



## Sustainable Tourism Action Plan

### Annual Update 2024/25

In delivering the actions below, all of which will help to deliver the National Park Partnership Plan, there are two overarching priorities:

1. Businesses, visitors and wider stakeholders should be engaged in the journey to Net Zero and nature recovery.
2. Communities and local residents should be involved in tourism decision-making where it affects them.

#### NATURE

**Outcome: A carbon negative and biodiversity rich National Park with better functioning, better connected and more resilient ecosystems.**

Research shows that the majority of our visitors are attracted by the landscapes and wildlife that make this such a special place. We want to deepen that connection with the natural environment, presenting visitors with opportunities to make a positive contribution through visitor giving, volunteering and responsible behaviour choices.

Delivering against National Park Partnership Plan objectives: • A1 – Net zero • A13 – Species recovery

Delivering against Scotland Outlook 2030: • Destination net zero

#### ACTIONS

#### Lead Partners

##### 1. Visitor investment

Encourage visitor investment in the National Park through visitor-giving, carbon offset schemes and other incentives, connecting visitors with the place through financial and emotional buy-in.

Cairngorms Trust,  
the Park Authority,  
Cairngorms  
Business  
Partnership (CBP)

The Cairngorms Trust continues to receive voluntary donations from the public to support projects within the National Park, with donations in 2023/24 of £7210.

##### 2. Climate Action Plan

Develop and implement a business-led Climate Action Plan that engages businesses in opportunities to lower their carbon footprint.

CBP



<p>CBP have developed a <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a> which has been shared with businesses. Over 79% of objectives have been achieved and a revised plan will be created for future focus. They have also recently recruited an intern who will be pulling together circular economy case studies on businesses across Scotland showcasing best practise and sharing them with CBP members.</p> <p>CBP Food Waste Event 'Elephant in the Bin' in March 2024 was well received. Keynote speaker Masterchef the Professional champion <a href="#">Gary Maclean</a> joined Zero Waste Scotland and David Ritchies and Sons along with 30 business representatives to discuss reducing food waste in the kitchen, on the plate and in general waste bins.</p> <p>GrowBiz ran a series of workshops in 2024 including 'The Circular Economy', 'Reducing your Carbon Footprint', 'Sustainable Business Models' and a Climate Cafe. In February they ran a workshop aimed at social enterprises 'Embedding Sustainable Thinking'. They are now partnered with the Climate Cafe and the next couple of events will discuss the importance of climate adaptation for business.</p> <p>UK National Parks are currently in discussions with Green Tourism Ltd around a potential bespoke National Park accreditation scheme.</p> <p>Delivery of the <a href="#">Cairngorms 2030</a> programme continues, with business engagement in many of the projects.</p>	
<p><b>3. Technological solutions</b> Investigate technological solutions to engage visitors and nudge them towards responsible choices in a way that enhances their experience of the destination.</p>	<p>Park Authority, VisitScotland</p>
<p>The Park Authority continue to sit on the national digital visitor management group and have been working with partners including Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority and VisitScotland to scope out the development of a visitor welcome app for Scotland's national parks. Subject to sourcing appropriate budget, we anticipate an app being developed in 2025 and early 2026, once redevelopment projects for the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond websites have been completed.</p> <p>In the meantime, Park Authority contracted digital spatial visitor data through Active Xchange as a year's trial to help monitor visitor volume and flows. A follow-up trial will now take place that focuses on specific sensitive sites.</p>	



<p>We also continue to investigate other digital data options in partnership with other National Parks.</p>	
<p><b>4. Pre-arrival visitor information</b> Develop a programme that supports business engagement with customers in advance of their visit, including information about biodiversity and responsible enjoyment.</p>	<p>CBP, the Park Authority</p>
<p>The “Love Nature, Love Cairngorms National Park’ responsible enjoyment project was launched to CBP members in October 2023 and since then an ongoing programme of engagement with members has sought to support their understanding of, engagement with and use of the <u>project assets</u>.</p> <p>Regular posts promoting responsible enjoyment have been shared with the VisitCairngorms consumer audience at relevant times using the project assets, with the Ed Byrne films having most engagement.</p> <p>After consultation in early 2024, the Park Authority board agreed on 28 June 2024 to develop a seasonal fire management byelaw, which would last from 01 April to 30 September each year. This decision was based on feedback from the consultation, which suggested that the approach should be easy to communicate, not perceived as heavy-handed and cover the period with the greatest risk. Further consultation on the byelaw will follow.</p> <p>Some of the Park Authority’s Tread Lightly messaging has been refreshed with updated messaging on fires and barbecues and has been translated into 12 different languages.</p> <p>The Park Authority has adopted a more proactive approach to community engagement on social media.</p>	
<p><b>5. Reducing species disturbance.</b> Develop and implement mechanisms to reduce disturbance on key species and recreational impacts on high ground.</p>	<p>The Park Authority, NatureScot, Ranger Services, CBP</p>
<p>The <u>Cairngorms Capercaillie Project</u> has now finished, having worked with key communities including visitors, businesses, dog walkers and mountain bikers to develop action plans that protect capercaillie and other vulnerable species. An overview of the project has been published <u>here</u>.</p> <p>As part of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project, an immersive capercaillie lek experience was created for visitors to Balmoral Castle that tells the story of capercaillie in Scotland</p>	



and action being taken to protect this iconic species, including how people can help it by reducing disturbance.

