



Cairngorms
NATIONAL PARK
Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaìdh Ruaidh

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan
Annual Progress Report for 2012/13



THE NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP

- > Aberdeenshire Council
- > Angus Council
- > Cairngorms Business Partnership
- > Cairngorms LEADER
- > Cairngorms National Park Authority
- > Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust
- > Community Development and Support Organisations throughout the Park
- > Community Energy Scotland
- > Education Scotland
- > Forestry Commission Scotland
- > Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- > Historic Scotland
- > James Hutton Institute
- > John Muir Trust
- > Keep Scotland Beautiful
- > LANTRA
- > Moray Council
- > National Farmers Union Scotland
- > National Health Service for Scotland
- > National Trust for Scotland
- > Perth & Kinross Council
- > Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland
- > Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- > Scotland Food and Drink
- > Scottish Enterprise
- > Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- > Scottish Government
- > Scottish Land and Estates
- > Scottish Natural Heritage
- > Skills Development Scotland
- > Soil Association
- > SportScotland
- > The Highland Council
- > Transport Scotland
- > University of the Highlands and Islands
- > VisitScotland
- > Zero Waste Scotland

Published by the Cairngorms National Park Authority
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 ISBN 978-1-906071-75-2

Front cover photo:
 Spittal of Glenshee

Welcome to our update on progress in delivering the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan

The Cairngorms National Park is internationally important for nature conservation, home to over 18,000 people and a global trademark destination.

Together, our National Park Partnership is working to get the best for the Cairngorms and for Scotland. We are helping deliver national outcomes by focusing our efforts on:

- > Supporting thriving rural economies and communities;
- > Enhancing a special place for people and nature;
- > Providing a great welcome and experience for people to enjoy.










In 2012/13 – Year of Natural Scotland and the 10th anniversary of the Cairngorms National Park – our partnership has made a great start in delivering the priorities in our 2012-17 Partnership Plan. Particular highlights include:

- > Launch of the ambitious new Cairngorms Nature partnership;
- > Capital investment in visitor infrastructure, including a new ranger base at Blair Atholl, paths and mountain bike facilities;
- > Strengthening Communities project delivered and progress in delivering community broadband;
- > Creation of the Cairngorms Enterprise Forum to shape an economic diversification strategy;
- > An increase of 21% in renewable energy generating capacity.

In 2012 National Geographic Magazine named the Cairngorms as the only UK destination in their list of the world's '50 last great places'. That is a good reminder of why this partnership across the public, private and voluntary sectors comes together to make the most of this special place for people across Scotland and beyond.

Corrie Fee,
 Angus

Here's what our indicators show:

FIVE YEARS OUTCOMES	INDICATORS	PROGRESS TO 2017 TARGETS	EXPLANATION
The economy of the Park will have grown and diversified, drawing on the Park's special qualities	Business confidence reported through Cairngorms Business Barometer		Business confidence improved through early 2013
	Number of jobs created in the Park		Data expected from 2014
Businesses and communities will be successfully adapting to a low carbon economy	% population living within connection of high speed broadband or equivalent		No change from 0% 2013
	Renewable energy production		Increase of 20% in generating capacity
Communities will be more empowered and able to develop their own models of sustainability	The number of community enterprises generating income		New community enterprises formed and expected to generate income during 2013/14
The quality and connectivity of habitats is enhanced	Area of woodland		New data expected late 2013
	Water quality		New data expected late 2013
The species for which the Park is most important are in better conservation status	Active conservation for LBAP priority species		6 of 26 species
	Estates participating in Wildlife Estates Initiative		20 estates by April 2013
The special landscape qualities, including wildness, are conserved and enhanced	Qualities of wildness		New data expected by 2017
Settlements and built development will retain and enhance the distinct sense of place and identity in the Park	Number of conservation area improvement projects		New data expected by 2014
More people will enjoy, learn about and help to conserve and enhance the Park	Number of volunteer days spent caring for the Park per year		Increasing from 900 in 2011/12 to 1200 in 2012/13
The expectations of visitors are met or exceeded	Visitor satisfaction reported in Cairngorms Visitor Survey		Next Visitor Survey results due 2014/15
The Park's recreation opportunities have improved the health and enjoyment of residents and visitors	Number of people using promoted core paths		27% increase in use of promoted core paths

For more information, visit www.cairngorms.co.uk

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESS



Collaboration rather than competition is key to communities within the Cairngorms National Park realising their goals. As public funding and support become harder to come by, working smarter by working together can help to ensure that resources go further. Moreover, by taking the initiative and tackling issues themselves, our communities can often see results much faster.

