

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR DISCUSSION

**Title: STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT AND  
MONITORING CORPORATE PERFORMANCE**

**Prepared by: VICKY WALKER, GOVERNANCE & REPORTING  
MANAGER**

#### **Purpose**

This paper presents an update on the Authority's performance to date in working towards delivery of strategic objectives established in the 2018 to 2022 Corporate Plan.

The paper focuses on delivery against the Key Performance Indicators adopted as measures of performance in delivery of our Corporate Plan, while highlighting by exception any significant constraints, risks or shortcomings on planned delivery.

The paper also presents the latest version of the Strategic Risk Register, following ongoing review and mitigation action by the Management Team and review by the Audit and Risk Committee.

Information is presented on delivery against the Corporate Plan only in this paper. Updates on delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan for 2017 to 2022 are reported separately.

#### **Recommendations**

**The Board is asked to:**

- a) Review the update on corporate performance and strategic risk management set out in this paper.**
- b) Highlight any achievements or exceptions which, from a strategic leadership perspective, Board members believe are of particular significance to the delivery of the Authority's strategic objectives.**
- c) Review and comment on the risk register for completeness in coverage of current strategic risks and adequacy of mitigation actions.**

## STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING CORPORATE PERFORMANCE – FOR DISCUSSION

### Strategic Context

1. The Authority's Corporate Plan, <http://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CNPACorporatePlan2018-2022.pdf> describes how we will contribute to the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP).
2. The Corporate Plan also sets out how the CNPA will support the Government's central purpose: to focus the Government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increased wellbeing and sustainable and inclusive economic growth and delivery of the Programme for Government. To this end, the plan highlights (page X) that the work of the Authority makes a contribution to 6 of the Scottish Government's 11 National Outcomes agreed within the National Performance Framework.
3. A corporate performance framework is required to measure the extent to which we succeed in delivering the priorities agreed in the corporate plan and make the desired contributions to wider national government strategies. The Board agreed the Authority's corporate performance framework as an integral part of the Corporate Plan. The information presented with this paper follows those agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
4. This Corporate Plan delivery update is the final update for the span of the Corporate plan. Since 2020 there have been some ongoing impacts on delivery due to restrictions and impacts of the COVID19 pandemic. This update features a range of commentaries where some of these the impacts have impacted on the final position for delivery of the Corporate plan. Management Team have closely monitored the capability to continue to deliver planned actions toward achievement of the Authority's agreed strategic objectives and adverse impacts have been mitigated accordingly. The Annexes presented along with this paper, and in particular Annex 2 which sets out the Key Performance Indicators, and our anticipated delivery position at the end of the Corporate plan period. A number of indicators have increased from Amber to Green since the last reporting period.

### Strategic Policy Considerations

5. The Authority's Corporate Plan makes reference to our contribution to National Outcomes. In most cases the corporate performance indicators do not present a direct measure of contribution to the specific outcomes. Rather, they are agreed to

represent an appropriate “proxy” indicator, whereby our demonstration of achievement in a specific area of the Authority’s operations is accepted as a reasonable measure of our contribution to wider national or portfolio objectives.

## **Strategic Risk Management**

6. The Board considered and approved the current strategic risk register supporting delivery of the 2018 to 2022 Corporate Plan at its meeting in June 2018. The Board also endorsed the Authority’s Strategic Risk Management Strategy at the same meeting.
7. The strategic risk register has evolved considerably since that time. The register is regularly reviewed and updated by both the Audit and Risk Committee and the Management Team with the Board considering the position on strategic risk management at the same time as it considers these Corporate Performance reports. The Strategic Risk Register is a dynamic document. Risks will be removed when their likelihood of occurrence and / or their potential impact is assessed to have declined sufficiently through management and implementation of mitigation or circumstances change in the Authority’s wider operating environment. The current version of the strategic risk register is set out for consideration as an Annex to this paper.
8. Responding to feedback from internal audit, the risk register now analyses the proposed risk mitigation actions between “preventative” and “remedial” action: respectively establishing management activities designed to prevent the risk from taking happening and seeking to minimise the impact of a risk should it occur. This categorisation is intended to assist the Board and Management Team better assess the adequacy of actions proposed to manage risk.
9. The Board are invited at this point to review the current version of the Strategic Risk Register; identify any potential strategic risks not currently included; comment on the draft assessment of significance of risks identified and adequacy of proposed mitigation.

## **Implications**

10. Both the Corporate Performance Monitoring Framework and Strategic Risk Register have been developed with a view to managing and limiting the staff time resource required to support the administration of these processes, while ensuring that the processes themselves are fit for purpose in managing risk to which the Authority is exposed and measuring our success in achieving agreed corporate priorities. We are aiming to make best use of data already collected by ourselves and our partners and hence tap into existing work rather than create new, often costly, data collection processes. Some indicators have data collected annually or over longer periods.

