



spring 2024

cairn

The magazine of Cairngorms National Park

Cairngorms 2030

Becoming the
UK's first net zero
national park

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Burning issue

Have your say on
fire management

Beavers back

Species returns to
the Cairngorms



To find out more information on the stories within this magazine please scan the QR code



**Cairngorms
National Park**

**Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaìdh Ruaidh**

Do you have a question about something in the National Park? The contacts on this page will help you to get to the correct person or organisation to help you.



Business support

GrowBiz

connect@growbiz.co.uk

Cairngorms Business Partnership
office@visitcairngorms.com



Local council services

Aberdeenshire: **01467 534 333**

Angus: angus.gov.uk

Highland: **01349 886 608**

Moray: **0300 123 4561**

Perth and Kinross: **01738 475 000**



Land management and conservation

landmanagement@cairngorms.co.uk
nature@cairngorms.co.uk



Paths and accessing the National Park

outdooraccess@cairngorms.co.uk

outdooraccess-scotland.scot



Planning

All planning questions should go to the relevant local authority in the first instance (see contacts on left) or visit eplanningcnpa.co.uk to view and comment on live applications.



Recruitment and current vacancies

recruitment@cairngorms.co.uk



Volunteering

volunteers@cairngorms.co.uk



Visitor information

visitcairngorms.com

visitscotland.com



Something else?

enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk

Switchboard: **01479 873 535**

Or to visit in person:
Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
Grantown on Spey
PH26 3HG

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Fàilte / Welcome

Welcome to the spring edition of *Cairn*, a magazine which has been created for all the folk who live and work in the National Park.

2024 may be only a few months old but a huge amount has happened since the last issue of *Cairn* hit your doormat.

Just before Christmas, beavers returned to the Cairngorms for the first time in over 400 years. In early February, our Cairngorms 2030 programme received a £10.7m funding boost from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, supercharging our bid to become the UK's first net zero national park. And we launched two major consultations – on Gaelic language and fire management – helping shape our future plans.

The past few months have not been without their challenges, though, and the farming protests that took place in Grantown and Ballater were a moment to pause and reflect.

We understand the strength of feeling here and that was why it was important to get round a table and build on the common ground we all share. You can read more about that meeting by scanning the QR code.



Whilst we won't all agree on everything, it's only by coming together and listening to each other's perspectives that we can tackle the huge challenges we face as a Park and as a planet.

We'd love to hear what you think of this spring edition.

You can get in touch with us by calling **01479 873 535** or you can email us on **haveyoursay@cairngorms.co.uk**

This document is available in other formats on request.



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Net zero National Park

First Minister Humza Yousaf and Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity Lorna Slater visited Mar Lodge Estate in Braemar to celebrate a major funding award for the Cairngorms National Park.

The five-year Cairngorms 2030 programme – which will see the Cairngorms become the first net zero national park in the UK – has been awarded £10.7m by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. It will inspire people and communities in the region to take action and tackle the nature and climate crisis.

Cairngorms 2030 is one of the largest programmes ever funded by The

National Lottery Heritage Fund and brings together 20 long-term projects on nature restoration, active travel and sustainable transport, community development and health and wellbeing (see page 14 for details). The total value of the programme could reach up to £42.3 million over the next five years, with further funding potentially coming from the Park Authority, Scottish Government and a range of other partners.

Speaking after planting a native aspen tree with National Park Junior Rangers Anna and Katherine Parfitt, Humza Yousaf said: “Scotland’s national parks are more important than ever in helping us tackle the biodiversity and climate crises – and strengthening our rural communities.

“We are proud to support the Cairngorms to become the UK’s first

net zero national park. The Cairngorms 2030 project is an excellent example of over 70 partners working together to deliver benefits for rural communities, businesses and the natural environment.”

Led by the Park Authority, the programme will be delivered by partners ranging from the NHS and local schools to charities, land managers and business groups. It has been shaped by feedback from over 4,000 residents within the National Park, who took part in nearly 150 different events and activities over the past 12 months.

To see how you can get involved in the next stage of Cairngorms 2030 or to find out more about the programme, Scan the QR code.





Transforming transport

Cairngorms 2030 aims to make it easier to get around the National Park without a vehicle.

A funding application was recently submitted to Sustrans which, if successful, will allow us to take forward major improvements with the communities of Aviemore and a number of villages in Badenoch and Strathspey.

