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Help is at hand for those organising outdoor events in the magnificent setting of the Park.

PAGE TWO



The Park goes Clim-ATIC - electric cars, wood fuel and more.

PAGE FOUR



Aspen orchard takes root in the Park.

PAGE SEVEN

## Park project to safeguard Scottish Wildcats

The future of one of Scotland's most iconic species – the Scottish wildcat – should be more secure with the creation of a new project in the Cairngorms National Park.

The Scottish wildcat is on the brink of extinction, with estimates that there are only 400 left in the UK. Hybridisation with feral cats, disease and difficulties in differentiating between wildcats and feral cats during predator control activities are considered to be major threats to their long-term survival. The Park is one of the last strongholds for the species and the Cairngorms National Park Wildcat Project aims to raise awareness of their plight and safeguard surviving populations by creating favourable conditions for them to thrive in the future.

The project was launched in February and involves the Cairngorms National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Gamekeepers' Association, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Wild Media

Foundation and Forestry Commission Scotland.

Project manager, David Hetherington, will work with vets and cat welfare groups to promote the neutering and vaccination of domestic cats. He will also ensure land managers have the information they need to confidently identify wildcats in the field as well as co-ordinating research on wildcat ecology and the genetic and disease threats posed to the species by feral cats.

He said: "The people of Scotland have long identified with the wildcat's fierce, untameable spirit. The Park is now the most important area left for the Scottish wildcat and this project will help the people of the Cairngorms and beyond work together to save this Scottish icon from extinction."

The project is part of SNH's five year Species Action Framework and the Cairngorms National Park Plan, which sets out the future for the Park.



© Mark Hamblin/toothandclaw.org.uk

## Sharing stories

The rich culture, wealth of wildlife and unique landscape of the Cairngorms National Park have inspired a treasure trove of tales ancient and new. The allure of stories runs deep; they forge connections between people and places, boosting reputations and making visitors' experiences unforgettable.

*Sharing the Stories of the Cairngorms National Park* is an innovative approach to interpretation which aims to help people enjoy, understand and value the vast landscape and communities of the Park.

There are a number of natural themes which people associate with the Park, including: the huge granite mountains at the heart of the Cairngorms National Park that have shaped the natural heritage, people, landscapes and culture around them; the diversity of wildlife and habitats; and the shared connections, distinct identity and passion of the people of the Park.

This guide is designed to get thoughts and ideas flowing rather than prescribing how the Park should be interpreted.



Living history at the Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore © David Gowans



Orienteering in Anagach Woods © CNPA/Stewart Grant

## Making the most of outdoor access events

Help is at hand for those organising outdoor events in the magnificent setting of the Park.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority has published new guidance to help with planning and managing events. It's aimed at community groups, businesses and public agencies as well as event organisers and land managers.

## Pointing the way!

Exploring its fantastic paths is a great way to appreciate the Cairngorms National Park. To help people find their way, a consistent path sign design will appear in the Park soon and guidance to the design has been produced by the CNPA. Simple and stylish, the new wooden signs use large white letters on a dark green background, making them easy to read and unobtrusive.

For further information about the above publications, contact the CNPA, email: [enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk) or tel: 01479 873535 or view on our website [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)

## Communities seize the initiative in the Park

The success of the pilot project Our Community... A Way Forward in Grantown-on-Spey, Cromdale and Advie, and Dulnain Bridge, has triggered further action. Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey secured funding to expand the project over the next three years. Ballater One Voice Our Future is underway and discussions are ongoing in other areas of the Park.



Continental market, Ballater © David Gowans

## How to live, work and play sustainably

The Cairngorms National Park Authority will be running more courses this year aimed at helping businesses and residents to be more sustainable.

The popular Land Based Business Training (LBBT) and Cairngorms Awareness and Pride (CAP) projects will offer courses on various issues, including climate change, local produce, forest management and wildlife.

The projects have been running for several years and are run by field experts. LBBT provides training for businesses involved in the management or use of land. CAP is open to people living and working in the Park

Finding out about the geology of the Park © Alan Smith



and raises awareness of the issues around both the aims of the Park and the Cairngorms National Park Plan.