CBP's cycling mapping project has expanded to offer new routes in Blair Atholl, Tomintoul and Glenlivet and Grantown-on-Spey. The aim is to encourage riders to carry on through sensitive areas (routes also avoiding area altogether) without raising awareness of nature sensitivity which could encourage disturbance. The cycling page on [visitcairngorms.com](http://visitcairngorms.com) has had 7609 views in the last 12 months.

The introduction of Beavers to the National Park has seen a lot of interest. As part of the project a new Beaver Trail was waymarked on Rothiemurchus Estate as a focus for visitor interest and to minimise disturbance.

## PEOPLE

### **Outcome: A wellbeing economy that works for all the people of the Cairngorms.**

Tourism forms a major sector of the local economy but there are opportunities to improve the value it adds to the lives of local residents and communities, developing and promoting hospitality as a career and supporting communities to benefit from the visitor economy.

Delivering against National Park Partnership Plan objectives: • B2 – Wellbeing economy • B4 – Skills and training • B5 – Community assets and land • B8 – Gaelic language and culture • B10 – A Park for all

Delivering against Scotland Outlook 2030: • Our passionate people • Our diverse businesses

## ACTIONS

### Partners

Lead first

### **1. Community-led tourism**

Support, encourage and promote community-led tourism enterprises and develop a community tourism network for the National Park.

Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey, Scotland's Community Tourism Network, Cairngorms Business Partnership

The Park Authority has supported Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust to develop community assets including the development of Aviemore ice rink, and the acquisition of the Glenmore Visitor Centre through the Community Asset Transfer process.

SCOTO, Scotland's community tourism network, ran a 'Press Pause' workshop in Braemar, bringing community and tourism interests together to discuss and agree priorities for the village.



<p>Community-led local development funding supported the refurbishment of toilets and waste disposal in Grantown under community ownership.</p>	
<p><b>2. Resident research</b> Monitor residents' attitudes to tourism in their community through regular surveys and informal open meetings.</p>	<p>The Park Authority</p>
<p>The first in a series of biennial resident surveys has recently closed, capturing attitudinal data from those who live and work in the National Park, with almost 1300 completed responses. Analysis of the results is taking place now and should provide valuable information on perceptions of visitor management, and the experience of those working in the tourism and hospitality sectors.</p> <p>The Park Authority have also been running community engagements events including community drop-in events in Braemar, Carrbridge and Kingussie, reaching over 200 residents. Staff also attended a range of other community events including Tomintoul Highland Games, Newtonmore Highland Games, Grantown Show and the Greentown Show.</p>	
<p><b>3. Cultural heritage</b> Strengthen cultural events through visitor engagement with Gaelic and other languages, music, storytelling and built heritage.</p>	<p>The Park Authority, Cairngorms Business Partnership</p>
<p>The Park Authority commissioned preparatory work to explore the potential for establishing a Cultural Heritage Network for the Cairngorms National Park. The contract was awarded to SCOTO and final report and appendices have been published on the Park Authority website (<a href="#">link here</a>).</p> <p>The CBP has been supporting Badenoch Heritage activity around the Badenoch Storylands project, attending Badenoch Heritage Festival and giving recommendations to engage more visitors and locals in programme promotion and development. A clearer strategy of what the festival wants to achieve would be of benefit.</p> <p>The CBP continues to encourage businesses and communities to engage in products and services that showcase Badenoch the Storylands - the library of assets being an invaluable tool in sharing the area.</p> <p>The Park Authority's updated Gaelic Language Plan was submitted in July, and discussions with Bord na Gaelic are continuing.</p>	



Funding was provided to Feis Spe to support their work in promoting traditional music and language amongst young people in Badenoch and Strathspey.

#### **4. Fair work and wellbeing**

Identify measures and support needed to encourage fair work practices and a wellbeing economy in the tourism industry.

The Park Authority, Cairngorms Business Partnership

The Wellbeing Economy Action Plan was discussed by the Park Authority Board in November 2024. Fair work first and living wage conditions are now a requirement within all contracts, grants and work issued by the Park Authority.