Running businesses in or from the Park can be challenging because of its remoteness, transport, travel and living costs and the difficulties of attracting new investment for growth. Again, collaboration between the private and public sectors across administrative boundaries is essential to maintain existing business sectors and encourage new and complementary businesses to start up and to grow in the Park.

WE ARE WORKING TO:

- > **Make the economy stronger** – encouraging new and different businesses and supporting existing ones;
- > **Put time and money into small-scale renewable energy, improve broadband speed and mobile phone coverage, provide training for young people and land based businesses;**
- > **Help communities to be more independent, keep traditions alive and plan for the future.**

ABOVE:
Boat of Garten, Station Square

OPPOSITE:
Opening of The Smugglers Hostel, Tomintoul
Continental market, Grantown-on-Spey

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERSHIP, IN 2012/13 ...

- > The Cairngorms Enterprise Forum was established and work began on the development of the Economic Diversification Strategy for the Park;
- > Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) selected Corgarff and Glenbuchat, and Tomintoul and Glenlivet for pioneer project support;
- > Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust was set up and started to deliver projects, including the operation of the Smugglers Hostel, Tomintoul;
- > 14 trainees joined the Cairngorms Construction Skills Project;
- > 6 trainees graduated from the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) Path Skills Training Course;
- > The Strengthening Communities initiative delivered training to 277 participants on managing community assets and income generation for community groups;
- > Training and advice about renewable energy opportunities was provided for community groups and estates in the Park;
- > Renewable energy generating capacity in the Park grew by 21%;
- > The proposed Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan was prepared for consultation by the end of 2012/13;
- > Approval of planning applications for significant local business growth and diversification including: Glenlivet mountain bike hub; a tourism and retail development at Braemar Mountain Sports in Braemar; and refurbishment of Boat of Garten Station Square.



PARK COMMUNITIES GET BROADBAND UP TO SPEED



Several enterprising communities in the Cairngorms National Park have taken matters into their own hands to ensure that their broadband access is sufficiently up to speed.

Perhaps even more so than in urban communities, good broadband and mobile coverage are essential for people living here to keep pace with the rest of the UK. Both services are also crucial elements of the infrastructure needed for growing businesses based in the Park to thrive over the long-term.

Badenoch Broadband and Communications launched its wireless internet service to residents and businesses in and around Laggan in October 2012. Set up as a social enterprise, the community interest company offers broadband at speeds of up to 16 times that available through BT phone lines. Sixty local households and businesses have signed up to receive Badenoch Broadband Service since it went live.

ABOVE:
Laggan

OPPOSITE:
Community broadband mast for Laggan



“

After putting up with a worse than 0.5Mbps service for years, residents in Laggan realised that the only way we could get decent broadband was to do something ourselves. I hope what we are achieving here can be used as a model for remote communities all over the UK.”

Alistair Fleming of Badenoch
Broadband and Communications



Two other communities in the Park have been looking on with particular interest as plans for the Badenoch Broadband Service have unfolded. Corgarff and Glenbuchat, and Tomintoul and Glenlivet were named Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) pioneer communities during 2012. Both will now benefit from the £5 million CBS initiative to help kick-start community-led broadband projects in rural communities across Scotland. By directing extra support their way, CBS aims to help pioneer communities to develop the best broadband services for their areas.

Lindsay Robertson, Community Development Officer for Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust, says: “We were delighted to be chosen by CBS as one of the first pioneer

communities to receive support under the new initiative. Our area is geographically isolated, which poses a number of issues for both residents and visitors to the area, accessing broadband being one.”

