



For Discussion

Title: Communication Update

Prepared by: Olly Davies, Head of Communications

Purpose

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

Recommendations

The Governance Committee is asked to:

Review activity across a range of communications channels in the past three months and discuss the identified priorities for Q3 of 2023.

1. Key comms deliverables / achievements

a) Websites

- A total of 50 agencies applied as part of the first 'single procurement document / SPD' round of our website development tender process. This list has been whittled down to a final shortlist of seven companies who will each receive a copy of the detailed tender document. The deadline for submissions will be towards the end of June, with contracts awarded soon afterwards. SPD responses were scored based on five main criteria: their approach to audience-centred design; their accessibility credentials; their design approach; project management and technical expertise.
- A [new website for the Cairngorms Nature Festival](#) launched in early April, showcasing over 75 events from the Park Authority and partners across the National Park. The new site features filterable events listings, volunteer opportunities, toggles for key elements such as wheelchair access, toilet availability, family or dog friendly events, as well as an interactive map showing where all the events are located.
- Our Digital Developer Donald Ross headed off on a career break at the end of March. Following a competitive recruitment process, we have appointed Adam



Alexander to the role of Digital Projects Coordinator to pick up many of Donald's duties, including project managing the development of our new National Park website. Adam lives in Aviemore and has run his own website design business for over a decade. He is due to start with us on Tuesday 30 May.

- The [Cairngorms 2030 microsite](#) continues to be updated to share the results of our Heritage Horizons consultation efforts. In late April this included the promotion of a series of drop-in events in Braemar, Ballater and Aviemore for residents to view the active and public transport proposals developed by our consultants. Further events are also planned for Blair Atholl and Killiecrankie.
- Over the past few months we have been working with a team of researchers from the University of Edinburgh to better understand (a.) whether visitors to the National Park would welcome an app to help them plan their visit to the area; and (b.) if so, what functionality they would expect to be included. The research project was in two parts, with an initial review of 20+ comparator apps from Scotland, the rest of the UK and Europe, followed by audience interviews with c. 100 people on what they were looking for. Encouragingly, 55% of respondents said that a visitor app would be 'very' or 'extremely' useful, while a further 25% said it would be 'moderately' useful. In terms of key functionality, the ability to use a map of the National Park offline was most popular, followed by tips from rangers, special offers, real-time busyness info and an interactive attractions map. We are now working with colleagues at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, Perth and Kinross and East Lothian Councils and the university to explore a collective funding bid for app development, likely in 2024.

b) Social media and blogs

- We celebrated World Gaelic Week across social media in February in line with our Gaelic language plan commitments, featuring some translations of commonly used words and phrases. Feedback and learning from this has helped shape our approach to the Cairngorms Nature Festival, with Gaelic translations woven into many of our website and social media messages.
- Our elections activity concluded with a [video featuring a diverse selection of people from across the Cairngorms National Park](#) encouraging people to vote, together with simple infographics showing them how to do so. A live stream of the count –



delivered in partnership with The Highland Council – was broadcast on YouTube and shared via the National Park website.

- A public-facing LGBT History Month campaign was shared across our website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Across the month we shared blog pieces from five members of the LGBT community living in the Cairngorms National Park and also showcased our work towards the LGBT Youth Charter. Our Cairngorms Voices pieces had a total social media reach of 35,724 and more than 2,000 engagements. [One piece from the owner of River Wild Adventures](#) quickly became our most read Cairngorms Voices piece ever, demonstrating the impact of powerful storytelling and audience interest. An [International Women's Day post from writer Merryn Glover](#) a few weeks later proved similarly popular.
- The team worked closely with visitor management and ranger colleagues to share relevant messages ahead of Easter and began to develop a bank of 'alert' style messages to improve the speed of our response when a relevant incident occurs in the National Park, eg a wildfire or flood. These messages will complement paid-for campaign activity being delivered by the Cairngorms Business Partnership for the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project, with a suite of materials aimed at tackling visitor disturbance due to launch before the busy summer period.
- For a third successive year the Park Authority has contributed to Ramblers Scotland's responsible access campaign for young people visiting the Scottish countryside. The campaign has co-created with a diverse panel of young people from across Scotland. Three films focusing on leaving no trace, [avoiding fires](#) and reducing wildlife disturbance have been produced, with the results shared across TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram throughout the summer.
- A comprehensive digital campaign has been pulled together to support the Cairngorms Nature Festival, focussing on creating a buzz and improving awareness of the festival through the National Park and Nature social media channels, local Facebook community groups, a targeted ad campaign and digital advertisement with external news sites. A simple and user-friendly toolkit has been shared with partners that includes specific digital outputs and social assets to support closer linkage with the Nature Festival brand, as well as the inclusion of Gaelic which has also been featured in our own digital promotion of the event.