Therefore not all indicators will change over the period since these monitoring reports were last presented to the Board.

11. Our strategic risk management process and practices build on existing methods already reviewed and approved by Audit & Risk Committee and evaluated by internal and external audit. Our strategic planning and corporate performance monitoring reporting was also subject to internal audit review as part of the 2018/19 internal audit programme and received a “clear” internal audit report. The internal auditors, BDO, gave a “substantial” (highest) rating to both the design and operational effectiveness of these performance monitoring processes.
12. Our risk management processes require staff to reference the agreed strategic risks in developing specific strategies and policies and tailor their plans accordingly, to both ensure these policies and strategies are not impacted by the recognised risks and also help manage these risks.
13. In taking forward actions and projects to help deliver Corporate Plan priorities, Directors and their Heads of Service are expected to ensure that operational plans and / or project plans where required are covered by more specific risk registers and risk management practices.

### **Success Measures**

14. Implementation of an effective Corporate Performance Monitoring System is an essential component of enabling identification of success in delivery of the Board’s agreed Corporate Plan.
  15. Effective risk management processes ensure that risks that may impact on success are identified, managed and / or monitored appropriately to support delivery of Corporate objectives. Risk management processes also assist in evaluating opportunities for action and in determining the Authority’s approaches to most effectively realising those opportunities.
  16. The work in bringing these processes together therefore forms a key aspect of the Authority’s strategic management processes.
  17. The progress shown in the Corporate Performance qualitative and quantitative updates are themselves presenting the success measures in the Authority’s deliver of its approved corporate objectives.
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## **Supporting Information:**

### ***Update on Corporate Plan Monitoring***

1. A summary of the Authority's Corporate Plan monitoring information is presented in Annex 1. Corporate KPIs complementing the qualitative updates on performance are set out in Annex 2 presented with this paper. A commentary on the current status of these KPIs is also presented. More information on the highlights and issues arising over the course of Corporate Plan delivery to date is presented in the following sections of this paper.

### ***Conservation and Land Management - Highlights***

2. The Capercaillie project has continued to meet all project milestones and is investigating new approaches to conservation of species across a number of partners with senior level engagement. The successful award of a further £2.9 million in funding in June 2021 has ensured delivery of findings from the development phase of the project up until July 2023. Project funds are allocated to local communities via devolved allocations of up to £100,000 per community, through commissioning innovate genetics and social science research, land management contracts and directly employing gamekeepers, ecologists and project staff - all delivering capercaillie conservation across the National Park from July 2020 until July 2023.
3. Since the last update, 1553.5 ha of woodland creation has been approved by Scottish Forestry in the National Park. This is spread across the Highland, Aberdeenshire and Perth & Kinross local authority areas. The bulk of the hectareage is accounted for by an approved natural regeneration scheme of 1425 ha, which will be delivered by Wildland Ltd. A proposed native woodland planting scheme of 426 ha at Kinrara is currently out for consultation by Scottish Forestry. Further woodland expansion continues to progress in key areas through managing deer populations for natural regeneration
4. Species conservation continues to be driven forwards primarily through the work of dedicated projects, namely Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms, Cairngorms Rare Plants & Wild Connections, Wetlands and Waders Initiatives, Cairngorms Wildcat and Cairngorms Capercaillie projects. CNPA and BTO have produced sensitivity maps identifying key curlew habitat and breeding sites across the Park and CNPA is developing Park-wide Fresh Water Pearl Mussel species reinforcement strategy and a raptor conservation strategy.
5. Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend, is set to welcome back people to the landscapes, wildlife and land management in the Park in May 2022. Approximately 100 events run by land managers, organisations, communities and enthusiasts across the Park will be

available for people to find out more about the National Park, how it's managed and the wildlife it's famous for.

***Conservation and Land Management – Exception Reporting***

6. Wildlife crime continues to be highlighted as an exception in this round of performance reporting, as incidents continue to occur in the Park. The raptor trackers acquired with funding from NatureScot are continuing to be fitted to golden eagles in the park. Work with Police Scotland and other partners to try to reduce incidents is ongoing. Broader raptor work in the Park is being discussed, including improved monitoring, conservation projects and ways of shifting the 'raptor culture' in parts of the Park.
7. Peatland restoration work, previously flagged as at escalated "red" risk of delivery, has improved performance is now at amber risk of delivery. The Peatland Team are on target to meet exceed performance targets from Scottish Government which support funding received but will fail to meet the target outlined in the Corporate Plan which is nearly double the target agreed with Scottish Government. Delivery had been significantly impacted by COVID19 restrictions during 2020/21 but has significantly increased activity during 2021/22 and anticipate between 550 and 700 hectares will be completed during this financial year.
8. The Capercaillie number target unlikely to be met and is now flagged as a red rated risk. Full national survey results are due in 2022 but other surveys suggest population has declined seriously from the 1100 birds estimated 2016.

