



Following on from the achievements made during 2021/22, the Board has continued a process of self-evaluation of effectiveness and governance in order to fulfil the Leadership aspirations set out in the first Organisational Development Strategy (2015/16). During 2022/23, the matrix of Board skills was updated with members assessing their own strengths against this matrix. This process will be completed in 2023/24 when the new public appointees take their places on the Board. The Board also held a self-assessment workshop and review in January 2023.

Staff Development and Management

The strategic policy for workforce management balances operational needs against delivering the maximum potential flexibility in making budget prioritisation decisions. Half of our staff group have worked for the Authority for fewer than two years; in the main these colleagues are engaged on short term seasonal contracts, or have been recruited to posts to support ongoing project work (e.g. Heritage Horizons Cairngorms 2030). New staff have been welcomed into the organisation through a variety of means, including all-staff events, the activities of the Staff Consultative Committee and a staff survey with follow-up activities.

The Park Authority aspires to be "the best small public body In Scotland" - to be innovative, quick to act and to empower staff to deliver the strategies that are put in place by the Board. Flexible working within a hybrid working environment provides opportunity for our staff to achieve an appropriate work-life balance while meeting the needs of the organisation. Over the past year, we have continued to embed our process of regular monthly performance development conversations (PDCs) and have provided sufficient budget to support identified training needs.

The Park Authority maintains oversight of its management of sickness absence through regular review of performance at Board and Management team level. Sickness absence is included as a key performance indicator in the Park Authority's corporate performance framework. In 2022/23 the average number of days lost through sickness absence was 4.93 days per person including COVID absences (2022: 4.93 days per person); and 3.56 days per person excluding COVID absences (2022: 3.3 days excluding COVID absences).



Sustainability reporting and environmental matters

A key purpose of the Park Authority is to promote partnership working and give leadership to all the bodies and agencies involved in the sustainable development of the National Park. Through coordinating development and collective agreement of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan, the Park Authority aims to ensure the collective and co-ordinated delivery of the three themes of the Partnership Plan. Thus, the Park Authority leads others in ensuring that we are all living in, or working and caring for, the Cairngorms National Park in such a way that it remains, and wherever possible is enhanced, to be enjoyed by future generations. Sustainability and environmental considerations are therefore at the heart of everything this organisation does.

In 2019, the Park Authority initiated the planning process towards our becoming a net zero emission organisation by 2045 and achieving the even more challenging objective of realising a 75% reduction in our emissions by 2030, through our Board's consideration of the "Net Zero with Nature" paper (December 2019). The Park Authority followed this up by coordinating the Cairngorms Net Zero with Nature conference in Aviemore in early March 2020. We continue this work and have distilled our future strategic objectives around this objective in our Corporate Plan 2023-27, while we have coordinated the incorporation of key climate action objectives into the National Park Partnership Plan.

The Park Authority continues to reduce its CO₂ emissions, with latest business emissions calculated at 58.4 tonnes, a reduction of over 60% against the baseline year (2007/08). The ongoing trend evidences the Park Authority's commitment to driving down its own business emissions while establishing a leadership direction for others within the Park.

Illustrations of our wider priority to deliver sustainability are presented throughout this report.

Social, community and human rights issues

Our work on sustainability and the environment is also central to our activities around social and community development. Conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park is essential if the Park is to build and maintain a diverse and vibrant economy.



The Park Authority's work in this area spans support for sustainable business development within the National Park, to promoting development of affordable housing, to establishing partnerships with individual communities in developing and delivering those communities' action plans, and more widely to engage with community planning partnerships.

Our various community development activities, support for community action planning and community led local development all seek to engage communities in identifying both needs and solutions to ensure their long-term sustainability. We seek to influence national funding to ensure that the Cairngorms receives funding to support community led development, in order to ensure this critical area of work continues.

Diversity

The Cairngorms National Park Authority is committed to promoting equality both as an employer and through the work it does.

As a public body, the Park Authority must meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Every four years the Authority is required to develop a set of equality outcomes, mainstream equality, gather employee information, review procurement procedures, and publish these materials. This report was last published in April 2021, with a follow-up report published in April 2023, providing an update on how we have been mainstreaming equalities, as well as setting out the progress made on our Equality Outcomes over the last 2 years. The full report can be found at: [Update on Equality Outcomes 2021 - 2025](#)

There has been significant equalities activity across the organisation in the last 12–18 months, but the key highlights are as follows.

Gender Pay Gap

The Gender pay gap for 2022/23 was 9.55%, which is lower than the most recently reported pay gap for Scotland (10.1% 2021). This is the lowest the gender pay gap has been for the Park Authority since we started reporting this data. The Park Authority's Gender Pay Gap has been on the downward trajectory for the last 6 years.



LGBT Charter and Action Plan

The Park Authority signed up to the LGBT Charter during 2021/22. The Charter Action Plan was approved by our Management Team in January 2023, and we hope to achieve accreditation within the next 18 months. Significant work has already been delivered, including a History Month campaign during February 2023.

Internal Equality Group

The Park Authority developed an Internal Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Advocacy Group in winter 2021. This is an advisory group, comprising staff across the organisation, tasked with commenting on the implementation and embedding of equalities actions. Specifically, the group ensures that equality and diversity requirements are suitably addressed within the organisation by raising awareness and reinforcing the message that equality and diversity are “everyone’s business”. They are tasked also with finding practical solutions to any barriers that may present themselves in delivering the Authority’s aspirations and obligations around equality and diversity.

External Equality Advisory Panel (EAP)

The EAP has gone from strength to strength since it was established in September 2020. There are 11 members, all of whom volunteer their time, equalities expertise and enthusiasm to help our staff embed equalities and inclusion in all our work. They provide up to date, authoritative and evidence-based advice and guidance on equality and inclusive practice and approaches.

Alzheimer Centre

Alzheimer Scotland’s first Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre, at Badaguish Outdoor Centre near Aviemore, opened in April 2023. The unique centre enables people with dementia and their family and carers to experience the benefits of green health activities. Alzheimer Scotland believes that access to the outdoors is essential for people living with dementia and their carers. People living with dementia can be at risk of becoming socially isolated, lonely, and depressed, and as a result often develop an indoor lifestyle. Spending time outdoors can provide instant benefits, including reducing both the stress and distress associated with dementia, increasing and improving physical activity, providing mentally engaging activities, and providing opportunities to learn new skills and hobbies or rediscover old ones.



National Park Partnership Plan Consultation Process.

The new National Park Partnership Plan was formally approved by our Board in June 2022, following an extensive consultation period, during which 1,453 responses were received online, via email and by post, (as compared with a total of 319 for the equivalent consultation five years ago). We also gathered equalities and demographic data from the respondents. Results were mixed, and when compared to previous consultation data gathered, showed increased engagement across some minority groups (sex, and disability age range), but poorer engagement across others (ethnicity). However, the key success is that we have now gathered benchmark data against which to measure engagement in future.

Inclusive Imagery

Following feedback from the Equality Advisory panel that imagery on our social media and print channels was limited, we have commissioned over 1,000 people-based images over the past year, including those featuring under-represented groups or communities.

Volunteer Cairngorms

Volunteer Cairngorms has partnered with Home Start East Highland, the Rape and Sexual Violence Centre in Perth and Kinross, and Searchlight Asylum Seekers. We have facilitated days out with a purpose for Asylum seekers, via the 'Volunteer Experience Programme'. This Programme aims to provide safe, positive, and memorable experiences in The Cairngorms National Park by exploring volunteering for nature. There are currently 112 men connected with the charity, and we take them out in groups of twelve. Activities have included taking down deer fencing, mending paths in the mountains, and ring barking invasive species to support native growth.

ScotInform Community Engagement Report

The Park Authority commissioned a review of the community engagement work undertaken across the National Park in the last five years, including the development stages of the Heritage Horizons: Cairngorms 2030 programme. The report, delivered by Scotinform, identified that there is significant commitment to engaging with local and visitor communities, and that the Authority has achieved a notable volume of community engagement. The report was particularly helpful in informing how we might approach future engagement activity to better involve minority communities. It also provides guidance on how best to evaluate the effectiveness of existing and future community engagement.



Cairngorms Nature Festival

The Nature Festival was on-line in 2021 and in-person over a weekend in 2022. For 2023 it evolved into a 10-day festival (12 to 21 May), which gave more people the opportunity to engage with it. There were a number of events specifically for inclusion groups, including handcycling for disabled adults, inclusive canoeing for disabled families, outdoor climbing for adults with disabilities, adaptive biking and off-road wheelchair taster sessions, and guided adaptive biking for disabled families. A new website was created to support engagement with the festival and allowed events to be easily searched using a range of criteria including wheelchair access, toilets, family friendly activities and free events. On the events page, public transport and full accessibility information was displayed, including any hidden costs such as parking fees.

Cairngorms Green Recovery Fund

This was made available through a partnership between the Park Authority and The Cairngorms Trust with the aim of supporting the recovery of the economy of the Cairngorms from the widespread impacts of COVID-19, while protecting and enhancing the natural environment and seeking to address the ongoing impacts of climate change.

Engagement around the local elections of board members

We implemented a number of innovative activities to encourage people to put themselves forward for the local elections to the Board of the Park Authority, and also to encourage people to vote in these elections. Activities included arranging a number of public meetings in settlements across the Park, as well as developing videos to showcase a variety of resident voices from across the Park, speaking in their own words about the importance of both standing for election, and voting in the elections. There was a door drop to every household in the Park explaining the elections process and encouraging candidacy. The Park Authority produces a quarterly magazine ('Cairn') that is sent to every household in the Park. We included a full article on the elections process as part of Cairn magazine, encouraging diversity and exploding myths about the 'type of person' who usually stands for election. Our press release used the same kind of language. We created a series of simple 'explainers' on social media to break down the process of standing and voting into plain English.

Information and data security

The Authority's current IT and Data Management Strategy establishes the vision and direction for our investment and work in this area. We are working towards



“a high resilience, cloud-based IT infrastructure that will support effective and efficient remote working. We will seek to maximise “technology as a service” offerings that include moving elements of our service to managed service and/ or cloud provision where it is supported as best value service provision. This will reduce in-house technical skills needs and reduce over-reliance on individual staff presence and knowledge base, transferring this risk to third parties and consequently mitigating the risk of over-dependency on specialist staff.”

The Park Authority has had no instances of loss of data or personal information over the course of the year. The Governance Statement included in this Annual Statement and Accounts sets out more information on the Park Authority’s range of internal controls and review mechanisms to ensure data security, amongst other things.

In 2022/23 we received a total of 29 information requests (2022: 42). 97% of these requests were processed within the statutory timelines.

The Park Authority also has a fully developed suite of wider policies designed to ensure that feedback on our service standards, activities and performance can be given. This includes our complaints, grievance, and whistleblowing policies. We have a mature approach to internal and external feedback, ensuring appropriate investigations of feedback take place and seeking to draw improvement points out of investigations where appropriate, irrespective of whether the initiating point of complaint or negative feedback is upheld. Our seeking improvement in this way supports our organisational aim of being the best small public body in Scotland, and also in securing Best Value in accordance with national objectives.

Our information access and complaints policies are published on the Park Authority’s website.

2.1.2 Statement of National Park Authority’s Responsibilities

Under section 25(1) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, the Cairngorms National Park Authority is required to keep proper accounts and accounting records, prepare an account of its expenditure and receipts for each financial year in accordance with directions issued by the Scottish Ministers, and send the account to the Scottish Ministers by such time as they may direct.



The financial statements are to be prepared on the accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of its expenditure and cash flow for the financial year, and of the state of affairs as at the end of the financial year.