With local communities taking steps to rectify the situation, people and businesses in the Cairngorms National Park stand to be better connected to the wider world very soon.

- > www.facebook.com/pages/Badenoch-Broadband-Communications-CIC/145459882264858
- > www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-broadband-scotland
- > www.facebook.com/TomintoulGlenlivet



PEOPLE AND NATURE

There's nowhere else like the Cairngorms National Park in Scotland – or the world. The unique landscapes comprising glacial landforms, wild arctic tundra and heather moorlands together foster an enormous ecological diversity. It is among our ancient pine forests, rivers, lochs and marshes that you can still find many of the UK's most threatened, localised and endangered species.

WE ARE WORKING TO:

- > Look after and improve our landscapes and wildlife – the rare and endangered species and the biggest and best habitats in the UK;
- > Help those who manage our land – bringing people together across estate boundaries and realising the potential for wildlife, enjoyment and the economy;
- > Improve the quality and sense of place in our towns and villages;
- > Prepare for how climate change will affect the way we live and the places we live in.

ABOVE:
Rush topper

LEFT:
Raptor tagging



THANKS TO OUR PARTNERSHIP, IN 2012/13 ...

- > Cairngorms Nature Partnership was established and Cairngorms Nature Action Plan launched at an event in Aviemore;
- > Cairngorms Wildcat Project, to raise awareness of the critical state of this protected species, saw completion and is now linked to a wider Scottish wildcat initiative;
- > New project Pearls in Peril launched to improve management for freshwater pearl mussels in the rivers Dee, South Esk and Spey;
- > Work continued on the Allt Lorgy project and scoping studies for further restoration of the river Spey (by the Spey Catchment Initiative) were conducted;

ABOVE:
Launch of Cairngorms Nature and Action Plan

BELOW:
The Woodman's Hut, The Lazy Duck Hostel, Nethy Bridge



- > The Wildlife Estates Scotland initiative was launched nationally following its successful pilot in the Park, where 20 estates now participate in the scheme;
- > The inaugural Cairngorms National Park Design Awards celebrated the breadth of quality design within the Park;
- > 10 farm habitat management plans, covering 1187 hectares, enhanced wetlands habitats for waders as part of the Strathspey Wetlands and Waders Initiative, along with 288 hectares of rush cutting by the Initiative's 'free-to-hire' rush topper machine.

ALLT LORGY GOES WITH THE FLOW



A stretch of the Allt Lorgy burn has recently been returned to its natural state, to allow all sorts of life – salmon especially – to thrive among gentler pools and ripples.

The pioneering river restoration project on the Allt Lorgy burn, near Carr-Bridge, attracted the attention of Scotland's Minister for Environment and Climate Change in April 2013. On visiting the site, Paul Wheelhouse MSP said: "This project at Allt Lorgy will allow the river to restore natural habitats, creating a diverse environment and benefiting a range of species. It will also reduce flooding – a problem that has wiped out salmon spawning habitats over the years – helping the angling industry around the Park."

Paul Wheelhouse MSP visits the Allt Lorgy burn restoration project



The burn, which joins the river Dulnain, had been straightened in the past to improve agricultural land. But the faster flow of water that resulted eroded salmon spawning habitats and increased the flood risk downstream.

Similar projects to restore river systems elsewhere have relied on heavy engineering. Instead, the Allt Lorgy project has simply involved lowering the artificial embankments and replacing boulders positioned in the river with fallen trees and branches. Woody debris is a natural part of a healthy river system that helps to protect riverbanks from erosion and is a source of shelter and food. Now the burn will do the rest of the work itself, re-meandering and allowing the ecosystem to become properly established in its more sedate waters.

The work on the burn is being supported by the regeneration of riparian woodlands around the Allt Lorgy. Primary 6 and 7 pupils from Carr-Bridge Primary School joined the Environment Minister during his visit to help plant some of the additional 4,800 native trees destined for the site.