In the meantime, the team continues to support local organisations with active travel and placemaking developments, such as the Centenary Garden project in Newtonmore and creating a new path from Dulnain Bridge to Grantown. The team is also working with Aberdeenshire Council and will soon begin work with Deeside communities, finding ways to get around local villages more easily.

Schools out

The Cairngorms 2030 team has been working with four of the National Park's secondary schools.

Pupils from Grantown Grammar took residents from Parklands Care Home out on e-trike rides to enjoy the great outdoors, while Speyside High and Kingussie High took part in Mock COP28, a student-led summit in Inverness that explored ways of tackling the climate crisis. Over in the east, 130 S2s from Aboyne Academy took on the role of project managers in order to tackle real-life challenges emerging from the Cairngorms 2030 programme. And at Alford Academy, pupils have been working with the local 'Men's Shed' group to regenerate a community garden, improving the space for people and boosting biodiversity.



Dementia centre

One of the Cairngorms 2030 projects, the UK's first outdoor dementia resource centre opened in April 2023 at Badaguish.

The centre enables people with dementia, their families and carers to experience the benefits of green health activities.

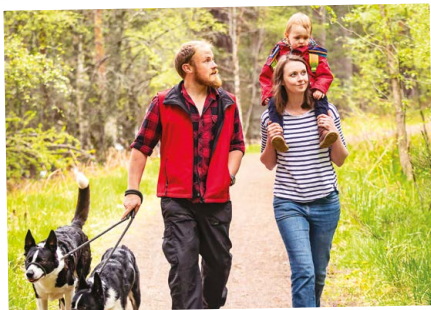
The Alzheimer Scotland team are preparing to launch a summer programme of activities that will take place at the centre at Badaguish and in a number of villages throughout the National Park. Find out more by scanning the QR code.

Take the lead this spring

The Cairngorms is home to 25% of the UK's rare and endangered species, and this spring we're asking everyone to play their part in 'treading lightly' when out and about in the National Park.

Whether you live here or are visiting for a short time, we can all do our bit to protect wildlife and local farm animals, particularly if we own a dog. April to August is breeding season for ground-nesting birds – everything from farmland waders such as oystercatchers and curlews to capercaillie in our woodlands – and they are very sensitive to disturbance.

Spring is also lambing season, and pregnant ewes and new-born lambs are particularly vulnerable to dogs running loose. That's why we're asking everyone to keep their dogs on a lead or under close control when around livestock, and in areas with ground-nesting birds (keep an eye out for local signs and guidance).



Fire management consultation

There's still time to tell us which, if any, of the following recreational fire options you prefer:

1. No fire byelaw, but enhanced communication and education
2. Fire byelaw at times of high fire risk
3. A year-round fire byelaw



Scan the QR code or visit cairngorms.co.uk/fires by **Wednesday 17 April**.

Burning issue

The risk – and potential impacts – of wildfires in the Cairngorms is increasing and we want to hear your views about what should be done about it.

Over the next few weeks, residents, organisations and others with a passion for the National Park are being asked to take part in a consultation on fire management, including the potential introduction of fire byelaws.

We heard from many concerned residents following the prolonged dry spell in early summer last year, and this consultation is your chance to make your voice heard.

We have outlined three potential ways forward; however, the Park Authority does not have a preferred option as part of this process. Instead, we are keen to gather feedback from a range of different perspectives to shape our long-term plans.

Distillery given green light

Plans for a new £20m whisky distillery at Laggan have been given the go-ahead by the Park Authority's Planning Committee.

Having outgrown their current facility near Kingussie, Speyside Distillers Company Ltd applied for planning permission for a new distillery and associated infrastructure near the

Spey Dam, bringing all aspects of their process together while retaining their connection to the River Spey.

In addition to the distillery itself, the development includes a marketing suite, power house, offices and warehouses, meaning that the company will be able to mature whisky locally. The development also secures a number of skilled jobs in the area.



Open house

The annual Rural Housing Conference was hosted in the Cairngorms for the very first time this February.

The event brought together delegates from the public and private sectors, as well as communities from across Scotland, to explore solutions for delivering rural housing and development in Scotland.