Auditors

The accounts of the Park Authority are audited by Mazars LLP who are appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland in accordance with paragraph 25(2) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. The audit for 2022/23 is the first carried out in their five-year appointment.

The costs relating to the statutory audit work for the financial year were £15,430 (2022: £11,820). No other fees for non-audit related services were paid in either year.

The Independent Auditor's report to the Park Authority, the Auditor General for Scotland and the Scottish Government is on pages 71 to 76.

2.1.3 Statement of Board's Responsibilities

The Board has a corporate responsibility for ensuring that the Park Authority fulfils the aims and objectives set by the Scottish Ministers and for promoting the economic, efficient, and effective use of staff and other resources in accordance with the principles of Best Value.

The Convener of the Board

The Convener is responsible to Scottish Ministers and is charged with ensuring that the Park Authority's policies and actions support the wider strategic policies of the Scottish Ministers, and that the Park Authority's affairs are conducted with probity.

The Convener has particular leadership responsibilities on:

- formulating the Board's strategy,
- ensuring that the Board, in making decisions, takes proper account of guidance provided by the Scottish Ministers/Department,
- promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources,
- encouraging high standard of propriety; and
- representing the view of the Board to the general public.



The Convener also ensures that all Board Members, when taking up office, are fully briefed on the terms of their duties, rights, and responsibilities, and receive appropriate training. They advise the Scottish Ministers when Board vacancies arise, with a view to ensuring an appropriate spread of balance of professional and financial expertise, and also assesses the performance of Board Members annually.

2.1.4 Statement of the Accountable Officer's Responsibilities

As Chief Executive of the Park Authority I am designated the Accountable Officer and am personally responsible for safeguarding the public funds for which I have sole charge, for ensuring the propriety and regularity in the handling of those funds, and for the day-to-day operations and management of the Park Authority. I am expected to act in accordance with the Management Statement/ Financial Memorandum for the Park Authority and within the terms of the relevant guidance in the Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM) and other instructions and guidance issued by Scottish Ministers, in particular the Memorandum to Accountable Officers for Other Public Bodies, and in particular:

- other relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis,
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis,
- state whether the applicable accounting standards have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements, and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to assume that the Park Authority will continue in operation.

Disclosure of Information to Auditors by the Accountable Officer

So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the Park Authority's auditors are unaware and I have taken all reasonable steps to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

Accountable Officer's statement on the Annual Accounts

As Accountable Officer I believe that the annual report and accounts as a whole are fair, balanced and understandable.



2.2 Governance Statement

Scope of responsibility

As Accountable Officer, I am responsible for maintaining sound systems of internal control that support the achievement of Cairngorms National Park Authority's policies, aims and objectives, while safeguarding the public funds and departmental assets for which I am personally responsible. These duties are in accordance with the Management Statement agreed between the Park Authority and Scottish Government, and also align with responsibilities assigned to me in the Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM).

The SPFM, issued by the Scottish Ministers, provides guidance to the Scottish Government and other relevant bodies on the proper handling of public funds, and sets out the relevant statutory, parliamentary and administrative requirements, emphasising the need for economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and promotes good practice and high standards of propriety. As Accountable Officer, I am responsible for ensuring that the Park Authority's internal control systems comply with the requirements of the SPFM.

The Management Statement established by Scottish Government sets out the role of the Park Authority's Board in providing leadership and governance. This Management Statement is scheduled to be replaced by the new standard 'Framework Agreement' between Scottish Government and its devolved public bodies, with the expectation that the new Agreement will come into force before the end of the 2023 calendar year.

The governance responsibilities of the Board are supported by Standing Orders last revised and adopted in 2019 and a Code of Conduct revised and adopted in 2022. The Board agreed a "Governance Responsibility Framework" document in 2021, setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of the board and its non-executive board members and senior managers in decision making to give added clarity and understanding to this aspect of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's governance. Our group of professional, senior staff advisors, complemented by appropriate Board training and development processes, support the good governance arrangements set out in the Standing Orders and Code of Conduct.

As a public body, the Park Authority is committed to accessibility, openness and accountability, and supports the highest standards in corporate governance.



Other than the documents referred to above and the resource allocation letters issued to me over the course of the year, there were no other written authorities provided to me over the course of 2022/23.

The operation of the Board and sub-committees

The Board comprises 19 members: 7 appointed by Ministers following nomination by five Councils with boundaries within the National Park, 7 appointed by Scottish Government through public appointments processes, and 5 directly elected within the wards of the Park. The Board therefore reflects a blend of different experience, backgrounds, and interests. The full Board meets regularly to consider strategy and performance against the current Corporate Plan. Meetings are scheduled quarterly, with additional meetings convened as required. To enable the Board to discharge its duties, all members receive appropriate and timely information in advance of meetings with all agendas and papers also placed in the public domain. Meetings are open to the public, save the occasional meeting held in private for various reasons of business and commercial confidentiality.

To ensure that the Board develops an understanding of the current and emerging issues, members also participate in informal discussion sessions to consider evolving policy issues and proposals. These meetings are held in private to provide for early-stage discussion and members' learning and development on a range of policy topics. The agreed strategic direction of the Park Authority is discussed and identified in full, open consideration at formal meetings.

The Board has established sub-committees: a Planning Committee (which deals with all aspects of the Park Authority's statutory planning responsibilities), together with Committees covering Governance, Resources, Performance, and Audit and Risk. This new Committee structure was adopted over the course of 2021/22. The revised structure was adopted to augment the governance of the Authority and enhance the Board's assurance role, as the Authority's scale of activities and support of significant programmes continues to increase. The Governance Committee has been created to support the Board and the Convener to maintain oversight of the effectiveness of governance arrangements across the organisation, including the effectiveness of the committee structure itself. All committees have delegated duties and responsibilities, set out in terms of reference agreed by the full board, to oversee and scrutinise the Park Authority's



deployment and management of resources. The operation of the new Committee structure was reviewed in 2022/23 and continued in place throughout the year.

The record of attendance at Board meetings can be found elsewhere in the Annual Report and Accounts.

The Audit and Risk Committee

The role of the Audit and Risk Committee is to provide effective governance over all aspects of the Park Authority's internal management control systems and the annual financial accounts and audit. It also takes a lead in strategic risk management, ensuring that risks impacting on strategic objectives are identified and mitigated, and that risk management is embedded throughout the Park Authority's operations. It is supported by the Park Authority's internal audit function, delivered by Azets, and by the external auditors, who were Grant Thornton LLP to the close of the 2021/22 accounts audit, and are now Mazars. Mazars have been appointed as the Park Authority's external auditors from commencement of the 2022/23 accounts audit. Both the internal and external auditors have independent access to the Committee and to its Convener. The Committee is tasked with monitoring the operation of the internal control function and bringing any material matters to the attention of the full Board. Detailed reports of all audit reviews are made available to both management and the Committee.

The Committee meets at least quarterly and reports to the board on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Park Authority's internal controls, and more widely on its work in the preceding year.

The Board has continued a process of self-evaluation of effectiveness and governance over the course of 2022/23; this process was initiated under the "Leadership" element of the first Organisational Development Strategy in 2015/16. A refresh of the board skills matrix, and self-evaluation of members against that matrix, was commenced in 2022/23 and will be completed in 2023/24 when the new public appointees take their places on the board. The board also held a self-assessment workshop and review in January 2023.

The Board has agreed a set of corporate performance indicators in order to improve its oversight of delivery against key strategic objectives and the Park Authority's Corporate Plan. A detailed performance report is submitted to the



Board twice yearly on delivery against key performance indicators. This report is typically considered at each June and December meeting, alongside a review of strategic risk management. These monitoring and control mechanisms support Board scrutiny over delivery of the Corporate Plan and National Park Partnership Plan priorities. There has been some variation in this reporting cycle over the 2022/23 year while the Park Authority went through a transitional year between its 2018 to 2022 Corporate Plan and its newly adopted 2023 to 2027 Corporate Plan. The Board agreed a Transitional Strategic Plan and budget for 2022/23 at its meeting in March 2022. Delivery against this has been reported in quarterly Chief Executive Officer's reports to the Board, while the end of year report will be presented to the Board at its meeting in September 2023.

Periodic reports from independent internal and external auditors form a key and essential element in informing my review as Accountable Officer of the effectiveness of the systems of internal control within the Park Authority. The Board's Audit and Risk Committee also plays a vital role in this regard, through its consideration of audit recommendations arising from reviews of internal control systems, and its scrutiny of proposed management action to address any improvements required. The Audit and Risk Committee also considers both a three-year plan for internal audit coverage and annually agrees an internal audit plan flowing from that three-year plan.

Shared services delivery

The Park Authority plays an important role in providing support over a range of activities to local communities and organisations to help deliver the National Park Partnership Plan's priorities. In the last year we have supported Cairngorms Local Action Group Trust in its leadership and delivery of new Community Led Local Development funding streams; continued our support of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project; and led the Development Phase of the Cairngorms 2030 Heritage Horizons Programme involving a wide range of partners across a variety of sectors. All of these have been significant, community and partner led programmes of activity. Our management and internal control structures ensure that support for these community-based delivery entities is separated from the core activities of the Authority, while ensuring that our support helps them achieve "best practice" in their operations.

The Authority also undertakes a range of shared service arrangements with other public body partners. Over the course of the year, we have provided human resource advice and organisational development support to the Scottish Land



Commission, while collaborating on a range of shared service delivery with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA). We receive key support from LLTNPA on IT infrastructure maintenance and development; shared licence agreements for planning systems; and data back-up and security arrangements. In addition to these more formal shared services with LLTNPA, both National Park Authorities continue to collaborate closely on areas of shared policy interest.

Internal audit

The internal audit function is an integral element of scrutiny of the Park Authority's internal control systems. Azets was appointed as the Park Authority's internal auditor following an open procurement process in 2020 and have undertaken a comprehensive assessment of key internal control systems since their appointment in determining annual and three-year internal audit plans. During the year to 31 March 2023, Azets has reported to the Audit and Risk Committee on the following reviews:

Governance & risk	Performance Management Systems Assurance Mapping Workforce Management and Planning Follow up review of prior recommendations
Internal control systems	LEADER administration IT and Data Strategy Cyber Security Arrangements Peatland Restoration Programme Data Management
Finance	Payroll and Expenses Control Systems

All recommendations made by Azets are considered; given management responses which are considered by the Audit and Risk Committee; and implemented as appropriate. There were no instances of internal audit recommendations not being accepted by management in the year.

External audit

External auditors are appointed for us by the Auditor General for Scotland through Audit Scotland. Audit Scotland appointed Mazars to the role with effect from the commencement of the 2022/23 final accounts audit. We are forming an effective and efficient audit relationship with Mazars, who review key systems so



they can form a view on the effectiveness of control arrangements, which in turn supports their audit opinion on the financial statements.

No fees were paid for any non-audit work undertaken by Grant Thornton LLP in their appointment as our previous external auditors, nor to Mazars.

Best value

The Audit and Risk Committee continues to monitor the Authority's adherence to Scottish Government Best Value guidelines and our approach to continuous improvement. We launched phase three of our Organisational Development Strategy in 2020/21 to continue to improve our work processes, organisational environment, and delivery of services. We have also completed our most recent independent staff survey, held every 2 years, and the analysis of the results of that process. This information has supported development of the internal organisational focus of our next Corporate Plan from 2023 to 2027. We are in the process of developing a fourth phase of our Organisational Development Strategy in 2023/24. Our next staff survey in autumn 2023 will inform the delivery of continuous organisational improvement as part of our new Corporate Plan to 2027.