c) **Press and media**



- In light of the new National Park Partnership Plan and significant changes to our core staff and board team, we have organised a series of media training sessions over the summer. The four sessions will be run by PR experts Comsteria (who have previously worked with The Highland Council) and will cover topics such as how the media works, interview techniques and developing key messages, as well as giving participants practical interview experience on camera.
- A huge amount of press activity for the Cairngorms 2030 programme has taken place over the past few months. This includes working with the team at Alzheimer Scotland on the [launch of the UK's first outdoor dementia resource centre](#), which was covered by both the BBC and STV, as well as the Press and Journal, The National, Aberdeen Live and the Badenoch and Strathspey Herald. The team also supported activity on the Climate Learning and Education and Community Arts and Culture projects.
- Other media highlights during the period include the [launch of the Cairngorms Nature Festival](#), [results of the March board elections](#), a [twinflower conservation success story](#) involving members of the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership and the [approval of 20 commercial letting units at Knockgranish](#).
- Three 'Beaver Blether' events took place on 9, 16 and 22 March in Kingussie, Kincaig and Aviemore, and the team were heavily involved in preparing supporting FAQs, video interviews and key messages, as well as promoting the events themselves. Over 60 people attended the sessions in total, with the average person staying around 20 to 30 minutes. They will be followed by a formal stakeholder engagement process later in the year.

d) Public and stakeholder engagement

- At the end of April we presented our draft Cairngorms 2030 Activity Plan to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The plan summarises our overarching approach to community engagement, our learning from previous Lottery projects (Tomintoul and Glenlivet, Badenoch: Great Place and the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project), our target audiences, our plans for widening participation, and our approach to volunteering. The plan also summarised the results of nearly a year's worth of consultation effort as part of the development phase, with an incredible 4,000 people engaged across nearly 150 different workshops, drop-in sessions and other engagement strands. Lottery representatives commented on how ambitious and



thorough the engagement process has been to date, with staff in almost every part of the organisation involved in some capacity.

- Building on the success of face-to-face engagement for the Partnership Plan consultation and Cairngorms 2030, we will be trialling a range of in-person events over the next few months, both in terms of more informal 'drop-in' style conversations and attendance at larger-scale shows across the National Park. In particular, we have taken a stall at the Atholl Gathering, Lonach Gathering and Grantown Show to explore how to best staff these events, what format works best for our target audiences and what materials we will need to support them. Depending on how these go, our plan would be to rotate around various community events over the next few years, ensuring we get a good coverage across the Cairngorms. On a related note, we are also attending the Ballater Walking Festival in June to talk about Cairngorms 2030.
- Board elections and the Cairngorms Nature Festival dominated our stakeholder engagement activity during the period. In addition to the points covered elsewhere, the festival was promoted via a dedicated breakfast show competition on MFR local radio, adverts on Northsound and Bauer, an online feature in the P&J, a takeover of the Inverness Courier homepage, advertorial / adverts in various other local newspapers, and a coordinated paid-for social media campaign.
- Alongside our partners in the Cairngorms Business Partnership, we hosted a third business branding workshop in Ballater, following similar events in Boat of Garten and online earlier in the year. These workshops were designed to inform businesses about the existence of our brand charter, and to explore how the Park Authority can best support businesses to celebrate their role in the National Park. Following the meetings we created a survey for business partners to feedback on which materials would be most valuable to them. Over 130 people responded from a wide range of sectors, with the most popular requests being maps in different sizes, access to the Park logo to use on their materials, photography / video, leaflets and an annual wall planner. We plan to take many of these forward over the coming months, working in partnership with local businesses wherever possible to create the materials (eg on the photography project – see section e) below).