Making plans

Councillor Chris Beattie – the Angus Council representative on the Park Authority board – has taken over as Planning Committee Convener following the departure of Dr Gaener Rodger. Recent planning approvals include a new footpath linking Braemar and Ballater, and a farm shop and café at Logie Coldstone.

Sustained success

The Cairngorms National Park has again been recognised at a European level for promoting and achieving sustainable tourism by the EUROPARC Federation, the representative body for European protected areas. Assessors praised the commitment to partnership working, quick response to Covid-19 and breadth of public engagement.



3, 2, 1... action!

The Park Authority is working with communities to refresh their community action plans. The process identifies key environmental, economic, social and cultural priorities. Communities agree a list of actions to take forward with partners, which also helps focus funding applications on the areas that matter most. For more info call Fiona McNally on **01479 873 535**.

Way better

A new footpath on the Speyside Way has been completed, helping walkers avoid a busy part of the public road between Kincaig and Insh Church. The project was driven by the Kincaig and Vicinity Community Council and received £45,000 of funding from the Park Authority.

Use your LOAF

Do you want to help people enjoy the Cairngorms responsibly? If so, the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum are looking for new members. The forum, which meets three times a year, advises the Park Authority on matters relating to outdoor access. Email outdoor@cairngorms.co.uk for more information before Friday 17 May.

Equal to the task

In the summer edition of *Cairn* we invited applicants to join our Equality Advisory Panel, helping guide and advise us on how we can best serve marginalised and under-represented groups.

Following a huge response, we're delighted to welcome seven new members to the group: Shreoshi,

Keith, Kate, Micah, Joanna, Mariana and Marisa. Find out more by scanning the QR code.



Finding their voice

The Cairngorms Youth Action Team and the Youth Local Action Group have been to Holyrood recently, as members of the Scottish Rural and Islands Youth Parliament.

Youth Action members Ellie Moore, Bob Cain and Iona Kellas were in Edinburgh alongside 30 other young people from across rural Scotland, presenting the demands of the Youth Parliament to First Minister Humza Yousaf, the Permanent Secretary and various Cabinet Secretaries.

The group's 10 demands were agreed following the first ever meeting of the

Rural and Islands Youth Parliament in November, and included action on topics such as the environment, diversity, affordable housing and mental health. Mairi Gougeon MSP agreed to act as the young people's spokesperson and led a parliamentary debate on their demands, which met with cross-party support.

Many MSPs commented on the chronic issue of ageing populations in rural Scotland and the need to work with young people to address this problem. The Youth Parliament will continue working with the Scottish Government over the coming months to explore many of these issues in more detail.



Good natured

The Cairngorms Trust, a small charity which promotes sustainable and community-led development throughout the National Park, has awarded 13 projects over £106,000 as part of its Nature Resilience Fund 2023-24.

The fund focuses on projects that protect and restore habitats, conserve wildlife and promote ecological sustainability in the region. This year's successful projects include wildflower pollinator habitat creation, tree planting, pond creation and bumblebee conservation. For more information and to support the Trust's work visit cairngormstrust.org.uk



Food for thought

A thriving agriculture industry is crucial to the National Park, not just for the economy but the long-term health of our environment.

It's for this reason that the Park Authority welcomes the rekindling of a Cairngorms Farmers' and Crofters' Group. The group was formed in light of some discontent around how the Park Authority engages with the sector, including on the reintroduction of beavers.

Over 80 group members met with Park Authority staff in January to express their concerns. Whilst agreement wasn't reached on all issues, the meeting provided an opportunity to come together to see how we can deliver for nature, climate and local agricultural businesses.

Grant Moir, Chief Executive of the Park Authority, said: "Farmers and crofters are very much part of the landscape here in the National Park and we are committed to working closely with the group to find further common ground."

As well as working with the new group, the Park Authority continues to fund work on farms throughout the National Park. Over the past two years, £180,000 of funding has been awarded to around 60 farms (40 farmers) for activities such as wader and goose management, carbon audits, dry stone dyke restoration and mob grazing.