Risk management

We have a risk management strategy in accordance with guidance issued by Scottish Ministers to identify actual and potential threats that may prevent us from delivering our statutory purpose, and also to identify appropriate mitigation actions. The Risk Management Strategy was most recently reviewed by the Board in 2019, with the Committee also receiving an internal audit report on the effectiveness of risk management operations within the organisation in that year.

The Board recognises the importance of risk management and continues to monitor the Park Authority's Strategic Risk Register. The Board held a risk appetite workshop in May 2023 to establish the overall strategic risk appetite for areas of the 2023 to 2027 Corporate Plan. This position will form the starting point for redevelopment of the Park Authority's Strategic Risk Register and supporting delivery of our new Corporate Plan objectives.

The Strategic Risk Register records risks, action taken to mitigate the identified risks and senior management's responsibility for leading on each risk and its mitigation. The Strategic Risk Register is reviewed by the Senior Management



Team four times each year and updated by the full Board twice and also by the Audit and Risk Committee twice a year.

The Audit and Risk Committee, with the Senior Management Team, leads on embedding risk management processes throughout the Park Authority. Both groups consider the management of strategic risk in line with the Risk Strategy to ensure that the required actions are appropriately reflected and incorporated in operational delivery plans.

Data security

Procedures are in place to ensure that information is being managed in accordance with legislation and that data is held accurately and securely. The Park Authority has no reported nor recorded instances of data loss in the year to 31 March 2023.

We continue to review our digital practices and infrastructure to ensure they remain fit for purpose and that all reasonable steps are taken to minimise the risk of data loss or compromise of systems due to cyber-attacks. The Park Authority is currently preparing for the third review of our systems through the Cyber Essentials Plus process.

The Authority's Senior Management Team approved an IT and Data Management Strategy in 2021 which approved our transition toward cloud-based service infrastructure. We also made additional investment in cyber security protection over the course of the year.

As noted elsewhere in this statement, our IT Strategy and cyber security arrangements have each been subject to internal audit review as part of the internal audit programme. Actions arising from these audits will be addressed over the course of the coming year. The Park Authority has invested in a new Information Manager role to further enhance the focus of our work in this area, with the postholder taking up the role from 1 June 2023.

Response to COVID19 Pandemic

The Authority implemented its Business Continuity Plan (BCP) processes on 17 March 2020 in response to the COVID19 pandemic and continued to apply that BCP process throughout 2021/22. The BCP has prioritised the maintenance and evolution of systems to support dispersed working while maintaining maximum focus on delivery of the Authority's strategic outcomes. Our BCP has also placed



an emphasis on staff welfare and ensuring our people remain as physically and mentally healthy as possible throughout this period of BCP operations.

The Board also approved BCP measures to support effective governance throughout the pandemic. This included adapting Board Standing Orders to remote working and meetings held by video conference and telephone, and ensuring appropriate Board and Senior Management succession plans are in place.

The Park Authority is progressing its movement from these BCP arrangements to revised, hybrid working arrangements, which have been trialled throughout 2022/23. The majority of our staff continue to work part time from home and dispersed locations and part time in the office. Our Board also holds both hybrid and full face-to-face public meetings. The Authority has commenced an internal review of the evolution of our new working arrangements for staff, following staff drop-in sessions held throughout the course of 2022/23 to gauge effectiveness of policies and processes and learn about improvements and adaptations we could make. We aim to adopt final hybrid working arrangements by the end of September 2023.

Conclusion

As Accountable Officer I am responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. In order to do this my review is informed by:

- a) the executive managers within the organisation who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework and who provide assurance on systems within regular Senior Management Team meetings;
- b) internal monitoring of control systems by staff against SPFM requirements;
- c) the work of the internal auditors, who submit regular reports to the Audit and Risk Committee, which include the Head of Internal Audit's independent and objective opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of our systems of internal control together with recommendations for improvement;
- d) comments made by the external auditors in their management letter and other reports.

I am supported by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services, who in turn is supported by the Corporate Services staff group, and provides senior management leadership on the financial management, internal controls



and governance arrangements. I take assurance from the effectiveness of internal control systems, financial management and planning processes, and risk management from the assurances received from the Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive.

I have also been advised on the effectiveness of the system of internal control by the Board and its Audit and Risk Committee. Appropriate action is taken against any weaknesses identified and to ensure continuous improvement of our systems.

The internal auditor's annual report for 2022/23 states that, "In our opinion, Cairngorms National Park Authority has a framework of governance, risk management and controls that provides reasonable assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of objectives."

Action is underway on implementing improvements required to mitigate risk areas identified by internal audit and as such I also take assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's internal controls from the independent internal auditor's report for the year.

The systems described in this statement have been in place for the year under review (2022/23) and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts.

Grant Moir

Chief Executive and Accountable Officer

24 November, 2023



2.3 Remuneration and staff report

The Remuneration and Staff Report sets out the Authority's remuneration policy for directors, reports on how the policy has been implemented and sets out the amounts awarded to directors. It identifies those tables and information subject to audit or not. Where information disclosed is not subject to audit, it is reviewed by the external auditor to ensure it is consistent with the financial statements.

Pay policy

(not subject to audit)

The fees and expenses paid to Board members comply with guidance issued by Scottish Ministers, the Public Sector Pay Policy for Senior Appointments, through the Park Authority's interaction with appropriate Scottish Government officials within the remit of these Public Sector Pay Policies.

Staff salary levels, including the Chief Executive, are reviewed by the Resources Committee, as is the overall pay remit established by the Park Authority. The pay remit is subject to agreement with the sponsoring department within Scottish Government, the Environment and Forestry Directorate, Natural Resources Division, in consultation with the Scottish Government Finance Pay Policy Team. Approval is normally given annually unless a multi-year arrangement has been agreed. The remit for 2022/23 was agreed on an annual basis and was within the terms and conditions set out in the Scottish Government Public Sector Pay Policy.

Members of staff covered by this report hold appointments that are either open-ended or fixed term. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual receiving compensation.

Performance and human capital management

Performance of all staff members is monitored and reviewed through the staff appraisal arrangements.

Performance management is achieved by regular and frequent Performance Development Conversations (PDCs) throughout the year between all staff and their line manager, giving "real-time" and two-way feedback. The feedback is to help staff act and work more constructively to support their growth, and is expected to be an appropriate mix of "recognition" (acknowledging strengths and skill that have contributed to success) or "guidance" (given with the intention of increasing effectiveness or success in the future). The PDCs are frequent, "in the moment" and in person, strengthening the working relationship between staff



and their line-managers, and reinforcing the meaningfulness of the feedback given through immediacy of connection to the performance to which the feedback is linked.

The PDCs policy has been designed to be a key tool in achieving optimal operational effectiveness throughout the Park Authority as we acknowledge that a high level of organisational performance is directly dependent on the skills, talent, engagement and well-being our staff.

Staffing and recruitment

The Park Authority has a Resource Committee, comprising seven Board members supported by relevant senior staff, which meets throughout the year. Its membership and remit are agreed annually by the Board.

The Committee's remit includes:

- oversight and monitoring of the Park Authority's human resource policies, including in particular the pay and grading, performance appraisal and the associated performance related pay systems when appropriate;
- advising the Board on annual pay awards;
- providing an interface between staff representative groups and the Board, and participation in arbitrating on staffing issues as set out in the Park Authority's procedures, and as otherwise required; and
- oversight of recruitment of senior staff (Directors and Chief Executive) including agreeing the job descriptions, adverts, and salary, to take responsibility for interviewing and selecting the successful candidates and seeking the endorsement of the Board, and, in the case of the Chief Executive, of Scottish Ministers.

In reaching its recommendations, the Committee has regard to the following considerations:

- the need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified people to exercise their different responsibilities;
- to take account of regional and local variations in labour markets and their impact on the recruitment and retention of staff;
- funds available to the sponsoring department as set out in the Scottish Government's departmental expenditure limits;



- to take account of Scottish Government policies for improving public services including the requirement to meet the output targets for the delivery of departmental services; and
- the Scottish Government's Public Sector Pay Guidance.

For the purposes of this report, persons in senior positions having authority or responsibility for directing or controlling the major activities of the Park Authority are taken to comprise the Board members, and the Chief Executive and Directors (the Management Team).

Staff involvement

The Park Authority has a Staff Consultative Forum (SCF) in place, through which it ensures effective two-way communications with staff and Prospect Trade Union representatives in resolving any issues arising and consulting on new initiatives. The SCF comprises a maximum of five staff representatives, one place amongst these representatives being reserved for a nominee of staff who are members of Prospect Trade Union with which the Park Authority has a voluntary recognition agreement. During 2022/23 key matters on which staff were consulted through the Staff Consultative Forum were:

- pay awards for the years commencing 1 April 2022 and 1 April 2023,
- equalities training,
- health and safety updates from Health and Safety Committee,
- review and update of a range of employment policies,
- continued development of the Park Authority's approach to the idea of a 35-hour working week,
- implementation of the Park Authority's hybrid working arrangements and office use post COVID 19 restrictions,

Equality and diversity

(not subject to audit)

The Park Authority is an equal opportunities employer with policies against discrimination and to ensure no unfair or illegal discriminatory treatment or barriers to employment or advancement. The Park Authority is accredited as a Positive about Disability employer and is a Living Wage employer as well as a Young Person's Guarantor employer. We have also signed up to the LGBT Charter.

During the year equalities training was provided for all staff and board: eleven training sessions were delivered in total, involving 120 unique learners, with 859



hours of staff and board time dedicated to equalities learning. All staff who completed the post-training evaluation said they would do something differently as a result of the training.

An equal pay audit was carried out using salary levels and staff numbers as at the 31 March 2023. The audit was designed to assess pay levels in terms of gender equality, as well as all aspects of pay, recruitment and promotion within the Authority. We have a number of policies designed to ensure that all members of staff have equal access to career progression through support for managing childcare, maintenance of work-life balance, and flexible working arrangements. The gender gap amongst our staff is improving, and we have seen a downward trajectory over the past six years, from 20.20% in 2017-18 to 9.55% for 2022-23. We are also starting to see the impact of the interventions implemented to support the achievement of gender balance in senior positions.

As an organisation we accept we cannot become complacent and recognise that continued work and monitoring must remain a priority. The Equality Advisory Panel will be key to achieving our equalities objectives.

Equality Advisory Panel

The Equality Advisory Panel was established in September 2020 to provide informed, evidence-based feedback, guidance, and support to the Authority on equality issues. The remit of the panel is:

- to ensure statutory public sector equality duties are delivered in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, and other relevant legislation,
- to embed equality and inclusion in our strategies and corporate processes,
- to assess critically the impact of the Park Authority's decisions on equality groups, through robust equality impact assessment procedures, and to provide appropriate mitigation of adverse impacts,
- to ensure best practice in equality and inclusion in our approaches to work, and
- to promote equality and inclusions work of the Authority and partners within the Park.

Over the course of 2022/23, the panel has made significant contributions to various aspects of the Authority's work.

The National Park Partnership Plan

Following suggestions from the panel, hard copies of the draft NPPP were produced for the consultation, and plans were put in place to ensure those who



did not have access to websites, or the internet were able to access the consultation process. The panel also submitted a formal response to the consultation, and changes were made to the Plan as a result.

Advice on Action Plans, Strategic Plans and Briefs

The panel has commented on multiple plans and briefs, including the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan, the E-Bike Consultancy Brief, and the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan. These contributions have encouraged officers to include equalities considerations within the plans, as well as providing them with valuable connections and examples of good practice.

Communications Strategy

The panel initially commented on the communications strategy when it was at draft stage, and identified several underrepresented groups they felt were missing from the document. The panel gave advice on designing equality focused consultations. As a result of their input, the Communications team reviewed our photography assets and commissioned photographs demonstrating a greater diversity of subjects. They also hired ScotInform to help reach those who would not normally respond to consultations, including equality and minority groups. The digital accessibility centre was tasked with auditing the Park Authority's systems to check their accessibility, and to provide recommendations for improvement.

