



Cairngorms Nature Action Plan Strategy Group meeting

Park Authority office, Grantown-on-Spey and on Teams

Wednesday 8 January | 10am – 12noon

Attendees

Alistair Whyte (Plantlife Scotland), Alice Fogg (Voluntary Action in Badenoch and Strathspey), Alison Hester (Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutions), Anne Elliott (NatureScot), Carolyn Robertson (Park Authority), Chris Beattie (Park Authority Board Member), Chris Donald (NatureScot), Claire Smith (RSPB Scotland), Colin Edwards (Forestry and Land Scotland), Ian Wilson (National Farmers Union Scotland), Kelly-Anne Dempsey (River South Esk Catchment Partnership), Penny Lawson (Spey Catchment Initiative), Sarah Henshall (Park Authority), Shaila Rao (National Trust for Scotland), Susan Cooksley (Dee Catchment Partnership)

Apologies

Deirdre Stewart (Durrell Wildlife), Deborah Long (Scottish Environment Link), Helen Senn (Royal Zoological Society of Scotland), Jeremy Roberts (Cairngorms Connect)

1. Agree the aim and responsibilities of the Strategy Group

Draft responsibilities and an aim for the Strategy Group were shared and discussed, and the following points were raised:

- **Advocacy and public engagement:** these responsibilities could be strengthened to ensure impactful and more dynamic engagement with communities.
- **Strategic leadership and oversight:** these responsibilities should include helping to avoid policy incoherence, including related to farming and agriculture.
- **Securing investment:** this could include ensuring fundraising opportunities are not missed and activities within the Nature Action Plan are not directly competing for the same external funding.



- **Membership:** Some members suggested inviting additional organisations to join the group, e.g., more NGOs and landowners. It was noted that the size of the group needs to remain practical. To achieve this, representatives of landowners and organisations with diverse expertise have been invited to join. It was however agreed that there is room to review the group's membership and its collaboration with the Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group (CUAG), Cairngorms Agricultural Advisory Group (CAAG), and other forums to aid effective engagement with landmanagers.

Actions:

- Carolyn to update and recirculate the draft aim and responsibilities of the group in response to the feedback received.
- Chris (Beattie) to liaise with CUAG and CAAG re working with the Strategy Group.

2. Review the learning from the last Cairngorms Nature Action Plan

The reflections included in the Final Report for the last Cairngorms Nature Action Plan were summarised and discussed, and the following points were raised:

- **Positive impact on people:** There is an opportunity in future to communicate more explicitly the positive difference that the Nature Action can make for people who live, visit, and work in the National Park. It is important to highlight the meaningful impact that activities in the Plan can and will have on people, their daily lives and livelihoods, for example through the delivery of nature-based solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- **Species recovery:** All the species included in the previous Nature Action Plan are included as indicators in the Cairngorms Nature Index. This will ensure they are not overlooked where there are ongoing needs and significant investment to date.
- **Partnership working:** In future, Strategy Group members and delivery partners could be more actively involved in the process of compiling data, measuring success and inputting to and reviewing progress reports.
- **Land manager engagement:** Early and proactive engagement with landmanagers is essential to the successful delivery of the next Action Plan. CUAG, CAAG and other forums provide an opportunity to do this, alongside Strategy Group members proactively engaging with the land managers they represent (where relevant).



3. Learn about the Cairngorms Nature Index – an introduction and update

A brief overview of the Cairngorms Nature Index was shared and discussed, and the following points were raised:

- **Reference conditions:** The reference conditions in the Cairngorms Nature Index will help to guide target setting in the next Nature Action Plan. The reference conditions are based on historic data and current factors, e.g., climate change.
- **External communications:** The Nature Index must be accessible to all if it is presented publicly as part of the next Action Plan. We should also be mindful of mixed messages if narratives in the public domain differ from findings in the Nature Index.
- **Data gaps:** Work is ongoing to compile data in the Cairngorms Nature Index. It was noted that Strategy Group members could help to fill data gaps, subject to knowing the full list of indicators.

Actions:

- Carolyn to share Adam Fraser's email (lead for the Cairngorms Nature Index) for members who are interested in more information about the indicators in the Cairngorms Nature Index.

4. Review the proposed vision and aim for the next Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, the outline process for identifying actions and any risks and issues.

A draft vision, aim and initial process for identifying the actions to be delivered through the next Nature Action Plan was shared and discussed, and the following points were raised:

- **Aim:** Whilst the draft aim is ambitious, and there's room to emphasise this to help manage expectations, it is based on the Scottish Government's commitment as set out in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. We need to make sure we can measure progress against the draft aim.
- **Vision:** Some members of the group felt the vision could be more ambitious and longer term, i.e., beyond 2045.



- **Outcomes:** There is room to emphasise that the plan will move us *towards* the outcomes and or that we aim to reach a 'meaningful point' by 2030. There is also room to note the role of Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in delivering the outcome related to nature networks.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** It is important to directly involve communities and more land managers at this point, particularly regarding the vision for the plan. This could potentially be a new 'Step 1' in the draft process shared, but care needs to be taken to involve people in a meaningful way. There is also room to outline at this stage how communities might be involved in delivering the plan.
- **Ecosystem approach:** The Cairngorms Nature Index will be used to guide ecosystem restoration through the next plan by using species to assess ecosystem health and inform action.
- **Dovetailing with the last plan and existing activities:** Subject to findings from the Cairngorms Nature Index, there is a need to reflect on the actions in the previous plan to identify any to be continued and to map existing conservation activities in the National Park to identify gaps. It was also noted that care needs to be taken to ensure activities in the next plan are deliverable alongside economic activities, e.g. forestry.

Actions:

- Carolyn to update and recirculate the slide deck shared in response to the feedback received.

5. AOB

- Carolyn to confirm the process for the Strategy Group commenting on and signing off documents.
- Carolyn to circulate a doodle poll for future meeting dates.