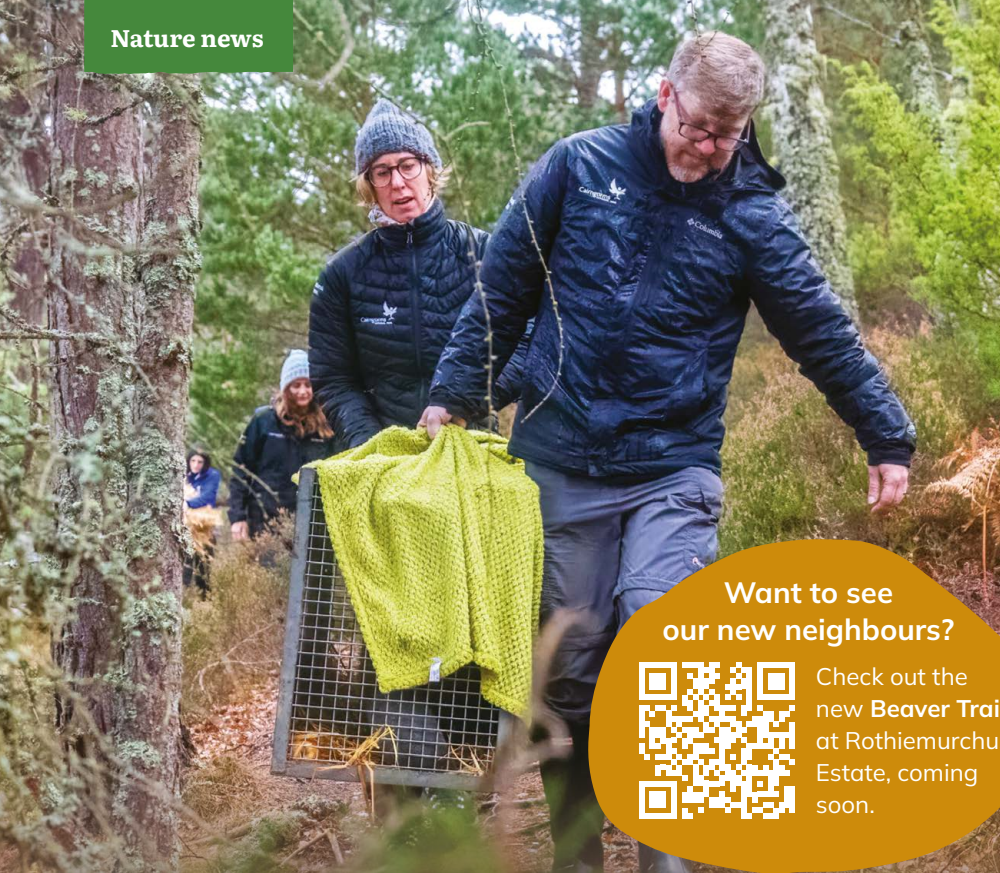
Lek-king at Balmoral

The capercaillie mating ritual, or 'lek', is one of nature's wonders but, with fewer than 600 capercaillie now left in Scotland, it is an offence to disturb them during the mating season.

However, thanks to a new 'virtual lek' experience at Balmoral Estate, visitors will now be able to experience lekking capercaillie up-close on a huge, high-definition screen. The experience is free for estate visitors and has been delivered as part of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

For more go to cairngorms.co.uk/food-for-thought or scan the QR code.





Want to see
our new neighbours?



Check out the
new **Beaver Trail**
at Rothiemurchus
Estate, coming
soon.

Beavers are back

The first beavers to be translocated to the Cairngorms are settling into their new home after arriving in the National Park in December.

A pair was released on Rothiemurchus, with Minister Lorna Slater there to offer a helping hand. A further pair was released the same day on land owned by Wildland Cairngorms Ltd, followed by a family at the same location in early January.

This is the first out of range translocation in Scotland and sees the return of beavers to the area for

the first time in around 400 years. By changing and re-naturalising the landscape around them, beavers can help combat climate change and boost biodiversity.

To minimise any possible stress to the animals, the beavers were released with a limited number of people present. Both the beavers and their wider habitat will now be closely monitored by the Park Authority's Beaver Officer and ranger service. A management and mitigation plan is also in place to minimise negative impacts on neighbouring landholdings. For more information see cairngorms.co.uk/beavers

Quite a catch

A river's catchment is not only a vital source of water but also an important habitat for wildlife, and the River South Esk is no exception.

The River South Esk Catchment Partnership has been awarded £1.4m from Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot, to enhance this important area of the Angus Glens. Project work begins this year including woodland expansion, wetland creation and river restoration at a scale unseen before in Angus.