New Website

The Panel worked with consultants reviewing various examples of accessible websites, which will help shape the new website and suggested "journey testing" to ensure it is accessible and easy to navigate.

Cairngorms 2030 - Heritage Horizons Project

The panel has given advice on most of the projects being delivered through the Cairngorms 2030 development stage, so that equalities considerations have been included in all projects from inception. The Panel have given examples of good practice, areas in plans that may need revision, groups that have been missed, and connections with organisations that may improve the project.

Diversifying Recruitment

The panel advised on reviewing the language of job descriptions and person specifications. Recommendations included removing non-essential requirements such as for a driving licence and giving recognition to the equivalence of experience as an alternative to degree qualifications.



Pronouns

The Panel gave advice on the process and language for inviting staff to display their pronouns.

Advice to other organisations

The Panel has given advice and fed into several projects for external speakers, including the Scottish Youth Hostelling Association, the Speyside Trust and Badaguish Project, Paratek (commenting on the suitability of the Trekker device), Backbone, Glenmore Corridor Sustainable Transport Plan, and the Aviemore to Carrbridge Non-Motorised User Route Study.

Guidance and advice on the 2023 Cairngorms Nature Festival

The panel advised on the need for some low-cost free events, and also made several recommendations to make the festival more accessible, such as locating events near changing places and toilets where possible and coordinating the timings of events with public transport. The panel also advised on suggested partnerships.

The Park Authority also has an Internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Group. The overarching purpose of this group is to champion the integration of Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity principles into daily working life at the Park Authority at an organisational level and give staff from minority groups a suitable environment to share their lived experience and inform any changes in culture or policy to facilitate improved diversity and integration. Specifically, the group ensures that Equality and Diversity requirements are suitably addressed within the organisation by raising awareness and reinforcing the message that Equality and Diversity is “everyone’s business”. It facilitates communication, debate and dialogue relating to Equality and Diversity issues, and seeks to find practical solutions to any barriers that may present themselves in delivering the Authority’s aspirations and obligations around Equality and Diversity. The group meets quarterly and comprises staff from across the organisation. It is an active and engaged group and has carried out the following activities:

- a) Supported the development of the training brief for procuring Equalities training for all staff and informed the content of the Management and Board sessions, as well as the Communications approach to staff attending the equalities training.
- b) Recommended the organisation sign up to the LGBT Charter. This proposal was taken to the Senior Management Team for consideration and approval.
- c) Informed the organisation’s approach to staff displaying their pronouns.



- d) Signed off the Park Authority's formal response to the Public Sector Equality Duty Consultation.
- e) Took on the role of LGBT Charter Champions to support the LGBT Accreditation journey.
- f) Informed the questions to include in the 2023 staff equalities monitoring survey, around the principle that we wanted to do more than just what was required to be legally compliant.
- g) Developed the LGBT Charter Action Plan.
- h) Informed the revision of the Equality Impact Assessment form and supporting guidance.
- i) Recommended the development of a Neurodiversity Policy, which was subsequently drafted, underwent staff consultation, and has now been adopted.
- j) Recommended the development of a Reasonable Adjustments Passport Policy.
- k) Supported the development of the Transgender Inclusion Policy.

The Park Authority continues to embed its approach to ensuring equality. The Park Authority's [Public Sector Equalities Duty Report 2021 - 2025](#) was fully updated in 2023 and comprehensively sets out the achievements of the Park Authority in our equalities work to date together with our ambitious forward programme of work in this key area.

Analysis of staff by gender

(not subject to audit)

At the end of the financial and operational year our gender split of staff, including staff on short or fixed term employment contracts (others) is:

	Male		Female	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Chief executive and directors	4	4	-	-
Heads of service	5	3	3	2
Staff	22	20	43	33
Others*	15	15	19	18
	46	42	65	53

* includes rangers who joined in March.



	2023	2022
Male	41%	44%
Female	59%	56%

Health, safety and wellbeing

The Park Authority has a Health and Safety Committee comprising Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) trained staff from across the organisation, who are tasked with scrutinising Health and Safety policy and procedure. The committee meets quarterly, and minutes are circulated to the Resources Committee for oversight and sign off.

The Park Authority has a Wellbeing Champion, tasked with scrutinising and updating wellbeing policies and procedures. They circulate a two-weekly Wellbeing e-mail discussing key topics, national campaigns and providing links to support resources. The Park Authority also has a team of Mental health First Aiders and a Mental Health First Aid Policy to support staff. We have also trialled a hybrid working approach, the default position being that staff can work 50% contractual hours from home and 50% in the office. In addition, on 1st April 2023 we reduced full time contractual hours from 37.5 to 36 per week. This is part of a phased reduction, which will result in full time contractual hours of 35 hours per week by April 2024

Remuneration and Pensions

Some elements of the following information on the Park Authority's remuneration and pensions arrangements are subject to audit. The audit coverage is indicated in each sub-heading.

Board members' fees and expenses

(subject to audit)

The Park Authority has a non-executive Board, and no member has any pension entitlement. The expenses disclosed below are not subject to audit. A register of Board member's interests can be found on the National Park's website.



	Start of current term	End of current term	Fees £'000	2023 Expenses £	Fees £'000	2022 Expenses £
Scottish Government appointees						
Janet Hunter	08 09 15	07 09 23	10-15	414	5-10	163
Douglas McAdam	01 11 18	31 10 23 ¹	5-10	1,264	5-10	545
Anne Rae MacDonald	01 11 18	31 03 23 ²	5-10	-	5-10	-
Dr F McLean	01 11 22	31 10 26 ³	5-10	143	5-10	45
William Munro	01 11 18	31 03 23 ²	5-10	696	5-10	-
Dr Gaener Rodger	01 10 18	31 10 23 ¹	10-15	430	10-15	270
Judith Webb	01 02 19	31 01 23	5-10	218	5-10	89
Local Authorities nominees						
Peter Argyle	08 09 15	30 09 22	0-5	-	5-10	291
Chris Beattie	01 10 22	30 09 27	0-5	454	-	-
Carolyn Caddick	01 10 17	30 09 22	5-10	1,381	10-15	221
Pippa Hadley	01 10 17	30 09 22	0-5	-	5-10	-
Russell Jones	01 10 22	30 09 27	0-5	-	-	-
John Latham	01 10 12	30 09 22	0-5	-	5-10	-
Bill Lobban	01 10 22	30 09 27	0-5	-	-	-
Xander McDade	01 10 22	30 09 27*	20-25	1,289	20-25	596
Ian Maclaren	01 10 17	30 09 22	0-5	743	5-10	291
Ann Ross	01 10 22	30 09 27	0-5	242	-	-
Derek Ross	01 10 22	31 10 27*	5-10	776	5-10	68
Locally elected						
Geva Blackett	31 03 19	24 03 23 ⁵	5-10	20	5-10	30
Kenny Deans	24 03 23	23 03 27	0-5	-	-	-
Deirdre Falconer	20 03 19	24 03 23	5-10	-	5-10	-
Paul Gibb	24 03 23	23 03 27	0-5	-	-	-
John Kirk	28 03 19	23 03 27 ⁴	5-10	-	5-10	-
Lauren MacCallum	24 03 23	23 03 27	0-5	-	-	-
Eleanor Mackintosh	22 03 19	23 03 23 ⁴	5-10	-	5-10	-
William McKenna	22 03 19	24 03 23	5-10	-	5-10	-
			169,055	8,070	175,504	2,609

This table excludes all appointees to the Board after 31 March 2023. The list of all Board members on the date the financial Statements were approved is contained on pages 3 and 4.

1. appointment extended to 31 October 2023
2. appointment extended to 31 March 2023
3. appointment extended to 31 October 2026
4. re-elected on 24 March 2023
5. appointed as local authority nominee from 1 October 2022

* nominated for further 5-year period from 1 October 2022



Board members' Attendance at Meetings

(not subject to audit)

	Board		Planning (9)	Committees
	Formal (5)	Business (9)		
Scottish Government appointees				
Janet Hunter	4	5	9	P 1/4 AR 1/1 R 3/3 G 1/1
Douglas McAdam		7		
Anne Rae MacDonald	5	6	6	
Dr Fiona McLean	5	8	9	P 3/4 AR 4/5
William Munro	4	6	8	P 4/4 G 1/1
Dr Gaener Rodger	3	7	9	AR 4/5 G 0/1
Judith Webb	4/4	5.5	5	P 3/3 AR 2/5 G 0/1
Local Authority nominees				
Peter Argyle	1/1	3/5	5/5	
Chris Beattie	3/4	4/4	4/4	R 3/3
Carolyn Caddick	1/1	2/5	4/5	R 3/3
Pippa Hadley	1/1	3/5	5/5	R 3/3
Russell Jones	4/4	3/4	3/4	R 2/3
John Latham	1/1	3/5	3/5	P 3/3 AR 1/1
Bill Lobban	4/4	4/4	4/4	AR 2/2
Xander McDade	5	7	8	R 6/6 G 1/1
Ian Maclaren	-	3/5	4/5	R 3/3
Anne Ross	4/4	4/4	3/4	
Derek Ross	4	8	9	P 4/4 R 3/3
Locally elected				
Geva Blackett*	4	7	8	AR 1/1 R 2/3
Kenny Deans	1/1			
Deirdre Falconer	4/4	6	6	P 2/4 R 6/6 G 1/1
Paul Gibb	1/1	-	-	-
John Kirk	5	7	9	P 1/4 AR 4/5
Lauren MacCallum	1/1	-	-	
Eleanor Mackintosh	5	8	9	AR 3/5 R 3/3
William McKenna	4/4	7	9	P 4/4

(Other committees: P – Performance Committee; AR - Audit and Risk Committee; R – Resource; G – Governance Committee)

*Geva Blackett was a locally elected Board member until she was nominated by Aberdeenshire Council to the Board. Changes to Board members are disclosed on pages 3 and 4.



Senior Management Team salary and pension entitlements

(subject to audit)

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 requires appointments to be made on merit and on the basis of fair and open competition. The members of the senior management team hold appointments that are open ended. Early termination, other than for misconduct, would result in the individual requiring compensation as set out in the Civil Service Compensation Scheme.

The following sections provide details of the remuneration and pension interests of the Senior Management Team of the Park Authority.

Senior Management Team remuneration

(subject to audit)

Single total figure of remuneration (subject to audit)

	Salary		Pension benefits*		Total	
	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Grant Moir	90-95	90-95	36	35	125-130	125-130
David Cameron	70-75	65-70	0**	14	85-90	80-85
Murray Ferguson	65-70	65-70	0**	14	55-60	75-80
Andrew Ford	55-60	50-55	24	17	80-85	70-75

No member of the management team received either a bonus payment or any benefits in kind in the year (2021: £nil).

*The value of pension benefits accrued during the year is calculated as the real increase in pension multiplied by 20, plus the real increase in any lump sum, less the contributions made by the individual. The real increases exclude increases due to inflation or any increase or decrease due to a transfer of pension rights.

**Negative accrued benefits have been capped at £nil. A negative benefit results where a scheme member has transitioned from a final salary scheme to alpha. The final salary pension is calculated with reference to pay during the year and length of service, and where a pay rise in year is not sufficient to offset the inflation increase, the pension value can reduce, hence the negative value.

Fair pay disclosure

(subject to audit)

The Park Authority is required to disclose the relationship between the total remuneration of its highest paid director and the median remuneration of its staff (the mid-point of banded remuneration, using the full-time equivalent remuneration). Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay, and any benefits-in-kind and severance payments. It



does not include employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent value of pensions.

