



winter 2024

cairn

The magazine of the Cairngorms National Park

Climate change

Cairngorms
2030 is making
its mark

Inside

Drawing up plans
Share your priorities
for planning

Hot topic
Have your say on
fire byelaws



For more information head to cairngorms.co.uk/magazine or 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 reach the correct person or organisation for support.



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 the 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
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PH26 3HG

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Fàilte / Welcome

Welcome to the winter edition of *Cairn*, the magazine for residents of the Cairngorms National Park.

Over the past few months there's been much discussion about a proposed national park in Galloway. Community drop-ins have taken place, newspaper articles written, surveys completed.

Whatever your views on the topic – and whatever the outcome – it's essential that all parts of the community have their say in deciding what happens on their doorstep.



The Cairngorms has been a national park for over two decades and this principle remains central to our work. Two years ago, nearly 1,500 of you helped shape the future direction of the National Park via our Partnership Plan.

And in this issue, we're asking for your views on three key topics: our residents attitudes survey, the wording of a byelaw restricting recreational fires in the Cairngorms, and our next Local Development Plan, setting priorities for planning and development in the area.

You may ask – why should I get involved? The answer is simple: these consultations matter. They affect where money is spent, what work gets taken forward and, ultimately, what the Cairngorms looks like in years to come. So if you can spare a few minutes, we'd love to hear what you think.

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

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Call of the caper



Hot topic

Earlier this year, the Park Authority consulted on the potential introduction of a fire byelaw. Over 1,600 of you took part, with 79% supporting the introduction of a byelaw, 16% against and 5% unsure.

We did not express a preference during this consultation, but the results gave the Park Authority a clear mandate for change.

Drawing on feedback from the general public, landowners and partners, the Park Authority board agreed on 28 June to develop a seasonal byelaw, lasting

from 1 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.

The Park Authority is required to consult on the specific wording of the byelaw. To read our proposal, find out about next steps and to have your say, please see below:



For more info go to cairngorms.co.uk/fires, scan the QR code or call **01479 873 535**



Centre of attention

Blair Atholl Local Information Centre has had a refurb, thanks to funding from the Park Authority. The centre, which is one of more than a dozen community-run facilities across the Cairngorms, is a central hub of information about the village and its heritage. The new visitor interpretation charts the 750-year history of Atholl Estates, highlights work taking place to tackle the nature and climate crisis, and celebrates some of the species that call the area home.

Resident reviews

What are your experiences of living and working in the Cairngorms National Park? What issues matter most to you and your community? From affordable housing to public transport and tackling climate change, we want to hear what you think as part of our long-term resident attitudes survey. The survey should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete and as a wee thank you we're giving participants a chance to win £100 in vouchers to spend locally. To take part go to cairngorms.co.uk/magazine.



Braemarkable building

Braemar Castle has reopened to the public following the completion of a community-led restoration project.

The historic building has been re-roofed and re-harled, with internal work also carried out as part of the £1.6m programme. The Cairngorms Trust funded a visitor experience study as part of the work.

Putting on a show

Over 700 people took part in Cairngorms 2030 engagement events this summer as part of our efforts to become the UK's first net zero national park.

Our team attended shows including the highland games at Newtonmore and Tomintoul and the Grantown Show, as well as arranging three community roadshows in Braemar, Carrbridge and Kingussie.

Attendees took part in a variety of activities, from feeding back on transport and active travel proposals to health and wellbeing sessions and ranger-led activities for children. We even offered free bike safety checks at the Carrbridge event, thanks to our partners at the SPIN Project.

Our next stop will be the Ballater Winter Festival on Saturday 30 November and we will publish a full list of 2025 events soon. Check our website or social media for updates, or call **01479 873 535**.



The future's bright

Billed as a careers fair with a difference, 'Your Future Here' saw over 300 young people come together to sample the array of jobs available in the National Park.



Attendees got the chance to have a go at activities like drone flying and chainsaw maintenance, as well as applying for live job opportunities.

Tom Kirkbride, an S6 pupil at Grantown Grammar, said: "It's definitely opened my eyes to more job opportunities than I thought were available. I have been flying drones since I was a kid so the workshop about jobs using drones was right up my street."