The partnership are holding a series of consultation events to gather views from residents – visit theriversouthesk.org for more information.



Cat tracks

Following the release of wildcats into the Cairngorms Connect landscape in June, the Saving Wildcats team have been tracking their movements using GPS radio collars.

Of the 19 wildcats released, 17 have stayed within the wider project area in Badenoch and Strathspey. While some individuals have begun to settle in specific locations, most are still moving about regularly, scoping out different areas of habitat. One has even travelled over the Cairngorm plateau to Mar Lodge estate in Deeside, crossing several Munros and covering 30 kilometres in three days.

The cats are typically using a mixture of rough grassland, mixed woodland and river or stream edges, which provide



prey such as mice and voles, as well as cover to hide from potential threats, including people and dogs. For more information contact the Saving Wildcats team on wildcats@rzss.org.uk

Points of view



Do you have a favourite view in the Cairngorms National Park?

We're mapping the special landscape qualities of the Cairngorms to help us better understand how communities perceive, experience and value the landscapes here in the National Park.

Whether it's rugged mountain views or a sense of peace, we'd love to know what you think and what makes it special.



Share your 'best view' using our interactive mapping tool and you'll be entered into a prize draw to **win** a **£100 voucher**.

Rare insects spotted

Rare dragonflies have been discovered in Deeside as part of a survey at the National Trust for Scotland's Mar Lodge Estate.

The iridescent northern emerald dragonfly was recorded for the first time in Deeside, whilst the brightly coloured azure hawk dragonfly (pictured right) was recorded in the area for only the second time.

Just a few weeks earlier, the shining guest ant was spotted further down

the glen for the first time in a decade. The species is so called because it makes its home in wood ant nests, despite being about a third of their size!

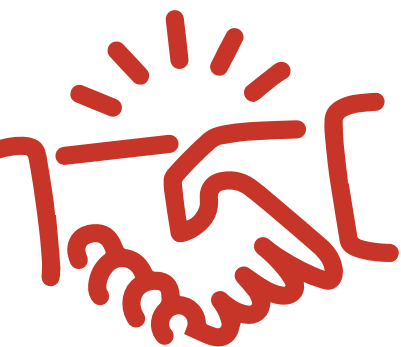
You don't have to be an expert to spot rare species. Anyone can get involved by downloading *Look Wild*, a free nature ID app that identifies plants



and animals for you and contributes to a nationwide citizen science project, led by UK national parks.



Taking Care of business



“I’m keen to hear from as many businesses as possible – members and non-members – to ensure we understand their priorities and that they’re represented.”

Craig Mills,
Cairngorms Business
Partnership

There are more than 1,000 businesses in the National Park, from manufacturing and construction to land management, tourism and retail. We caught up with Graeme Low of GrowBiz and Craig Mills of the Cairngorms Business Partnership to learn more about what support is out there for local employers.

“I think one of the most special things about the business community in the National Park is its diversity,” says Craig Mills, who recently took over as CEO of the Cairngorms Business Partnership, the chamber of commerce for the region. “From accommodation providers to food and drink, farming to activity operators and everything in between – we’ve got a lot to offer here for both locals and visitors.”

The Business Partnership, which has around 400 members, runs a variety of events throughout the year, including networking opportunities, workshops and an annual conference, as well as hosting the destination site VisitCairngorms.com

“So much is changing both here in the Cairngorms and in the wider economy, and it can be difficult especially for small businesses to keep track of everything and have their voices heard. As I start my new role, I’m keen to hear from as many businesses as possible – members and non-members – to ensure we understand their priorities and that they’re represented when it comes to new legislation such as the tourism levy.”

As with most parts of rural Scotland, businesses in the National Park are typically small, with 87% employing fewer than 10 people. This can make dealing with challenges such as staff availability, skills shortages and available housing particularly difficult, something which Graeme Low and his organisation GrowBiz know all about.

GrowBiz was founded in Perthshire in 2007 to help local people build businesses and enterprises for themselves. They offer support services across all of rural Scotland, including the Cairngorms, and have supported 2,300 individuals, businesses and social enterprises in the past five years.



"Starting up and running a business is rewarding but can also bring a very unique set of challenges," says Graeme. "We're here to offer free, non-judgemental, practical help and advice to people, including on funding, business planning, marketing, mentoring and training and development."