The highest paid Director's salary was increased by £1,672 (1.82%) between 2021/22 and 2022/23 as a result of the Scottish Government's public sector pay award. For the rest of the Park Authority's staff, at 31 March 2023, the average salary change from the previous year was a reduction of 4% (2021/22 - 0.6%) reflecting seasonal staff, the change in staff mix and increase in staff levels during the year. Excluding seasonal staff, the average salary increased by 11% (2021/22 - 12%).

	2022/23	2021/22
Median remuneration (a)	£32,467	£30,185
Range of staff remuneration	£1,407-93,060	£1,240-91,388
Banded remuneration of the highest paid director (b)	£90-95,000	£90-95,000
Ratio between the median remuneration and banded remuneration of the highest director [(b)/(a)]	2.87	3.03

The table below, shows the ratios between the highest paid director's remuneration against those of all employees on the 25th, 50th (median) and 75th percentiles during the financial years.

All staff

Pay Ratio	2022/23		2021/22	
	All staff	Excluding seasonal	All staff	Excluding seasonal
25 th percentile	6.18	4.01	6.21	3.99
	15,065	23,197	14,707	22,897
50 th percentile	2.87	2.73	3.03	2.76
	34,020	34,041	30,184	33,053
75 th percentile	2.3	2.27	2.36	2.28
	39,122	40,951	38,745	40,135

The movement of the ratios between the two years is slight, except in the 50th percentile. The changes are due to a complex mix of factors including a change in the highest paid director's remuneration, the impact of the payroll model in a period of high inflation putting pressure on pay awards to the employees, and the number of new starts in the year coming in at the bottom of their pay band. The Authority believes that the ratios are a fair reflection of the pay, rewards and progression policy for the staff group as a whole.



No member of staff received remuneration in excess of the highest paid director in either year.

Civil Service Pensions

Pension benefits are provided through the Civil Service pension arrangements. From 1 April 2015 a new pension scheme for civil servants was introduced – the Civil Servants and Others Pension Scheme or **alpha**, which provides benefits on a career average basis with a normal pension age equal to the member's State Pension Age (or 65 if higher). From that date all newly appointed civil servants and the majority of those already in service joined **alpha**. Prior to that date, civil servants participated in the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). The PCSPS has four sections: 3 providing benefits on a final salary basis (**classic**, **premium** or **classic plus**) with a normal pension age of 60; and one providing benefits on a whole career basis (**nuvos**) with a normal pension age of 65.

These statutory arrangements are unfunded with the cost of benefits met by monies voted by Parliament each year. Pensions payable under **classic**, **premium**, **classic plus**, **nuvos** and **alpha** are increased annually in line with Pensions Increase legislation. Existing members of the PCSPS who were within 10 years of their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 remained in the PCSPS after 1 April 2015. Those who were between 10 years and 13 years and 5 months from their normal pension age on 1 April 2012 switched into **alpha** sometime between 1 June 2015 and 1 February 2022. Because the Government plans to remove discrimination identified by the courts in the way that the 2015 pension reforms were introduced for some members, it is expected that, in due course, eligible members with relevant service between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2022 may be entitled to different pension benefits in relation to that period (and this may affect the Cash Equivalent Transfer Values shown in this report – see below). All members who switch to **alpha** have their PCSPS benefits 'banked,' with those with earlier benefits in one of the final salary sections of the PCSPS having those benefits based on their final salary when they leave **alpha**. (The pension figures quoted for officials show pension earned in PCSPS or **alpha** – as appropriate. Where the official has benefits in both the PCSPS and **alpha** the figure quoted is the combined value of their benefits in the two schemes.) Members joining from October 2002 may opt for either the appropriate defined benefit arrangement or a



defined contribution (money purchase) pension with an employer contribution (**partnership** pension account).

Employee contributions are salary-related and range between 4.6% and 8.05% for members of **classic, premium, classic plus, nuvos and alpha**. Benefits in **classic** accrue at the rate of 1/80th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. In addition, a lump sum equivalent to three years initial pension is payable on retirement. For **premium**, benefits accrue at the rate of 1/60th of final pensionable earnings for each year of service. Unlike classic, there is no automatic lump sum. **classic plus** is essentially a hybrid with benefits for service before 1 October 2002 calculated broadly as per classic and benefits for service from October 2002 worked out as in **premium**. In **nuvos** a member builds up a pension based on his pensionable earnings during their period of scheme membership. At the end of the scheme year (31 March) the member's earned pension account is credited with 2.3% of their pensionable earnings in that scheme year and the accrued pension is uprated in line with Pensions Increase legislation. Benefits in **alpha** build up in a similar way to **nuvos**, except that the accrual rate is 2.32%. In all cases members may opt to give up (commute) pension for a lump sum up to the limits set by the Finance Act 2004.

The **partnership** pension account is an occupational defined contribution pension arrangement which is part of the Legal & General Mastertrust. The employer makes a basic contribution of between 8% and 14.75% (depending on the age of the member). The employee does not have to contribute, but where they do make contributions, the employer will match these up to a limit of 3% of pensionable salary (in addition to the employer's basic contribution). Employers also contribute a further 0.5% of pensionable salary to cover the cost of centrally provided risk benefit cover (death in service and ill health retirement).

The accrued pension quoted is the pension the member is entitled to receive when they reach pension age, or immediately on ceasing to be an active member of the scheme if they are already at or over pension age. Pension age is 60 for members of **classic, premium and classic plus**, 65 for members of **nuvos**, and the higher of 65 or State Pension Age for members of **alpha**. (The pension figures quoted for officials show pension earned in PCSPS or **alpha** – as appropriate. Where the official has benefits in both the PCSPS and **alpha** the figure quoted is the



combined value of their benefits in the two schemes but note that part of that pension may be payable from different ages.)

Further details about the Civil Service pension arrangements can be found at the website www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk

The Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV)

This is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies.

The figures include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement which the member has transferred to the Civil Service pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their buying additional pension benefits at their own cost. CETVs are worked out in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and do not take account of any actual or potential reduction to benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

The real increase in the value of the CETV

This is the element of the increase in accrued pension funded by the Exchequer. It excludes increases due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee, (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.



Senior Management Team pension benefits

(subject to audit)

	Accrued pension at age 65 as at 31 03 2023	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age	CETV at 31 03 2023	CETV at 31 03 2022	Real increase in CETV
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Grant Moir	20-25	0-2.5	222	189	16
David Cameron	40-45	0	764	704	(24)
Murray Ferguson	30-35	0-2.5	704	643	(22)
	plus lump sum 70-75				
Andrew Ford	15-20	0-2.5	286	242	13

Staff costs and Board Members' Fees

(subject to audit)

	Permanently employed staff and Board Members	Others	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Board members	172	-	172	179
Staff	3,763	1,093	4,856	4,016
Agency or short-term staff	-	43	43	-
	<u>3,935</u>	<u>1,136</u>	<u>5,071</u>	<u>4,195</u>
Board members				
Fees	169		169	176
Social security costs	3		3	3
	<u>172</u>		<u>172</u>	<u>179</u>
Staff				
Salaries	2,728	826	3,557	2,952
Social security costs	297	82	379	297
Pensions	735	185	920	767
Apprenticeship levy	3	-		-
	<u>3,763</u>	<u>1,093</u>	<u>4,856</u>	<u>4,016</u>
Non-payroll staff	-	43	43	-

Number of staff with salaries above £60,000

(subject to audit)

	2023	2022
£90,001 - £100,000	1	-
£80,001 - £90,000	-	1
£70,001 - £80,000	1	-
£60,001 - £70,000	1	2



Consultancy and temporary staff

	2023 £'000
Consultancy	2,078
Temporary staff	43

Consultancy has a wide-ranging meaning and includes the provision to the Park Authority of objective advice on a range of management issues, where skills are either not available or are time limited, or for project delivery. The type of work undertaken includes finance, legal, IT, procurement, communications, corporate strategy and predominantly project delivery to achieve the Park's objectives.

Temporary staff, or contingent labour, are 'non-payroll' individuals contracted to cover business-as-usual or service delivery. The type of work undertaken was administration and clerical work by agency staff and a specialist contractor used to provide communications expertise not available within the Park Authority.

Average number of persons employed

(subject to audit)

The average number of whole-time equivalent persons employed during the year was:

	Permanently employed staff	Others*	Total 2023	Total 2022
Senior management team	4	-	4	4
Staff (whole time equivalent)	61	28	89	81
	65	28	93	85

*Other staff are those staff employed on a fixed short-term contract.

During the year, 1 member of staff was seconded to the Park Authority from another organisation (2021: nil). No members of the staff were seconded to other organisations during the year (2021: nil).

Sickness absence

(not subject to audit)

The average numbers of days lost to sickness absence during the year per employee, excluding COVID 19 absences, is 3.56 days (2021/22: 3.3); including COVID 19 absences, is 4.93 days (2021/22: 4.2)



Facility Time Data

(not subject to audit)

The Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017 requires public bodies to publish information relating to staff time dedicated to staff union matters in the following statutory format:

1 Relevant union officials

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period Full-time equivalent employee number

1 (2021/22 - 1) **101.11** (2021/22 – 85.23)

2 Percentage of time spend on facility time

% of time Number of employees

0%	-
1-50%	1 (2021/22 – 1)
51-99%	-
100%	-

3 Percentage of pay bill spent on facility time

Total cost of facility time	£182 (2021/22 - £139)
Total pay bill	£4,856,212 (2021/22 - £3,996,167)
% of total pay bill spend on facility time	0.004% (2021/22 - 0.004%)

4 Trade union activities

Time spent on paid trade union activities as a % of total paid facility time hours **0.005%** (2021/22 - 0.006%)

Grant Moir
Chief Executive and Accountable Officer
24 November, 2023



2.4 Parliamentary accountability disclosures (subject to audit)

Cairngorms National Park Authority is held to account by the Scottish Ministers, in accordance with the requirements of The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. The Authority is expected to manage its budget in accordance with its Financial Memorandum and the Scottish Public Finance Manual and to deliver an outturn for the year within the Scottish Government budget limits.

The Park Authority's financial performance for the year against the Board approved budget and grant-in-aid awarded by the Scottish Government is shown on pages 16 and 17. Income for 2022/23 includes income and grant funding from partners, recharges, and planning fees. Expenditure includes Board and staff costs, operating costs, and project expenditure. Non-cash expenditure includes depreciation and amortisation, and movement in the accrual for holiday pay.

Fees and charges

During the year, the Park Authority received 60% of planning fees for called in planning applications to the 5 local authorities within the National Park boundaries.

Losses and special payments

During the year a cyber fraud resulted in the loss of £15,665. There were no special payments in the year to 31 March 2023, or the previous year. There were no gains or losses on the disposal of non-current assets in the year (2021/22: nil).

Gifts

Gifts totalling £391 were made to Board members leaving during the year. (2021/22: nil)

Significant remote contingencies

In addition to contingent liabilities reported within the context of IAS 37, the Park Authority is not aware of any liabilities for which the likelihood of a transfer of economic benefit in settlement is too remote to meet the definition of a contingent liability.



The accountability report was approved by a duly authorised committee of the Board on 24 November, 2023 and signed on its behalf by

Grant Moir
Chief Executive and Accountable Officer
24 November, 2023



2.5 Independent auditor's report to the members of Cairngorms National Park Authority, the Auditor General for Scotland and the Scottish Parliament

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion on the financial statements

We have audited the financial statements in the annual report and accounts of Cairngorms National Park Authority for the year ended 31 March 2023 under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. The financial statements comprise the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Cash Flows, the Statement of Changes in Taxpayer's Equity and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2022/23 Government Financial Reporting Manual (the 2022/23 FReM).