Favourable climate

Farms, businesses and community groups across the National Park have been busy this summer taking forward ambitious climate adaptation projects, supported by a dedicated £370,000 fund from the Park Authority.

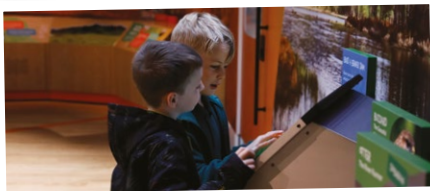
From solar panels and battery storage to floodbank repairs, wildfire mitigation and river restoration, the 18 successful applicants to the Climate Adaptation Fund were incredibly diverse. Amongst them was Gray's Auto Services in Kingussie, who were given funding to support a long-term plan to reduce their environmental impact.

The funding will accelerate their plans to improve their energy and resource efficiency, installing a solar photovoltaic and battery storage system, an air source heat pump and a rainwater harvesting system. By utilising natural resources, they will reduce their carbon footprint, benefitting the local area and making improvements to the working environment for their staff. What's more, much of the work will be serviced by local businesses.

The Climate Adaptation Fund is the latest in a series of measures from the Park Authority to tackle the effects of climate change.



For more info go to cairngorms.co.uk/climate-adaptation-fund or scan the QR code



Voyage of discovery

Visitors to the Cairngorms National Park can now learn about nature and how they can save wildlife following the completion of Scotland's Wildlife Discovery Centre. Based at the Highland Wildlife Park, the £6.5 million project was part-funded by the Park Authority and comprises three new buildings, an ambitious community outreach programme and a biodiversity action plan to help protect native species.

Fèis Week

Kincraig was alive with music last month when musicians from Fèis Spè came to the village for Fèis Week, an annual celebration of Gaelic arts – song, dance and traditional music. More than 80 talented young people and tutors were involved in performances and workshops, and a highlight of the week was the tutors' concert.

Cleaning up

Keep Scotland Beautiful's network of more than 150 Clean Up Hubs across the country is supporting communities to tackle litter in their local area. Five hubs have now been set up in the National Park in Braemar, Grantown-on-Spey, Killiecrankie, Aviemore and Laggan. Visit [keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org](https://www.keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org) for more info.

Welcome developments

The Park Authority is seeking views from local residents on a range of issues as part of the latest phase of the Local Development Plan consultation.

The Local Development Plan helps guide development in the National Park over a five-year period, including where affordable housing, community facilities and economic development will go. It is a legal requirement for the Park Authority set by Scottish Government.

People who live and work in the National Park can use the dedicated Local Development Plan website to provide feedback on a series of topics that will go live in stages until the end of the year.

If you have any questions about the Local Development Plan, completing the surveys or would like to share your views over the phone or in writing, please call **01479 873 535** or email planning@cairngorms.co.uk.



Head to cairngormsldp.commonplace.is or scan the QR code to take part



Ranging far and wide

At the end of summer, 15 junior rangers embarked on a three-day expedition from Linn O' Dee to Cairngorm Mountain.

The route for the expedition, through some of the more remote parts of the Cairngorms National Park with a total ascent of 1,200m, was designed to provide a more immersive experience for the group over a longer period of time.

Our monthly junior ranger activities normally take place over a half day at readily accessible locations so this really was a different challenge for the group, but everyone rose to the occasion.

The expedition proved to be a great experience, with the group demonstrating excellent teamwork and resilience, as well as bringing a lot of fun to proceedings. Thanks go to our expedition partners at the National Trust for Scotland, Cairngorms Connect, RSPB Scotland and Cairngorm Mountain.

The junior ranger project is an exciting, fun and adventurous outdoor learning programme for young people aged between 11 and 18. If you'd like to find out more about the programme, email rangers@cairngorms.co.uk.



A vital cog

Earlier this year, Kincaig resident Josh Crofts received funding from the Cairngorms Trust's Youth Local Action Group, a group of young people supporting projects in the National Park.

Josh used the funding for a bike maintenance course and is now using the skills he picked up to support his local community.