Says Carol Evans, Director of the Woodland Trust Scotland: "We're delighted to have been involved in this pioneering project, which should provide inspiration for other fishery boards across Scotland who are looking for ways to improve the condition of their spawning habitats."

Renaturalising the Allt Lorgy burn has already dramatically improved this habitat for plants, fish and other creatures. The outlook for our landscapes as a whole should only improve further with time and the continued efforts of partnerships like this one.

“

From initial concept and design through to actual delivery, the project has been a great demonstration of partnership working and an example of how to tackle pressures on rural highland rivers through low-cost, sustainable measures.

David Harley, Water and Land Manager at Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)





ENJOYING THE PARK

The Cairngorms National Park is a source of inspiration. Its beauty and setting combine to provide a place for contemplation and creativity, for outdoor activity through walking, cycling, winter sports and other outdoor recreation, for outdoor learning and for the development of new skills. Ongoing investment in outdoor access and visitor infrastructure will help to ensure that we continue to attract and excite visitors from near and far. We aim to make it as easy as possible for people of all backgrounds and abilities to enjoy the Park, without affecting those very qualities that make it special.

WE ARE WORKING TO:

- > Maintain the Cairngorms National Park as an inspiration – a place for creativity, for outdoor learning and for developing new skills;
- > Make it as easy as possible for people of all abilities and from all backgrounds to enjoy the Park, without affecting what makes it special;
- > Provide a great welcome and an authentic, high quality visitor experience.

ABOVE:
Braemar Gathering

OPPOSITE:
Allotments at Revack

Work starts at the Blair Atholl Visitor Information Centre and Ranger Base

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERSHIP, IN 2012/13 ...

- > A new Blair Atholl Visitor Information Centre and Ranger Base was created;
- > Station Square in Boat of Garten was upgraded to become a visitor and information hub;
- > The Cairngorms Business Partnership led on the promotion of the Park, including by increasing circulation of What's On magazine and through a joint marketing campaign with VisitScotland centred around Disney Pixar movie, Brave;
- > The inaugural Cairngorms Outdoor Learning Competition was launched among local schools;
- > The Outdoor Learning with the National Parks project became mainstream, through the Curriculum for Excellence;
- > 2,246 John Muir Awards were presented;
- > 41 Junior Rangers graduated;



- > The Cairngorms E-Bike Project established electric bike rental and charging points across the Park;
- > Construction of Glenlivet mountain biking trails neared completion;
- > Glen Feshie, Carr-Bridge and the Loch Avon area welcomed either new or upgraded and restored paths; a new footbridge was installed over the river Gairn near Ballater; and a new bike skills park was created at Carr-Bridge.



PARK BIKING EXPERIENCES LEAD THE PACK



The UK's largest National Park is one of the best and most stunning places in the country to enjoy cycling. Now the Cairngorms E-Bike Project offers a new option besides high-energy mountain biking and leisurely touring of the Park's communities.

The Cairngorms E-Bike Project lets you rent battery-powered wheels to take you round the Park with ease. The project is part of the Electric Bicycle Network, a new, UK-wide initiative and the Cairngorms National Park is home to the first such network in Scotland. Funded by the Scottish Government Energy and Climate Change Directorate, the project is delivered by Sustrans in partnership with the Cairngorms National Park Authority and community interest company Electric Travel.



ABOVE & LEFT:
Cairngorms E-Bike Project

OPPOSITE:
New bike trails, Glenlivet



Explains Mike Dennison, Project Officer of the Cairngorms E-Bike Project: "Over 30 local businesses have come together to form a network of E-Bike rental and battery charging points so that visitors can hire an E-Bike from any number of locations around the Park.

"Using our specially designed maps, they can follow scenic routes linking visitor attractions, viewpoints and places of interest, stopping off en route at a designated café or local business to recharge their batteries both literally and metaphorically. E-Bikes make cycling accessible to everyone, irrespective of age and ability."