In our opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the body's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its net expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2022/23 FReM; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), as required by the Code of Audit Practice approved by the Auditor General for Scotland. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We were appointed by the Auditor General on 18 May 2022. Our period of appointment is five years, covering 2022/23 to 2026/27. We are independent of the body in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in



the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. Non-audit services prohibited by the Ethical Standard were not provided to the body. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern basis of accounting

We have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the body's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

These conclusions are not intended to, nor do they, provide assurance on the body's current or future financial sustainability. However, we report on the body's arrangements for financial sustainability in a separate Annual Audit Report available from the [Audit Scotland Website](#).

Risks of material misstatement

We report in our separate Annual Audit Report the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement that we identified and our judgements thereon.

Responsibilities of the Accountable Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accountable Officer's Responsibilities, the Accountable Officer is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as the Accountable Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Accountable Officer is responsible for assessing the body's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as



applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention to discontinue the body's operations.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities outlined above to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud.

Procedures include:

- using our understanding of the central government sector to identify that the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers are significant in the context of the body;
- inquiring of the Accountable Officer as to other laws or regulations that may be expected to have a fundamental effect on the operations of the body;
- inquiring of the Accountable Officer concerning the body's policies and procedures regarding compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework;
- discussions among our audit team on the susceptibility of the financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur; and
- considering whether the audit team collectively has the appropriate competence and capabilities to identify or recognise non-compliance with laws and regulations.

The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the



effectiveness of the body's controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

Irregularities that result from fraud are inherently more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error as fraud may involve collusion, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. The capability of the audit to detect fraud and other irregularities depends on factors such as the skilfulness of the perpetrator, the frequency and extent of manipulation, the degree of collusion involved, the relative size of individual amounts manipulated, and the seniority of those individuals involved.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Reporting on regularity of expenditure and income

Opinion on regularity

In our opinion in all material respects the expenditure and income in the financial statements were incurred or applied in accordance with any applicable enactments and guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers.

Responsibilities for regularity

The Accountable Officer is responsible for ensuring the regularity of expenditure and income. In addition to our responsibilities in respect of irregularities explained in the audit of the financial statements section of our report, we are responsible for expressing an opinion on the regularity of expenditure and income in accordance with the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000.

Reporting on other requirements

Opinion prescribed by the Auditor General for Scotland on audited parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report

We have audited the parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report described as audited. In our opinion, the audited parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report



have been properly prepared in accordance with the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers.

Other information

The Accountable Officer is responsible for the other information in the annual report and accounts. The other information comprises the Performance Report and the Accountability Report excluding the audited parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report.

Our responsibility is to read all the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on the Performance Report and Governance Statement to the extent explicitly stated in the following opinions prescribed by the Auditor General for Scotland.

Opinions prescribed by the Auditor General for Scotland on Performance Report and Governance Statement

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Performance Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers; and
- the information given in the Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial



statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We are required by the Auditor General for Scotland to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the audited parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

We have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

Conclusions on wider scope responsibilities

In addition to our responsibilities for the annual report and accounts, our conclusions on the wider scope responsibilities specified in the Code of Audit Practice are set out in our Annual Audit Report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 and for no other purpose. In accordance with paragraph 108 of the Code of Audit Practice, we do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Tom Reid (Audit Director)

For and on behalf of Mazars LLP

Mazars LLP – 100 Queen Street – Glasgow – G1 3DN

24 November, 2023



3 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

3.1 Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2023

	notes	For the year to 31 March 2023 £'000	For the year to 31 March 2022 £'000
Income			
Operational plan income		2,685	1,304
Other income		84	152
Total operating income	5	2,769	1,456
Expenditure			
Board and staff costs	7	(5,071)	(4,195)
Operational plan expenditure	3	(6,982)	(5,187)
Other operating costs	3,6	(769)	(762)
Depreciation, amortising, and impairment charges	9/10/11	(321)	(171)
Total operating expenditure		(13,143)	(10,315)
Net operating expenditure		(10,374)	(8,859)
Finance expenditure (interest on leases)	17	(27)	-
Comprehensive net expenditure for the year funded by grant-in-aid		(10,401)	(8,859)

No activities were discontinued during the year.

The notes on pages 82 to 103 form part of these accounts.



3.2 Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2023

	notes	As at 31 March 2023 £'000	As at 31 March 2022 (restated) £'000
Non-current assets			
Tangible assets	9	375	415
Right of use assets	10	2,570	-
Intangible assets	11	84	105
Investments	8	-	-
Total non-current assets		3,029	520
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	12	1,245	496
Cash and cash equivalents	13	1,613	1,918
Total current assets		2,858	2,414
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	14	(2,211)	(1,898)
Total current liabilities		(2,211)	(1,898)
Non-current assets less current liabilities		647	516
Non-current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	14	(2,405)	-
Assets less liabilities		1,271	1,036
Taxpayers' equity		1,271	1,036

The notes on pages 82 to 103 form part of these accounts.

The Accountable Officer authorised the financial statements for issue on 24 November, 2023.

Grant Moir
Chief Executive and Accountable Officer
24 November, 2023



3.3 Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 31 March 2023

	notes	For the year to 31 March 2023 £'000	For the year to 31 March 2022 (restated) £'000
Net operating expenditure		(10,374)	(8,859)
Adjustment for non-cash transactions			
Depreciation, amortisation, and impairment charges		321	171
Movements in working capital			
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables		(749)	340
(Decrease)/increase in trade and other payables		148	711
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of non-current assets		(98)	(49)
Net cash flow from operating activities		(10,752)	(7,686)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Grants from sponsoring Directorate	4	10,636	8,965
Capital element in respect of leases	17	(162)	-
Interest in respect of leases	17	(27)	-
Net (decrease)/increase in cash		(305)	1,279
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 April	13	1,918	639
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 March	13	1,613	1,918

The notes on pages 82 to 103 form part of these accounts.



3.4 Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for the year ended 31 March 2023

	notes	For the year ended 31 March 2023 £'000	For the year ended 31 March 2022 £'000
Balance as at 1 April, 2022		1,036	930
Grants from sponsoring Directorate	4	10,636	8,965
Net expenditure		(10,401)	(8,859)
Balance as at 31 March, 2023		1,271	1,036

The notes on pages 82 to 103 form part of these accounts



3.5 Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

Note 1. Basis of preparation of accounts

The annual accounts are prepared in accordance with the Accounts Direction issued by Scottish Ministers under section 25(b) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by HM treasury, as adopted and interpreted by the Scottish Government, which follows generally accepted accounting practice as defined in International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adopted by the United Kingdom and the Companies Act 2006 to the extent that it is meaningful and appropriate in the public sector context. The Accounts Direction is included as Appendix 1.

Note 2. Accounting policies

Where FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, those which are considered to be most appropriate in giving a true and fair view have been adopted and have been applied consistently to all material transactions throughout the financial year.

The accounting policies adopted are set out below and have been applied consistently throughout the year in dealing with and items which are considered material to the accounts.

Accounting convention

The accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention.

Accounting period

The accounting period commenced on 1 April 2022 and ended on 31 March 2023.

Going concern

The accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis as the Board and Accountable Officer believe that future liabilities will be met from a combination of cash budget allocation from the Scottish Government, future grants from partner agencies, and income from chargeable activities.



Non-current assets – property, plant, and equipment (PPE)

Assets capitalised are initially recognised at costs in the financial statements and with subsequent recognition depreciated historic costs as a proxy for current value due to the types of tangible assets capitalised, and the short useful economic lives.

The minimum level for the capitalisation of individual non-current assets, other than information technology, is £500. Information technology systems are capitalised where the pooled value exceeds £500. Substantial improvements to leasehold properties are also capitalised.

All PPE is reviewed annually for impairment and adjustments are made if necessary.

Non-current assets – leased assets

From 1 April 2022 we have applied IFRS 16, which provides a single lessee accounting model, with a right of use asset and a lease liability being recognised on the commencement of a lease. Right-of-use assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the associated lease term, or estimated useful life where this is shorter. Impairment losses are charged in the same way as those arising on property, plant and equipment. As permitted by the FReM, right-of-use assets are subsequently measured using the cost model as a proxy for the measurement of the cost of value in use. This is because lease terms require lease payments to be updated for market conditions, for example, rent reviews for leased properties, which will be captured in the IFRS 16 cost measurement provisions. Right-of-use assets also have shorter useful lives than their respective underlying assets and, as such, cost can be used as a proxy for assets with shorter economic lives or lower values in accordance with the FReM.

Non-current assets – intangible assets

Intangible assets capitalised, purchased computer software costing more than £500, are initially recognised at cost. Where an active (homogeneous) market exists, intangible assets other than those that are held for sale, are carried at current value in existing use at the reporting period date. Where no active market exists, the assets are valued, using indices, to depreciated replacement cost. For 2022/23 the indexation was deemed to be nil and therefore no impact on carrying value.



Depreciation and amortisation

Depreciation or amortisations provided on all non-current assets at rates calculated to write down the cost or valuation on a straight-line basis over the useful economic lives in the following ranges:

Tangible assets

- park entry markers 25 years or less
- operational plant and equipment 5 years or over length of lease on land for “Scenic Routes” assets
- information technology 3 – 5 years
- leasehold improvements over the length of the lease, or shorter period depending on the nature of the asset capitalised as a leasehold improvement
- right-of-use assets over the length of the lease

Intangible assets

- software 5 years

Depreciation or amortisation is charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure on the carrying value of the non-current asset.

Financial instruments and exposure to risks

The Park Authority’s financial instruments comprise trade and other receivables, trade and other payables, and cash and liquid resources.

Trade receivables are recognised at cost, which is assumed to be their fair value, and recoverability is routinely monitored. If it is assumed or known that a debt will not be recovered it is written off to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. Any subsequent recovery of amounts previously written of are similarly taken to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Trade payables are recognised at cost, which is considered to represent fair value.



Cash is held in accounts with commercial banks. There is no significant liquidity or credit risk exposure due to the credit controls in place.

The carrying value of the financial assets and liabilities is considered a reasonable approximation of fair value. The investment in National Parks Partnerships LLP is measured at a fair value through profit and loss, in accordance with IFRS 9 Financial Instruments. The fair value is assessed as £nil (2021/22: £nil).

Income and expenditure recognition

Income from activities is accounted for in the year to which it relates and not to when cash payments are received.

Where income has been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a receivable for the corresponding amount is recorded in the Statement of Financial Position. Where cash has been received in advance of the activity, no income is recognised and a payable for the corresponding amount is recorded in the Statement of Financial Position. Operating income is income that relates directly to the operating activities of the Park Authority. It includes fees and charges for services provided.

All income from contracts with customers is recognised in accordance with IFRS15, which depicts the transfer of goods and services to customers in an amount that reflects the consideration to which the Park Authority expects to be entitled to in exchange for those goods or services. Revenue is recognised in accordance with that core principle by applying the following steps:

- Identification of contract with a customer
- Identification of the performance obligations in the contract
- Determine the transaction price
- Allocate the transaction price to the performance obligations in the contract
- Recognise revenue when the performance obligation is satisfied and control of the goods or service has been passed over.

Grant income is recognised in line with IAS 20 when it is receivable. If entitlement of grant income is subject to performance conditions, the income is recognised as the performance conditions are met.



Expenditure on operational activities is accounted for or charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net expenditure in the year in which it has been done. Staff costs are accounted for in the year in which the salaries are earned together with employer's costs. Other expenditure is charged or accrued into the year the service of goods is used. As part of the year end accounts preparation any expenditure that relates to future accounting periods of more than £500 is prepaid to be matched to income earned in future accounting periods. All expenditure relating to services or goods received by 31 March 2023, after this date, have been accrued.