e) Publications and branding



- The [second issue of Cairn magazine](#) hit doorsteps in the run-up to Easter. In addition to the usual mix of community and conservation news, the magazine featured articles about the upcoming Cairngorms Nature Festival, the work of the ranger service, a summary of Cairngorms 2030, information about our work with beavers, and interviews with Alzheimer Scotland's Gillian Councill and the Beaver Trust's Roisin Campbell-Palmer. Word-of-mouth feedback on the magazine has been really positive so far, but we plan to gather more detailed feedback via a readers' survey once the publication has bedded in, likely in early 2024.
- We have been working with mobile outdoor activity provider Able 2 Adventure to produce a suite of images of people using all terrain wheelchairs and adaptive bikes, with a view to increasing diversity in the images that we use for comms. This follows similar photoshoots with ethnic minority communities, gamekeepers and land managers, the Peatland Action team and various community groups. We are also working with the Cairngorms Business Partnership and Aboyne Photographics to produce a range of free 'stock' images for businesses to use as part of their promotion of the National Park.
- With the refreshed [National Park brand guidelines](#) now published, our focus has turned to creating a series of practical templates for staff and partners to use. These include everything from agendas and meeting minutes to planning templates, business cards, posters and Powerpoint presentations, with a stock of resources growing all the time. Our new [media library](#) is also growing both in the number of users (c. 100 and counting) and images (15k+), with a search feature powered by Google AI helping users identify appropriate images much more easily than before.
- Alongside the development of the brand guidelines themselves, we have drawn up comprehensive legal agreements covering both the licensing of the VisitCairngorms brand by CBP and the new brand charter process for partner businesses. Both documents are now sat with CBP to review, before we roll the latter out to partners over the next month or two. We have also applied for trademark protection for the revised National Park, Park Authority, VisitCairngorms and 'Proud to be part of' logos.
- After much technical discussion with partners at the Highland Rail Partnership, Scotrail and Network Rail, we have finally been able to update the National Park signage across six stations on the Highland Mainline. There are around 25 signs in total along the route, featuring the refreshed National Park brand against a solid purple background (to avoid the fading issues that occurred last time around).



2. Priority comms activity over the next three months

A range of comms activities are planned over the next three months; these are summarised below. These projects will take place alongside a regular programme of Comms activity, coordinated through our centralised Content Working Group.

- Finalise the award of our website development contract and begin work on the new Cairngorms National Park website platform.
- Complete engagement paperwork for Cairngorms 2030 delivery phase and submit to NLHF by August.
- Develop a suite of resources for businesses to promote their role in the National Park as part of the rollout of the refreshed brand. Includes the development of a new merchandise range, working with CBP and VisitScotland.
- Attend a series of large-scale events across the National Park (Atholl, Grantown and Lonach) and gather feedback from attendees and staff on how effective these were.
- Pull together content and circulate the July issue of *Cairn* magazine to all residents in the National Park.
- Evaluate year 1 of the Cairngorms Nature Festival – how well did we do in reaching our target audiences? How do we make the event sustainable in the long-term? How best should we utilise our limited resource to support the festival alongside other comms priorities?
- Support the Conservation team to deliver formal engagement activity for beaver reintroduction in the National Park.
- Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver timely and appropriate messaging for visitors to the National Park, including supporting Ramblers Scotland's young visitor campaign.
- Firm up plans for the Park's 20th anniversary later in 2023 (from September).