For more information on the courses or to sign up to the mailing list contact **Kate Christie** [katechristie@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:katechristie@cairngorms.co.uk) or tel: 01479 870535 or **Sam Masson** [sammasson@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:sammasson@cairngorms.co.uk) or tel: 01479 870537

## Wetland vision for the Park



Whooper swans © David Gowans

Work is underway to develop a wetland vision for the Cairngorms National Park, which aims to identify areas for potential wetland restoration and creation.

The Park holds internationally important wetland sites. However, habitats have been considerably reduced by drainage through past land management practices, and both existing and historic wetland sites are in need of enhancement or restoration. Wetlands can bring a number of benefits apart from their nature conservation value, such as buffering against

flood events, possible climate change mitigation, diffuse pollution control, improvements to landscape quality, educational value as well as tourism benefits. SEPA has identified the Park as a pilot area for the first phases of their national inventory of wetlands. The project will identify existing wetlands and areas in the Park where wetlands should occur.

The Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the CNPA and other partners will use the findings to work with land managers to explore the possibilities of enhancing existing and creating new wetlands in the Park. A one-day workshop will be held later this year focusing on wetland restoration and creation.

Contact **Justin Prigmore, Cairngorms LBAP Officer**, email: [justinprigmore@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:justinprigmore@cairngorms.co.uk) or tel: 01479 870528

## Scottish Government Climate Challenge Fund



Nethy Bridge © CNPA/Stewart Grant

Communities in the Park can still apply for help to turn their town or village into a greener place.

The Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund funds projects that take local action to tackle the

global threat of climate change. The £18m project supports community-led action to reduce emissions and empower communities to take action to reduce their carbon footprint and make a real difference to the local and national environment.

For more information visit [www.infoscotland.com/gogreener](http://www.infoscotland.com/gogreener)



# Bright idea!

Drivers in the Strath will have their own green, clean driving machine, thanks to the provision of an electric car!



Electric car in London - coming to a Park near you! © Alan Trotter

One of the Clim-ATIC projects will work with the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Initiative (BSCT) to provide an electric car for the much-needed service, which provides free transport for people with no access to public transport.

The car will be used by the BSCT volunteers, but will also be available for use by other local groups. It is also hoped the car will help raise awareness about sustainable transport and people will be encouraged to pop along and see the electric vehicle in action.

BSCT administrator Maggie Lawson said local volunteers

were thrilled to be pioneering the use of the new electric Vauxhall Astra. "This puts us in the forefront of delivering a community service of this kind in a more environmentally friendly way," she added. "We are all very excited about the new vehicle, which is already attracting interest from far and wide from other groups keen to find out about electric vehicles."

"They are often seen as an urban vehicle; this project seeks to show that they are suitable for remote, rural use too."

The car has been adapted to electric power by removing its engine, but has retained its gears. Batteries fit under the back seats and boot. A single charge will allow you to drive up to 140km. As well as being a more environmentally friendly means of transport, the car has the added advantage of being quieter than a normal fuel-consumption car.

Plug-in bays, where the car can be recharged, will be installed in Kingussie, Blair Atholl and Aviemore. Outdoor power points will also be placed at volunteers' homes and at CNPA offices.

The car is due to hit the streets in late Spring and will be instantly recognisable as it will feature the Park brand and partner logos. It will also be shown at games and shows around Badenoch and Strathspey during 2009 and 2010 to promote electric car use.

# Sustainable tourism

New technologies will be used to promote the Park as a year-round visitor destination, whatever the weather.

For example, the use of Bluetooth technology could alert visitors to a range of alternative tourism activities when lack of snow or poor weather hampers winter sports at CairnGorm Mountain.



Perfect skiing conditions, CairnGorm Mountain © www.cairngormlandscapes.co.uk

# The Park goes Clim-ATIC

The Cairngorms National Park is leading the way in helping communities adapt to climate change.

The Clim-ATIC project is a first-of-its kind European project that will see the Cairngorms National Park trial a number of exciting projects in the fight against climate change. Communities, businesses, tourism and young people will be at the forefront of the work.