"What's unique about GrowBiz is the range of support on offer and also the events that we run throughout the year. Topics range from digital skills to essentials for start-ups, networking and climate action."



"The journey to net zero

will be an even more significant aspect of the business support we offer over the coming years."

**Graeme Low,
GrowBiz**

The Park Authority provides annual funding to the Cairngorms Business Partnership, GrowBiz and a number of other organisations to support local businesses, provide training and development opportunities, and help the economy of the National Park diversify and thrive.

One key area of focus is the nature and climate crisis, with the Cairngorms aiming to become the UK's first net zero national park. In 2021 the Business Partnership and the Park Authority signed up to Tourism Declares, an initiative that supports businesses, organisations and individuals to reduce their carbon emissions. For GrowBiz, too, this has become an increasingly important area of work.

"Understanding how business owners can play a part whilst also maintaining a thriving business is really important," explains Graeme. "The journey to net zero will be an even more significant aspect of the business support we offer over the coming years."

Whatever challenges emerge over the next few years, it's encouraging that such a strong support network exists to help businesses and local communities thrive, both now and in the future.

**Looking
for support?**



Business Gateway

Expert advice and guidance on running your business.

T. 01463 896 831

bgateway.com/highland

Cairngorms Business Partnership

Chamber of Commerce for the Cairngorms region.

T. 01479 810 200

cairngormschamber.com

Cairngorms Trust

Charity supporting sustainable and community-led projects.

T. 01479 870 543

cairngormstrust.org.uk

GrowBiz

Support and advice for small businesses and social enterprises.

T. 01828 627 790

growbiz.co.uk

Cairngorms 2030

Putting the power to tackle the nature and climate crisis in the hands of the people of the UK's largest national park. Through 20 long-term projects we will:



Become the first national park in the UK to **reach net zero**



Restore 3,500 hectares of carbon-storing peatland



Develop the world's first **outdoor dementia resource centre**



Transform the way people **get around** the Cairngorms



Pioneer **nature-friendly farming** and green finance approaches



Foster **lasting relationships** with under-represented communities



Create **1,500 football pitches** worth of new woodland



Prescribe nature on the NHS to improve health and wellbeing



Empower communities to shape the future of their area



Restore **three iconic rivers** in the Park: the Spey, Dee and Esk

Want to be part of it?

Head to cairngorms.co.uk/cairngorms2030 to find out how.



In conversation with Sean Williamson

Restoring peatland will be essential in helping the Cairngorms become the UK's first net zero national park. We talked to local contractor Sean Williamson, of Williamson Groundworks in Grantown, to find out how he became involved in peatland restoration projects.

Why is it important for local contractors to get involved in peatland restoration?

I am pleased the opportunities are there for local contractors to train and tool up for this type of work rather than bringing in contractors from other parts of the country. Peatland restoration is all about helping to slow and reverse the effects of the climate crisis and so it makes sense to train local people rather than have workers



and machinery travelling up to the Cairngorms, which would obviously have a considerable carbon footprint.

What are some of the peatland projects you've worked on so far?

Our first peatland restoration project involved delivering some novel technique trials in Glenfeshie in 2022. Following that we worked with the Park Authority under the New Entrant Scheme (which gives existing contractors the skills needed to deliver peatland work) on a project at Glenmuick in autumn last year. That was followed by a complex project on Allargue Estate. We will also be delivering a Park Authority-funded peatland project with RSPB Scotland at Abernethy over the coming months.

What impacts do you hope peatland restoration projects will have in the National Park?





Restoring damaged peatland obviously has significant benefits to the environment, but I think what is

important on top of that is the jobs that will be created locally. There are going to be more opportunities for this type of work in the coming years and that will provide new work opportunities for people in our communities. These projects could also play a part in helping the growth of local businesses – it's great that contractors in the Cairngorms are being given the opportunity to diversify the services they offer and upskill their team. All this will have a positive impact on our economy in the Cairngorms National Park.

We plan to restore 3,500 hectares of peatland as part of **Cairngorms 2030**, trapping thousands of tonnes of carbon. Scan the QR code to find out more.





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“Restoring damaged peatland obviously has significant benefits to the environment, but I think what is important on top of that is the jobs that will be created locally.”

Sean Williamson,
Peatland contractor

Read the
full story on
page 15



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**FOREST
CARBON**