Cairngorms Business Partnership hosted a guest question from the Park Authority in the Q1 2024 Business Barometer survey to help establish business attitudes to the Real Living Wage. There will be ongoing development of this work in partnership with CBP for tourism sector.

The CBP continues to position itself as a point of support for business owners, with business support services offered as standard to all CBP members. The sense of community and the opportunity for networking events, allowing business owners to learn, share and develop best practice which can feed into their wider team.

A range of wellbeing questions are included in the Cairngorms Resident Survey to allow tracking of progress over time.

#### **5. Employment, training and skills**

Promote the Cairngorms as an exceptional destination to work in the hospitality industry and develop a training initiative to strengthen links between local schools / further and higher education organisations and the hospitality sector.

Cairngorms Business Partnership, Highlands and Islands Enterprise / Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland

A rural careers event "Your Future Here – Careers in the Cairngorms", sponsored by the Park Authority and organised by Countryside Learning Scotland, took place on 12 September 2024 in Aviemore showcasing the variety of careers in the National Park. 25 local businesses and organisations exhibited with interactive stalls, and some delivered interactive workshops and demonstrations. 160 senior pupils from seven High Schools in and around the National Park attended the event along with over 200 young people who had already left school. Several of the employers came along with job opportunities, some of which were successfully filled by a young person resulting from a conversation had at the event.



<p>The CBP was involved in the 'Careers in the Cairngorms' Steering Group and have invited students from Kingussie High School to attend and support the CBP Annual Conference in November, nurturing their ambitions to work in the local community and make connections within the business community.</p> <p>The Park Authority continues to promote routes into the countryside careers through the Cairngorms Junior Ranger Project and the annual recruitment of trainee rangers.</p>	
<p><b>6. Business engagement</b> Review and refresh the 'Make it Yours' business engagement programme to ensure it meets the needs of our partners and informs and inspires frontline staff.</p>	<p>The Park Authority, Cairngorms Business Partnership</p>
<p>The Make it Yours online video continues to be promoted as an asset for training front-line staff, and a trial face-to-face event was run as part of the Braemar community engagement event. Feedback from the trial was positive and the Park Authority are assessing option for a wider roll-out in 2025.</p>	
<p><b>7. Equalities, diversity and inclusion</b> Encourage a more diverse range of visitors to the Cairngorms by addressing barriers identified by underrepresented groups and people from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, and support training for frontline hospitality staff to offer a warm welcome to visitors of all backgrounds.</p>	<p>The Park Authority</p>
<p>The Park Authority continues to work in partnerships with a range of organisations to take forward work in this area, including Black Professionals Scotland, Able2Adventure and LGBT Youth Scotland.</p> <p>In addition to the continuing work of the Park Authority's Equalities Advisory Panel, a Lived Experience panel is being developed as part of the Cairngorms 2030 Programme.</p> <p>A workshop at last year's CBP Conference was dedicated to promoting accessible tourism - encouraging CBP members to engage with the 14.6 billion accessible tourism market whilst improving the visitor experience.</p>	
<p><b>8. Local visitor levy</b></p>	<p>Local authorities, The Park Authority</p>





Engage with stakeholders to ensure that Scottish Government's proposals for a local visitor levy meet the needs of the Cairngorms National Park.	
<p>The Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill 2024 was passed by Parliament in May, allowing Local Authorities to introduce a Visitor Levy Scheme. The legislation states that National Parks Authorities must be consulted when relevant Local Authorities are developing a scheme.</p> <p>VisitScotland have published a comprehensive set of <a href="#">guidance</a> about scheme implementation.</p> <p>Highland Council launched a consultation on their proposal in November 2024, and the Park Authority and partners have been engaged through a variety of events and discussions, with a formal response to the consultation due to be discussed by the Park Authority Board on 28 March.</p> <p>Other Local Authorities are at an earliest stage of consideration and the Park Authority has reached out and asked to be involved at proposals develop.</p>	

<p><b>PLACE</b></p> <p><b>Outcome: A place that people want to live in, work in and visit that works for all.</b></p> <p>Visitors contribute not just economically but socially to life in the National Park, supporting investment in infrastructure, businesses and events to help create thriving communities. We want to spread these benefits by developing and promoting assets in communities with additional visitor capacity and encouraging visits at traditionally quieter times of year.</p> <p>Delivering against National Park Partnership Plan objectives: • C1 – Access to housing • C5 – Visitors to the National Park • C6 – A sustainable destination • C8 – Accessible path and cycle network • C9 – High-quality visitor experience</p> <p>Delivering against Scotland Outlook 2030: • Our thriving places • Our memorable experiences</p>	
<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>Partners</b> Lead first
<b>1. Tourism infrastructure</b> Produce a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan that defines the priorities for investment in tourism	The Park Authority, VisitScotland