Amongst the initiatives are:

- an electric car for local communities
- a wood fuel scheme, which will provide training and opportunities for increased use of locally sourced wood fuel
- a film about climate change produced by primary pupils
- technology to help deliver a sustainable economy for the tourism sector

It is a €2.4m three-year partnership project between the Cairngorms National Park Authority, UHI Millennium Institute, Forestry Commission Scotland and a number of European organisations, and is supported by the European Commission's Northern Periphery Programme.

# Wood Fuel

Wood fuel is a hot topic as businesses and householders throughout the Cairngorms National Park and beyond become aware of the green and economic benefits of using locally sourced logs, wood chips and wood pellets.

A Wood Fuels Fair at Alvie House in May will give everyone interested in wood heating systems the opportunity to discover more about the enormous potential of this renewable, natural, local fuel. This will be followed up by a series of training courses.

For details, please email [katechristie@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:katechristie@cairngorms.co.uk) or [fiona.strachan@highlandbirchwoods.co.uk](mailto:fiona.strachan@highlandbirchwoods.co.uk)

An action plan will guide development of local wood fuel markets in a way that optimises economic benefit and showcases best practice in sustainable development and biodiversity and landscape management.

For more information, please contact [fionachalmers@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:fionachalmers@cairngorms.co.uk) or tel: 01479 870524



Finding out about wood fuel technology © Peter MacKenzie

# School media project

Pupils from seven primary schools across the Cairngorms National Park are getting a taste of the movie business thanks to the Clim-ATIC project.

Primary five, six and seven pupils will make a short film about potential climate change impacts on the National Park and how the Park is adapting to and mitigating these effects.

Aberdeenshire Media Unit worked with the youngsters earlier this year to train them in film making. The pupils will spend spring and summer visiting places around the Park which may be impacted by climate change as well as filming adaptation and mitigation projects. It is hoped the films will be premiered at a film festival in the Park later this year.



School pupils filming at Glenmore for a previous media project © CNPA/Stewart Grant

Gynack Bridge, Kingussie – to be replaced Spring 2009 © Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust

## Happy Birthday to the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust

The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust is one year old and the first year has proved both exciting and challenging.

Trust Manager, Dougie Baird said: “Helping communities resolve some long-standing problems has been great. The replacement bridge over the Gynack at Kingussie is a good example of this work. The local paths group has been fantastic in raising the funds and doing some of the negotiations with land owners. The Trust has provided support and skills needed to manage the project.

“Other early work nearing completion is the safe route to school in Strathdon, which will allow children to cycle to and from the school avoiding the busy A944. This has attracted money from the Climate Challenge Fund as it helps reduce carbon emissions and from LEADER, as it contributes greatly to the local community.”

Work is underway on securing funding for the next two years to deliver paths around communities, throughout the Park. These have been identified as priorities through the core paths planning consultation exercise. Expanding the health walking schemes to more communities will also help to address the Scottish Government’s priorities for health.

Contact: [dougie@cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk](mailto:dougie@cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk) or tel: 013398 87777



## Aspen orchard takes root in the park

Flowering aspen © Ern Emmett

The rare and delicate aspen tree has been a source of much lore down the centuries. Revered by generations of Highlanders, it is believed to have been the first tree to re-colonise Scotland after the ice age. The Cairngorms National Park is a stronghold of the species and site of a pioneering project to help ensure its survival.



“The Highland Aspen Group (HAG) is now developing an aspen seed orchard, to produce planting stock for woodlands throughout Scotland,” explained Cairngorms biodiversity officer Stephen Corcoran.

“The concept being trialled by Forest Research involves using heat and drought to make aspens come into flower and seed. The Group will use this principle and already have aspen clones grafted to root stock at their nursery near Kincaig.”

“A poly tunnel and other equipment has been set up for the seed orchard and it is hoped that aspen seed will be available in 2011.”

Contact: [stephencorcoran@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:stephencorcoran@cairngorms.co.uk) or tel: 01479 870528

David Green

© CNPA/Stewart Grant



## The Green outlook

David Green, Convener of the Cairngorms National Park Authority

Fragile rural uplands have hit the spotlight lately with studies revealing increasing economic and environmental challenges.

The Cairngorms National Park is no exception but here we have tremendous opportunities to try innovative new approaches to tackling them.

We are working with partners to develop ways to support land based businesses and develop broader markets for the fantastic range of quality products and services that come from the Park.