"I initially heard about the fund from a friend, found the application and thought it could be a good opportunity for me," Josh says. "I was looking to do a bike course anyway and it was a huge bonus that there were people out there who wanted to support that." Read our interview with Josh at cairngorms.co.uk/voices.

Moth in a million

The silver shade is a delicate white moth with a silvery sheen.

Usually found across continental Europe and in North America, the only site it has ever been recorded in the UK is at Glen Tilt in the Cairngorms, where it was first seen in 1875.

Since then, no one had seen it, its eggs or caterpillars... that is, until the sharp eyes of Butterfly Conservation volunteer Holly Doherty, 18, spotted the

eggs in the remote glen. She has been nominated for a National Biodiversity Network award for her discovery.



Beaver babies

Beavers released in the Cairngorms National Park have given birth to two kits, making them the first wild-born beavers in the Cairngorms in over 400 years.

The beaver kits were born to two of the six family groups that were translocated to the upper Spey catchment as part of a coordinated effort to re-establish the species in the Cairngorms.

The Park Authority and partners have been monitoring the animals closely since the first releases in December 2023, and it's encouraging that two of the beaver pairs have already bred successfully.

The team have now turned their attention to a series of new release sites, working closely with the Beaver Trust and NatureScot. After months of scoping, four locations have been identified: two on Wildland Ltd, another on private land between Kingussie and Aviemore, and a final site amongst the quieter bays and lochans on the southern shores of Loch Morlich, owned by Forestry and Land Scotland.



For more info go to cairngorms.co.uk/beavers or scan the QR code



Super-natural

Spanning habitat, land management and priority species work, the Cairngorms Nature programme brings together over 30 organisations and is the driving force for conservation and land management work in the National Park.

2024 marks the end of the current five-year plan and a great deal has been achieved. Whilst we often hear about well-known species like capercaillie and wildcat, significant progress has also been made to protect lesser-known species and habitats, including aspen and one-flowered wintergreen.

The Park Authority has been working with Plantlife Scotland on the UK's first ever conservation project for one of our rarest flowers, the one-flowered wintergreen (pictured), with results showing a fantastic 70% survival rate of translocated rosettes after the crucial first nine months.

We have also been working with partners to create a map of where aspen stands are located, helping identify planting opportunities to increase the connectivity and resilience of the tree across the National Park.

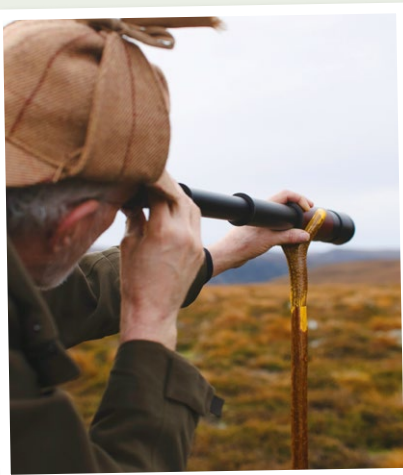
A new plan is currently in the works with partners, including key actions to tackle the nature and climate crisis.

Deer subsidies

A significant reduction in wild deer numbers is required to meet our nature and net zero commitments, with a maximum of five to eight deer per km² targeted in the Partnership Plan.

However, with 80% of deer management carried out by the private sector at a net cost to deer managers, support is needed to make the practice economically viable.

As one of three venison subsidy schemes being trialled in Scotland, deer managers in the National Park will receive additional payments for venison for a proportion of any deer culled over and above annual targets. The scheme is intended to help with the nature and climate crisis, as well as supporting jobs in the deer sector.



Future farming

The Cairngorms Future Farming project is exploring how farming in the Cairngorms can help tackle the nature and climate crisis, whilst increasing business resilience and maintaining profitable farm businesses.

This project is part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The first stage of the project has involved working with six pilot farms who will trial different farming practices that aim to lower the carbon footprint and increase biodiversity on their farm. These practices are likely to include

finishing cattle on home-grown feed, methods to establish red clover and herbal leys, bracken management options and more.

These activities will be monitored to assess their impacts on carbon, nature, productivity, costs and ease of implementation. We will also share learnings from the project with the wider farming community as it develops, including through farm walks and case studies, which will begin in 2025.