For mountain bikers in hot pursuit of the next adrenalin rush, the wait is nearly over. Construction by the Crown Estate of its new mountain biking trails, at Carn Daimh Forest on the Glenlivet Estate, has progressed hugely over the last year. Glenlivet Mountain Biking Trail Centre is a £500,000 project funded by the Crown Estate, European Regional Development Fund, Cairngorms National Park Authority and Moray Council.

A visitor centre hub for the trails was granted planning permission by the Park Authority in May 2013. Both the trails and hub are planned to open late in 2013, giving people yet another reason to spend time in the Park.

- > www.electricbicyclenetwork.com/hiring/cairngorms/
- > www.facebook.com/GlenlivetMountainBikeTrailCentre



These trails will draw in a wide range of users, from families with young children to local and visiting hardcore mountain bikers. There will be child-friendly trails that are safe, fun and weatherproof as well as exciting, feature-rich trails for the experts.

Paul Masson of Cycletherapy, Designer of the trails

SPOTLIGHT ON 2013/14

The partnership is committed to delivering change on the ground in the Park. In 2013/14 we will deliver a range of exciting projects, including:

Sustainable Communities and Business

- > Completion of the Economic Diversification Strategy guiding investment and business development.
- > A Capital Investment Strategy for the Park.
- > Community Action Plans for Braemar and Blair Atholl and more community enterprises generating income from projects.
- > Highland & Islands Food and Drink Awards going Park-wide.
- > New orchards established across the Park through the Cairngorms Community Orchards Project.

People and Nature

- > River restoration projects on the rivers Spey and Dee.
- > Woodland expansion including riparian woodland and development of an exciting montane woodland project.

- > A Capercallie Framework for the Park, focussing on Strathspey, to secure the long-term future of the bird's UK stronghold.
- > Farm management plans for wetlands and waders.
- > More estates in the Park progressing through the Wildlife Estates Initiative.

Enjoying the Park

- > Delivery of Tomintoul and Glenlivet Gateways Project to improve visitor facilities and information and upgrades to viewpoints on official Tourist Routes through the Park.
- > Refurbishment of the Forestry Commission Glenmore visitor centre for visitors to Glenmore and the Park.
- > Opening of the new Crown Estate Glenlivet mountain bike trails.
- > Development of permanent facilities at Laggan Wolfrax mountain bike centre for cyclists and visitors to the Park.
- > Construction of sections of the Speyside Way Extension from Aviemore towards Newtonmore.
- > Development of Deeside Way near Braemar.

“

We are delighted to have established the Cairngorms Enterprise Forum this year, bringing the private and public sector together to plan for the future of the Park's distinct economy with a commercial edge. We will soon finalise an economic diversification strategy for the Park and it is critical that each partner then leads delivery into next year and beyond.

David Fraser,
Chair of the Cairngorms Enterprise Forum

“

When we joined the Cairngorms National Park in 2010, we and the community had developed detailed plans for a new visitor centre in Blair Atholl but we didn't have enough money to deliver it. The National Park Authority were able to add funds and expertise to this partnership and our new centre opened in March 2013. We're looking forward to developing this partnership in 2014 so that all tourism businesses in the area benefit from being part of Britain's largest and most impressive National Park

Andrew Bruce Wootton,
Blair Atholl Estates

“

RSPB Scotland is delighted to have been involved in establishing Cairngorms Nature this year, setting an ambitious vision for conservation in the Cairngorms. There is exciting work already begun to deliver its targets and make a long term difference to the Park including woodland expansion, wetland enhancement and capercaillie conservation.

George Campbell,
RSPB Scotland

Loch Garten at dawn, Abernethy NNR

This document is available in large print, and other formats, on request. Contact us on 01479 873535. It is also available to view at www.cairngorms.co.uk

Published by
Cairngorms National Park Authority
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Grantown-on-Spey
PH26 3HG

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ISBN 978-1-906071-75-2

Photography:
BEPTA; CNPA; Cycletherapy; Angus Findlay; David Gowans;
Mark Hamblin/2020VISION; Pete Moore/RSPB; P Tomkins/
VisitScotland/Scottish Viewpoint; www.cairngormlandscapes.co.uk