Scottish Government funding and grant-in-aid

The Park Authority receives grant-in-aid from the Scottish Government to finance its operations.

The Park Authority receives a budget from the Scottish Government (Departmental Expenditure Limit or DEL) to fund non-cash expenditure (depreciation) and the cash costs of acquiring tangible and intangible assets and operating expenditure. Taxpayers' Equity is credited with the DEL cash allocation and charged with the net expenditure on the DEL cash allocation in the Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity.

Pension costs

Present and past employees are covered by the provisions of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) which is a defined benefit scheme. The Park Authority recognises the expected cost of providing pensions for their employees on a systematic and rational basis over the period during which they benefit from their services by payment to the PCSPS of amounts calculated on an accruing basis. Relevant disclosures are reported in Note 15. Liability for the payment of future benefits is a charge to the PCSPS.

Leases

As noted above, we have applied IFRS 16, as interpreted and adapted in the FReM, with effect from 1 April 2022. Under the modified retrospective approach comparative information has not been restated and continues to be reported under IAS 17. The details of accounting policies under IAS 17 are disclosed separately if they are different from those under IFRS 16 and the impact of the changes is disclosed in the Note: Changes in Accounting Standards.



Policy applicable from 1 April 2022

Where a lease has been identified, the Park Authority recognises a right-of-use asset and a corresponding lease liability, except for short term leases and leases for which the underlying asset is of low value. For such leases, the lease payments are recognised as an expense on a straight-line basis over the lease term. The Park Authority determines the term of a lease as the non-cancellable period of a lease combined with periods covered by an option to either extend the lease where the Park Authority is reasonably certain to exercise that option, or to terminate the lease where the Park Authority is reasonably certain not to exercise that option. In assessing whether an option is reasonably certain to be exercised or not exercised, judgement is applied in consultation with future property strategy. The Park Authority has not set a specific threshold for identifying assets that are of low value and applies the guidance in IFRS 16 on a case-by-case basis. Where the interest rate implicit in a lease cannot be readily determined, the Park Authority calculates the lease liability using the HM Treasury discount rates promulgated in PES papers as the incremental borrowing rate. For leases that commence or are remeasured in the 2023 calendar year, this rate is 3.51% (2022: 0.95%).

Policy applicable before 1 April 2022

In the comparative period we applied IAS 17 as follows: Operating lease rentals are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure over the term of the lease.

Value Added Tax (VAT)

Most of the activities of the Park Authority are outside the scope of VAT, and in general output VAT does not apply and input tax on purchases is not recoverable. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant expenditure category or is included in the capitalised purchase cost when incurred.

Short-term employee benefits

A liability for accrued unused annual leave, flexi-time and time off in lieu of leave (TOIL) is recognised to 31 December, the end of the holiday year. The movement for the year is charged or credited to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.



Interest in other entities

IFRS 12: Disclosure of interests in other entities, requires disclosure on interests in subsidiaries, joint arrangement, associates, and unconsolidated structured entities. The Park Authority is a Designate Member of National Parks Partnerships LLP, which was incorporated on 11 June, 2016. The Authority, along with the 14 other National Parks, holds an equal share in the LLP. The investment does not meet the criteria of a subsidiary, joint venture or associate and has been recognised as an investment.

Changes in Accounting Standards

During the year IFRS 16: Leases was adopted. IFRS 16 was issued by the IASB in January 2016 and was effective for accounting periods starting on or after 1 January 2019. Implementation for NDPBs was subsequently delayed and to be applied for accounting periods starting on or after 1 January 2022. The initial date for application for the Authority is 1 April 2022.

IFRS 16 introduces new or amended requirements with respect to lease accounting, with a significant change to lessee accounting by removing the distinction between operating and finance leases except for short-term and low-value leases. For short-term and low-value leases, payments continue to be recognised as operating expenses when incurred.

At the commencement of a lease, the Authority as lessee, recognises a lease liability for the future lease payments and an asset (right-of-use asset) representing the right to use the underlying asset during the lease period. Interest expense on the lease liability and depreciation on the right-of-use asset are recognised. There is no impact on the Authority's cash flows.

Impact on the Authority and financial statements

The adoption of IFRS 16 has affected the Authority's accounting for operating leases relating to properties and equipment (fleet vehicles and multi-function printers). The Authority has recognised the lease liability at the present value of the remaining lease payments, adjusted by the amount of any prepaid or accrued lease payments recognised immediately before the date of initial application, and discounted using the incremental borrowing rate (as advised by Scottish Government) at the time of



recognition of the liability. The liability is recognised as part of Trade payables and other liabilities in the Statement of Financial Position.

The Authority has recognised a lease liability of £2.566m, and during the year the recognised interest cost on the lease liability of £0.027m.

New or amended standards issued but not yet effective and not adopted early IFRS 17 Insurance Contracts

IFRS 17 sets out requirements for the recognition and measurement of contracts and associated revenue where an entity accepts insurance risk from another party. The Park Authority has not entered into insurance contracts and does not currently expect to be affected by the new standard. IFRS 17 is currently applicable for reporting periods beginning from 1 January 2023. The standard, including the date from which it is expected to be applicable in the public sector, is subject to further review by HM Treasury.

Standards, amendments, and interpretations early adopted this year

There are no new standards, amendments or interpretations early adopted this year.

Significant judgements and estimates

Preparation of financial statements requires management to make significant judgements and estimates. The items in the financial statements where these judgements and estimates have been made include LEADER irregularities. As accountable body for the Cairngorms Local Action Group, which delivered the Local Development Strategy, the Park Authority is liable for any funding advanced that may not be recoverable (irregularities) from funds made available from the EU through the LEADER rural development program. Based on management's experience of the previous LEADER programme an estimate of the small percentage of costs found to be irregular has been used to make a provision against irregularities in the current 2014-2020 programme, which closed on 31 December 2021. The level of provision for irregularities will be closely managed and adjustments made in future accounting periods when warranted.



Note 3. Segmental reporting

IFRS 8: Segmental Reporting, requires operating segments to be identified on the basis of internal reports about components of the Park Authority's work. The categories reported in 2022/23 relate to the transitional year between the conclusion of the National Park Plan ending in 2021/22 and the commencement of the new Park Plan 2023-2027. No restatement of the 21/22 disclosure has been made but categories have been made as comparable as possible.

2023	Board member and staff costs £'000	Operational plan expenditure £'000	Other operating costs £'000	Operational plan income £'000	Other income £'000	Net segmental expenditure £'000
Conservation						
Peatland recovery	293	2,023	44	-	-	2,360
Species conservation	346	658	52	(661)	-	395
Sustainable uplands	524	84	79	(16)	(16)	655
Nature network	373	698	57	(10)	-	1,118
Cairngorms nature index	67	39	10	-	-	116
Engagement	56	33	8	(2)	-	95
	1,659	3,535	250	(689)	(16)	4,739
Visitor experience						
Rural development	574	492	87	(433)	(54)	666
Visitor experience	763	267	116	(16)	-	1,130
Community development	84	156	13	-	-	253
Inclusion	117	105	18	-	(3)	237
	1,538	1,020	234	(449)	(57)	2,286
Rural Development						
Sustainable tourism	39	46	6	-	-	91
Path maintenance & improvements	28	306	4	(128)	-	210
Strategic infrastructure	28	344	4	-	-	376
Glenmore	17	5	3	-	-	25
	112	701	17	(128)	-	702
Corporate services						
Collaboration	3	143	-	-	-	146
Heritage Horizons development	250	1,204	38	(1,399)	-	93
Open and inclusive innovation	1,097	166	167	(20)	(11)	1,399
	1,350	1,513	205	(1,419)	(11)	1,638
Communications						
	412	213	63	-	-	688
	5,071	6,982	769	(2,685)	(84)	10,053

Items not attributable to segmental activity

Depreciation, amortising, and impairment charges

321

Net operating expenditure

10,374



2022	Board member and staff costs £'000	Operational plan expenditure £'000	Other operating costs £'000	Operational plan income £'000	Other income £'000	Net segmental expenditure £'000
Conservation						
Habitat restoration	124	1,472	22	(33)	-	1,585
Priority Species	382	533	69	(578)	(46)	360
Moorland management	475	62	86	(24)	-	599
Catchment management	232	137	43	(12)	-	400
	<u>1,213</u>	<u>2,204</u>	<u>220</u>	<u>(647)</u>	<u>(46)</u>	<u>2,944</u>
Visitor experience						
Glenmore	15	69	3	(1)	-	86
Infrastructure	124	865	22	(6)	-	1,005
Active Cairngorms	67	39	12	(29)	-	89
Visitor experience	837	398	153	(42)	-	1,346
	<u>1,043</u>	<u>1,371</u>	<u>190</u>	<u>(78)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2,526</u>
Rural Development						
Planning	336	116	61	(20)	(45)	448
Economic strategy	41	60	7	(2)	-	106
Tomintoul & Glenlivet regeneration	-	90	-	(76)	-	14
Community support	235	1,011	43	(406)	(48)	835
	<u>612</u>	<u>1,277</u>	<u>111</u>	<u>(504)</u>	<u>(93)</u>	<u>1,403</u>
Corporate services						
OD strategy	160	106	29	(8)	(13)	274
Facilities and accommodation	57	-	10	(3)	-	64
Service improvement	625	18	114	(32)	-	725
Governance & community	103	-	19	(5)	-	117
	<u>945</u>	<u>124</u>	<u>172</u>	<u>(48)</u>	<u>(13)</u>	<u>1,180</u>
Communications	382	211	69	(27)	-	635
	<u>4,195</u>	<u>5,187</u>	<u>762</u>	<u>(1,304)</u>	<u>(152)</u>	<u>8,688</u>
Items not attributable to segmental activity						
Depreciation, amortising, and impairment charges						<u>171</u>
Net operating expenditure						<u>8,859</u>



Note 4. Grant-in-aid

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Grant-in-aid allocated to meet operational expenditure	7,472	6,785
Grant-in-aid allocated to meet capital expenditure	3,164	2,180
	10,636	8,965

Note 5. Income

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Operational Plan income from EU sources	-	221
Operational Plan income from other sources	2,715	1,192
Planning fees	54	43
	2,769	1,456

Note 6. Board member and staff costs

Further information can be found in section 2.3 – Remuneration and staff report.

	Permanently employed staff and Board Members £'000	Others £'000	Total 2023 £'000	Total 2022 £'000
Board members	172	-	172	179
Staff	3,763	1,093	4,856	4,016
Agency or short-term staff	-	43	43	-
	3,935	1,136	5,071	4,195
Board members				
Fees	169		169	176
Social security costs	3		3	3
	172		172	179
Staff				
Salaries	2,728	826	3,557	2,952
Social security costs	297	82	379	297
Pensions	735	185	920	767
Apprenticeship levy	3	-	-	-
	3,763	1,093	4,856	4,016
Agency or short-term staff	-	43	43	-



Note 7. Other operating costs

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Office running costs	314	203
Board and staff costs (excluding salary/fee costs)	131	49
Information technology	185	80
Professional support fees	82	38
Land and buildings rentals*	2	143
Vehicles and office equipment rentals	40	38
Independent auditor's fees	15	12
COVID 19 specific related costs (excluding staff costs)	-	41
	<u>769</u>	<u>604</u>

*Rentals on leased properties are from 1 April 2022 accounted for under IFRS 16 whereby a right-of-use asset and lease liability are recognised in the financial statements. Depreciation is charged on the right-of-use asset and interest is charged to the lease liability.