National Parks are ideal places for fresh ideas to be taken forward. Our aim is clear – to work together with partners in helping businesses weather current and future challenges, both economic and environmental.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority has recently looked at a package of action to help support and stimulate the rural economy.

Among projects being brought forward are plans to boost opportunities in – using wood fuel to heat homes and businesses, a local food and drink action plan and guidance on renewable energy opportunities.

## Visit your National Nature Reserve

A wintery Abernethy National Nature Reserve © John Mackenzie

The Cairngorms National Park is exceptional. It mantles a dramatic landscape of villages and townships, farms, heaths, rivers and lochs, moors and great Scots pine forests. At the heart of the scene is the Cairngorm plateau: the most extensive area of wild land over 4000 feet above sea level in this country.

Nine National Nature Reserves reflect the major natural heritage aspects of the Park. Badenoch and Strathspey boasts: Creag Meagaidh, Insh Marshes, Craigellachie, Abernethy, Glenmore and Invereshie/Inshriach. Corrie Fee is high in the Angus glens and Deeside Reserves has Glen Tanar and Muir of Dinnet.

Visitors to these special reserves enjoy the challenge of trying to see the various animals and plants, such as red deer, crossbill, crested tit, capercaillie and mountain plants.

Why not visit these special reserves as soon as you can?

For more information visit [www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/](http://www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/)





## Quick updates

### Scotland's National Parks Strategic Review

The Cairngorms National Park Authority was given the thumbs up in a Government review of its first five years. Both Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Parks Authorities were declared successes by former Environment Minister Mike Russell.

### Cairngorms National Park boundary

To find out the latest news on the proposals to extend the Park boundary into Perth and Kinross, please visit the SNH website at: [www.snh.org.uk/nationalparks](http://www.snh.org.uk/nationalparks)

### Local Plan

An inquiry into the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan is set to commence on 18 May. Two Scottish Government Reporters are to sit in sessions in different parts of the Park, working as a team to resolve outstanding issues and determine the final shape of the Local Plan. To keep up to date visit:

[www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning/localplan/](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning/localplan/)

### Core Paths Plan

A Local Inquiry into the Cairngorms National Park's Core Paths Plan is expected to be held over the summer. See the website at:

[www.cairngorms.co.uk/outdooraccess/corepathsplanning/](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/outdooraccess/corepathsplanning/)

## Come and join in the fun!

National Parks Week is an annual event which raises awareness of the UK's 14 National Parks. NPW 2009 takes place from Monday 27 July to Sunday 2 August. This year's theme is climate change and there will be a number of exciting events and training opportunities taking place. Visit [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk) for more information.

The CNPA is also involved in Homecoming Scotland 2009, which celebrates Scotland's great contributions to the world. Amongst the events we are involved in are the Royal Highland Show (25 to 28 June) and The Gathering, which takes place on 25 and 26 July at Holyrood Park, Edinburgh. This will be one of the largest clan gatherings in history. Put the dates in your diary! For more information, visit: [www.homecomingscotland.com](http://www.homecomingscotland.com)

## Don't forget that Parklife is available in a variety of formats

You can read the newsletter on our website, [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk), or we can provide copies of all the articles in large print. It's also available on audio cassette.

We're always pleased to receive feedback, comments and suggestions, contact:

**Communications Team, Cairngorms National Park Authority,  
14 The Square, Grantown-on-Spey, Moray PH26 3HG.**

**Tel: 01479 873535. Email: [enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk)**

## What's on?

Cairngorms National  
Park Authority  
Meetings 2009

### April 3

Planning committee,  
Aviemore

### May 1

Planning committee,  
Ballater

### May 15

Finance committee  
and board meeting,  
Boat of Garten

### May 29

Planning committee, Lecht

### June 26

Audit and planning  
committees, Ballater

### July 10

Board meeting, Braemar

### July 24

Planning committee,  
Boat of Garten

### August 7

Finance committee,  
Glenmore

### August 21

Audit and planning  
committees, Ballater

### September 4

Board meeting,  
Boat of Garten

### September 18

Planning committee,  
Kingussie

**Please check local press or the  
CNPA website for further details of  
dates, times and venues.  
[www.cairngorms.co.uk/park  
authority](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/park<br/>authority)**