***Visitor Experience - Highlights***

9. 51.8 km of path upgraded by Mountains & People project (ended Jan 2021) and 6.5 km of new path constructed along Speyside Way Extension & Seven Bridges path Ballater. Further improvements to the route at Grantown, Kincaig & Tromie being developed in 2021. Both path creation and path upgrade KPIs sought over the Corporate Plan period are now achieved.
10. Full visitor survey data indicates 27% of visitors from C2, D & E categories which significantly exceeds the target of 20% of visitors from these categories.
11. The ranger service was fully operational from April 2021 and will continue with increased numbers of seasonal rangers from April 2022. The new service was positively received by communities and partners as visitor numbers to the park increased significantly during the Summer of 2021.

12. The target level of volunteer rangers trained over the corporate plan period has also been achieved, an additional 9 volunteer rangers have been recruited since the last update.

***Visitor Experience – Exception Reporting***

13. The current interruption to service at Cairngorm Mountain remains a key issue for the Cairngorms visitor infrastructure and tourism economy. We continue to work as closely as possible with Highlands and Island Enterprise (HIE) and other stakeholders on this matter, and reviewing the wider impacts of this on the Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy, while recognising that HIE are very much in the lead in planning for the future of Cairngorm Mountain.
14. Current STEAM data also continues to indicate that the tourism impact in the southern and eastern areas of the Cairngorms National Park is declining very slightly from prior year levels rather than increasing toward the target of 25% of the total visitor economy. The position remains an increase from the baseline figure, although trend is downward rather than the targeted increase.
15. John Muir Award completions has been significantly impacted by Covid-19 restrictions with 832 awards being completed during 2021 significantly lower than over 2000 completed during 2019.

***Rural Development – Highlights***

16. The CNPA has granted consent (including consent by appeal) for 578 affordable homes since 31st March 2018

***Rural Development – Exception Reporting***

17. There are no exceptions to report on Communications at this point

***Communications - Highlights***

18. In 2021, we reached 351,820 website sessions, a 7% increase on the 2020 figure but short of our 400k target. Social media engagement increased by 50% from 2020. This growth can be attributed to focusing on building our Instagram and LinkedIn audiences, including reaching our end of year goal of 10,000 followers on Instagram.
19. The informal phase of the NPPP4 consultation was launched in September with formal responses being a focus in November and December. A significant increase in responses was received as a result.
20. A number of staff were present for a variety of events at COP26 which took place in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November. Park staff engaged with hundreds of

delegates as part of an Environment and Economies Leaders' Group and CNPA's Chief Executive delivered a speech on the impacts of climate change on snow levels in the Park at the Cryosphere Pavilion, and also took part in a panel event with other UK National Parks.

***Communications – Exception Reporting***

21. There are no exceptions to report on Communications at this point.

***Corporate Services - Organisational Development***

22. Cairngorms NPA was recognised this year as one of the Top 10 Flexible Organisations in Scotland, giving significant public and sectoral recognition to the work being undertaken through our Organisational Development Strategy in building an effective organisation while establishing a positive work / life balance for our staff.

***Organisational Development – Exception Report***

23. Since the last update 3 posts have not had a successful recruitment at the first attempt. Two of these were successfully recruited to following a re-specification of the role during a second recruitment. The further post is currently out to second recruitment.

***Other Corporate KPIs and Cross-cutting Indicators***

24. Despite the range of COVID impacts and unusual scale of budget amendments approved, draft year-end figures for 2020/21 financial year indicate that finances over the year have been successfully managed with a small under-spend equating to 0.6% of the total income of £7.035 million under management in the year.
25. Financial resources available to the Authority for 2021/22 are significantly ahead of the Corporate Plan projections.
26. Our carbon emissions modelling highlights a significant reduction in emissions over the course of the last year. Of course, the suspension of the great majority of business related travel over the course of the year must be borne in mind at this point. Annual progress prior to 2020/21 on reducing our business related emissions has been positive and we continue to focus on the carbon impacts of our operations as we begin to develop the plans around moving out of our business continuity planning phase into our “new normal” operational mode.
27. FOISA requests have reduced to amber for this reporting period as staff absence before the Christmas break lead to delays one responding to two requests. Overall

the response rate within statutory time scales is 92% despite an increase in requests during 2021/22 compared to previous years.

***Strategic Risk Management***

28. The Strategic Risk Register is presented at Annex 3 to this paper. This sets out the most recent appraisal of the Authority's strategic risk management by the Audit and Risk Committee in February 2022 and by Management Team in January 2022.
29. One new risk in relation to recruitment trends has been added to the corporate risk register since the last review by the Board.

**Vicky Walker on behalf of Management Team and Operational Management Group**

**4<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

**[davidcameron@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:davidcameron@cairngorms.co.uk)**