Note 8. Investments

The Park Authority holds an investment in National Parks Partnerships LLP. At incorporation, the Park Authority and the other 14 UK National Parks contributed £12,000 for an equal share in the entity with a further capital call in March 2018.

The investment was fully impaired as at 31 March 2018, as the capital contributions cannot be withdrawn or paid back. Under IFRS 9, the investment is measured at a fair value through the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. The fair value is assessed as nil, which is the same as the carrying value in the prior year.



Note 9. Tangible assets

	Leasehold property improvements £'000	Park entry markers £'000	Operational plant and equipment £'000	Assets in the course of construction £'000	Information technology £'000	Total £'000
Cost						
At 1 April 2022	238	57	594	-	215	1,104
Additions	-	-	17	30	44	91
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(32)	(32)
At 31 March 2023	238	57	611	30	227	1,163
Depreciation						
At 1 April 2022	(174)	(57)	(311)	-	(147)	(689)
Charge for year	(23)	-	(69)	-	(39)	(131)
Disposals	-	-	-	-	32	32
At 31 March 2023	(197)	(57)	(380)	-	(154)	(788)
Cost						
At 1 April 2021	238	57	594	-	238	1,127
Additions	-	-	-	-	22	22
Disposals	-	-	-	-	(45)	(45)
At 31 March 2022	238	57	594	-	215	1,104
Depreciation						
At 1 April 2021	(150)	(31)	(239)	-	(153)	(573)
Charge for year	(24)	(26)	(72)	-	(39)	(161)
Disposals	-	-	-	-	45	45
At 31 March 2022	(174)	(57)	(311)	-	(147)	(689)
Carrying value						
At 31 March 2023	41	-	231	30	73	375
At 31 March 2022	64	-	283	-	68	415

The Authority owns all assets capitalised other than right-of-use assets, leased property and leased equipment, which are held under lease. The Authority has no finance leases.



Note 10. Right-of-use assets

	Property	Vehicles	Office equipment	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost				
At 1 April 2022	-	-	-	-
Impact of change in accounting policy	2,565	66	10	2,641
Additions	-	58	27	85
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2023	<u>2,565</u>	<u>124</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>2,726</u>
Depreciation				
At 1 April 2022	-	-	-	-
Charge for year	(118)	(34)	(4)	(156)
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2023	<u>(118)</u>	<u>(34)</u>	<u>(4)</u>	<u>(156)</u>
Cost				
At 1 April 2021	-	-	-	-
Additions	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2022	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Depreciation				
At 1 April 2021	-	-	-	-
Charge for year	-	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-	-
At 31 March 2022	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Carrying value				
At 31 March 2023	<u>2,447</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>2,570</u>
At 31 March 2022	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>



Note 11. Intangible assets

	Software £'000
Cost	
At 1 April 2022	173
Additions	12
Disposals	(70)
At 31 March 2023	<u>115</u>
Amortisation	
At 1 April 2022	(68)
Charge for year	(33)
Disposals	70
At 31 March 2023	<u>31</u>
Cost	
At 1 April 2021	91
Additions	96
Disposals	(14)
At 31 March 2022	<u>173</u>
Amortisation	
At 1 April 2021	(72)
Additions	(10)
Disposals	14
At 31 March 2022	<u>(68)</u>
Net book value	
At 31 March 2023	<u>84</u>
At 31 March 2022	<u>105</u>

Note 12. Trade receivable and other current assets

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade receivables	44	96
Project income debtors	1,040	294
Prepayments and accrued income	161	106
	<u>1,245</u>	<u>496</u>



Note 13. Cash and cash equivalents

	2023	2022 (restated)
	£'000	£'000
Balance as at 1 April	1,918	639
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	(305)	1,279
Balance as at 31 March	1,613	1,918

The year end balances were held in commercial bank accounts or as cash in hand.

Note 14. Trade payables and other current liabilities

	2023	2022 (restated)
	£'000	£'000
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Trade payables	556	424
Accruals and deferred income	1,163	1,195
Holiday pay accrual	249	198
Provisions	60	60
Other liabilities	22	21
Current part of lease liabilities	161	-
	2,211	1,898
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Lease liabilities	2,405	-
	4,616	1,898

Provisions carried are for irregularities on Leader Programme claims.

Note 15. Pensions

The Park Authority is a member of the Principal Civil Service Pensions Scheme (PCSPS) which is an unfunded multi-employer defined benefit scheme. The Park Authority is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities of the scheme. A full actuarial valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2020, details of it, and annual Resource Accounts, can be found at www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk

For the year ended 31 March 2023 employer's contributions of £909,992 (2022: £767,015) were paid to the PCSPS. The contributions were payable at one of four rates, from 26.6% to 30.3% of pensionable pay, based on salary bands. The scheme's Actuary reviews employer contribution every four years following a full



scheme valuation. The salary band and contributions rates were revised for 2019/20 and will remain unchanged until 2023/24. The contribution rates reflect benefits as they are accrued, not when the costs are actually incurred, and reflect past experience of the scheme.

All employees have the opportunity to join the scheme, and can also opt to open partnership pension accounts, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. There were no contributions due to partnership pension providers during 2022/23 or the previous year.

Note 16. Capital commitments

	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Contracted capital commitments at 31 March 2022 not otherwise included in the financial statements		
Property, plant, and equipment	35	56

Note 17. Leases

Information for 2023 is reported under IFRS 16. The prior year is reported under IAS 17.

The Authority has entered into leases in the normal course of our operating activities. Rentals on leased assets are from 1 April 2022 accounted for under IFRS 16 whereby a right-of-use asset and lease liability are recognised in the financial statements. Depreciation is charged on the right-of-use asset and interest is charged to the lease liability. Details of the right-of-use assets included in the Statement of Financial Position and of the depreciation charge recorded in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure are shown in Note 10.

Obligations under non-cancellable leases are given in the table below:

	Land and buildings		Motor vehicles and office equipment	
	2023 £'000	2022 £'000	2023 £'000	2022 £'000
Not later than 1 year	115	143	46	53
Later than 1 and not later than 5 years	441	529	75	59
Later than 5 years	1,889	2,146	-	-
	<u>2,445</u>	<u>2,818</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>112</u>



The expense related to short-life leases was £3,688. The expense related to low value assets was £2,292.

The cash outflow in respect of leases for year ended 31 March 2023 £161,422. Interest on lease liabilities recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2023 was £27,383.

Note 18. Contingent liabilities

The Park Authority is the lead body for Heritage Lottery Fund supported projects the Capercaillie Framework Project and the new Cairngorms 2030: People and Nature Thriving Together (known as the Heritage Horizons project) as well as being the Accountable Body for Cairngorms LEADER which administered the European funded project (LEADER) on behalf of the Cairngorms Local Action Group (concluded in 2021/22).

Given the nature of these arrangements, advances are made to projects and grant applicants which in turn are reclaimed from the funders. It is possible that funds advanced may fall to be irrecoverable. At this time there is uncertainty whether any liability will arise or its value.

Note 19. Related party transactions

The Park Authority is a Non-departmental Public Body of the Scottish Government. The Park Authority's sponsoring body is the Natural Resources Division, Environment & Forestry Directorate.

The Scottish Government and the Natural Resources Division, Environment & Forestry Directorate are regarded as related parties with whom there have been various material transactions during the year in the normal course of operations.

In addition, the Park Authority has had a small number of material transactions with other Scottish Government departments and other central, local UK government bodies: Aberdeenshire Council, Angus Council, Audit Scotland, Broads Authority, Crown Estate Scotland, Dartmoor National Park Authority, Disclosure Scotland, Exmoor National Park Authority, Forestry and Land Scotland, HM Revenue & Customs, Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Lakes District National Park Authority, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, The Moray Council, Nature Scotland, NHS Highland, New Forest National Park Authority, Northumberland National Park Authority, Perth and Kinross Council, Scottish



Forestry, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Land Commission, Scottish Police Authority, South Downs National Park Authority, Transport Scotland, Visit Scotland, and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.

There were neither payments nor receipts outstanding at either year end.

No Board member, senior manager or other related parties have undertaken any material transactions with the Park Authority during the year.



	22/23		21/22	
	Payments £,000	Receipts £,000	Payments £,000	Receipts £,000
Geva Blackett as appointee Ballater Royal Deeside – grants	15	-	3	-
David Cameron, Derek Ross trustees of the Cairngorms Trust – support payments and contributions to sustainable transport within the National Park and for COVID 19 recovery	168	48	173	-
Janet Hunter trustees of The Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) – payments for path maintenances; David Cameron (resigned 26 June 2021),	82	-	200	-
Janet Hunter, director of Cateran Ecomuseum – grants	-	-	1	-
Janet Hunter, board member Europarc Council – annual subscriptions	1	-	1	-
Janet Hunter, Growbiz	46	-	-	-
John Kirk, owner of Rothiemoon Farm – nature friendly farming grant	-	-	1	-
John Latham, elect representative Marr Area Partnership – grant (resigned 30 September 2022)	-	-	1	-
Douglas McAdam, chair, South Grampian Deer Management Group - grant	-	-	1	-
Xander McDade, representative National Parks UK – annual subscription	12	-	10	-
Fiona McLean, rector of University of the Highlands and Island – grant	2	-	1	-
Gaenor Rodger, non-exec director of NHS Highland	71	-	14	-



Note 20. Financial Instruments and Exposure to Risks

The Park Authority's cash operating and capital expenditure is met from the DEL cash budget allocation from the Scottish Government, from other income sources and from contributions from partner agencies to jointly fund projects. The Park Authority has no powers to borrow money or to invest surplus funds. Other than financial assets and liabilities which are generated by day-to-day operational activities, the investment in National Parks Partnerships LLP (Note 10), the Park Authority holds no financial instruments.

Liquidity risk - the Park Authority's net revenue resource requirements are financed by Scottish Government, as is its capital expenditure. The Park Authority is not therefore exposed to material liquidity risks.

Credit risk - the Park Authority's funders are mainly Scottish Government Departments, Executive Agencies or other Public Bodies. The Park Authority is therefore not exposed to any material credit risk.

Foreign Currency Risk - the Park Authority is not exposed to foreign currency risk.

The Park Authority's financial assets and liabilities are categorised by groups under IFRS 9 as

	2023	2022 (restated)
	£'000	£'000
Financial assets		
Trade and other receivables	1,245	496
Cash and cash equivalents	1,613	1,918
	2,858	2,414
Financial liabilities		
Trade and other payables	4,616	2,010

Note 21. Third-party assets

The Park Authority acts as custodian for cash received for restoration and aftercare of two quarry sites (£181,000, of which £154,000 is in an interest-bearing deposit account) and for developers' contributions held until such time that a decision is



made on the application of those funds (£73,000). Neither the Park Authority nor Scottish Government more generally has a direct beneficial interest in those funds at the year end. Third-party assets are not public assets and are not recorded in the primary financial statements.

	2023 £'000	2022 (restated) £'000
Bank balances and monies on deposit	254	112



APPENDIX 1 – ACCOUNTS DIRECTION



CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

DIRECTION BY THE SCOTTISH MINISTERS

1. The Scottish Ministers, in pursuance of The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, hereby give the following direction.
2. The statement of accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2022, and subsequent years, shall comply with the accounting principles and disclosure requirements of the edition of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) which is in force for the year for which the statement of accounts are prepared.
3. The accounts shall be prepared so as to give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year, and of the state of affairs as at the end of the financial year.
4. This direction shall be reproduced as an appendix to the statement of accounts. The direction given on 12 January 2006 is hereby revoked.

Signed: Donald Henderson, Deputy Director of Nature Division
by the authority of the Scottish Ministers

Dated: 02 August 2023