infrastructure for the next five years and seek additional funding for delivery.	
<p>The <a href="#">Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan 2023-28</a> has been updated in light of Cairngorms 2030 projects. After a hiatus, the national Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund will again be running in 2025. The Park Authority's Visitor Infrastructure Improvement Plan was supported through Park Authority grant funding of more than £300k in 2024/25 for path and parking improvements at the Linn of Quoich on Mar Lodge Estate, welcome signage at Glen Tanar Estate, path improvements on Atholl Estate, improvements to the Glen Clova Loch Brandy car park and improvements to the Old Logging Way in Glenmore.</p> <p>The funicular railway at Cairngorm Mountain resort returned to service on Thursday 27 February. Scotland's only funicular railway has been out of action since August 2023, while an extensive programme of remediation works has been carried out, led by contractor Balfour Beatty on behalf of estate owner Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). All safety-critical matters have now been concluded, enabling resort operator Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd (CMSL) to bring the railway back to service for the remainder of the 2024/25 snowsports season. A combination of the scale and technical complexity of the remediation programme, plus the challenges of working in an exposed mountain environment in often harsh weather led to the works taking longer than had initially been expected.</p>	
<p><b>2. Visitor accommodation</b> Monitor the implementation of the new short-term let licensing arrangements and the development of measures such as the short-term let control areas and ensure that we maintain an appropriate range of accommodation for visitors.</p>	The Park Authority, local authorities
Regular updates are received from local authority partners about progress on processing short-term let licensing applications. We expect to receive statistics in early 2025 that should allow analysis of the impacts to begin.	
<p><b>3. Tourism assets</b> Promote and invest in tourism assets produced by previous place-based initiatives – including Badenoch: The Storylands, SnowRoads Scenic Route, Tomintoul and Glenlivet Dark Sky Park, Cateran Eco-museum, the Speyside Way and Deeside Way.</p>	Cairngorms Business Partnership, The Park Authority, VisitScotland
The CBP has a bank of assets to promote Badenoch the Storylands, the SnowRoads, Dark Sky experiences and the Speyside Way. There is a focus on promoting	



engagement with these products by members to ensure the benefits are maximised by all.

Speyside Way: There have been initial conversations with Badenoch Connections around luggage transfers along route, work on content creation to promote the trail to audiences, and exploration of PR opportunities and influencer collaboration in partnership with Visit Moray Speyside. A film promoting the Speyside Way has been developed showcasing the whole of the 137km route, and the CBP are in conversation with VisitMoraySpeyside on future promotional collaborations.

Cateran Ecomuseum: The Park Authority supports the delivery of The Cateran Ecomuseum's 'Museum of Rapid Transition' Programme (primarily funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund) with a grant, enabling the organisation to become more resilient, work towards financial sustainability and reduced grant dependency.

The Park Authority is supporting the development and promotion of the Dark Sky Park by providing match funding to Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust to employ a heritage ranger who will run dark skies tours and events.

#### **4. Reducing seasonality**

Support development of new products and events to encourage visits at quieter times of year, particularly through the winter months. Commission destination marketing campaigns to foster growth at traditionally quieter times of year and to encourage longer stays, with increased value to the local economy.

The Park Authority and  
Cairngorms Business  
Partnership

The winter marketing plan for the 2024/25 season is in progress, aiming to promote the Cairngorms as the original winter destination through a dynamic PR campaign. This campaign targets multiple markets and consistently highlights our four key attractions: Badenoch the Storylands, the SnowRoads, Dark Skies, and the Speyside Way.

The CBP continue to promote the event planners guide, which was developed with businesses and landowners to encourage event organisers to maximise the benefit of events to local economy, especially during the shoulder seasons.

#### **5. Business support**

Develop opportunities for businesses to use their location in a National Park to build sustainable growth through branding, product development and targeted marketing.

Cairngorms Business  
Partnership, The Park  
Authority



The Park Authority continue to support businesses through funding and service-level agreements with Growbiz and the CBP.

GrowBiz support includes one to one business support and advice as well mentoring and networking opportunities. They will be highlighting the importance of resilience and adaptation to climate change for sustainable businesses in communications and peer learning events this spring.

The redevelopment of the Cairngorms [brand charter scheme](#), with assets for use by participating businesses is highlighted through CBP's monthly members newsletter and was promoted through a branding workshop at the CBP conference in November 2024.

#### **6. Partnership working**

Build on the partnership structures and policies developed in response to the Covid-19 lockdowns as a model for resilience against future uncertainty.

The Park Authority

The Managing for Visitors group continues to meet fortnightly over the summer months, and monthly during the winter, to share information on visitor pressures and co-ordinate communications and messaging.

The Park Authority is represented on all the National Visitor Management sub-groups co-ordinated by VisitScotland.

The Cairngorms Tourism Partnership continues to meet three times a year.