For more info on the project go to shorturl.at/ffuBa or scan the QR code

Common ground

The management of deer in the National Park is vital to a sustainable future.

As part of the Common Ground Forum, an initiative to find better ways of working across the deer sector, a series of events for stalkers have been organised.

The most recent one took place in the National Park at Fealar Estate and saw around 100 stalkers taking part in discussions about the future of deer management, tech demonstrations and a panel discussion where they could ask questions of senior government officials.



Grassland gains

Three grassland workshops took place over the summer involving 24 land managers from the National Park, discussing how species rich grasslands can benefit farms and livestock.

The workshops provided advice on identifying, surveying and managing grasslands, achieving maximum benefit to wildlife without negatively impacting production. Elsewhere, farms have benefited from the £370,000 Climate Adaptation Fund. Projects include flood bank restoration, woodland planting, and the purchase of direct drill equipment to be shared by two farming collectives in Laggan and Strathspey.

Miraculous marshes

Marsh saxifrage is a very rare flowering plant that only grows in specific conditions. Until recently it was only known to grow in five sites in Scotland; however, Simon Thomas of the Park Authority's Peatland ACTION team has now made that six. Simon came across the species on one of our peatland restoration sites in Deeside. He has subsequently trained the rest of the team on what to look out for when they are out and about visiting peatlands, in the hope that more locations can be identified.



Peat treat

The Park Authority's Peatland ACTION team showcased their work to over 400 delegates at the annual IUCN UK Peatland Programme Conference, which took place in Aviemore in September. Scotland is leading the way in safeguarding this important part of our natural environment, and delegates got to see projects taking place in the National Park including at Wildland Ltd and Inshriach Forest. Meanwhile, the UK's 15 national parks have become the first in the world to join the UN-backed 'Race to Zero' initiative, aiming to halve their global carbon emissions by 2030.

Networks for nature

Ten projects across the National Park have received funding through the Cairngorms Trust's Networks for Nature Fund.

The fund was launched to help develop nature projects related to climate change and to help tackle nature decline within the National Park.

One of the successful projects will see 15,000 trees planted in a number

of key salmon spawning tributaries in the River Dee's upper catchment. The Tay Rivers Trust in the south of the National Park will also receive funding for woodland creation.

Other projects include an outdoor classroom and polytunnel for Grantown Grammar gardening club, and habitat creation for two of our rarest pollinators, the small scabious mining bee (pictured) and the dark bordered beauty moth.





Beetle-sleuths

The hunt for the elusive blood-red longhorn beetle in the Cairngorms National Park has been surprisingly successful.

A total of 160 beetles have been found by staff and volunteers from RZSS in 2024. This compares with a total of 81 beetle sightings since the 1900s.

Enough beetles were found that six pairs could be collected for captive breeding at the Highland Wildlife Park. They have been observed mating and have been given sections of dead Scots pine for the females to lay eggs on.

It could be some time before breeding can be confirmed, though – the beetle grubs tunnel into the wood and live inside it for at least two years!

Wildcat anniversary

Following the release of 19 wildcats last year, a further nine wildcats have been released into the Cairngorms Connect landscape this summer by the Saving Wildcats project.

Despite intensive planning, however, the releases this year have been significantly more challenging than last. Prolonged periods of heavy rainfall made it difficult for the cats to get out and explore, and this was compounded by low availability of voles due to a cyclical decline in their population.

The Saving Wildcats team monitor all of the cats using GPS-radio collars and a network of camera traps, and have been providing them with supplementary food immediately after release to sustain them while they learn about their new environment.

Sadly, two individuals died shortly after release, including a female wildcat named 'Midge' who was found by Park Authority rangers on an early morning patrol, having been hit by a vehicle the night before.

Despite these losses, the project has had a very successful year: the survival rate of the wildcats released in 2023 has been much higher than anticipated, and wild births have also increased wildcat numbers in the area.



Small but mighty

Narrow-headed ants are some of the smallest inhabitants of the National Park.



Local entomologist Nick Baker is currently keeping captive three queens in 'starter nests' to see if we can establish new colonies of this endangered species, without harming the wild population.

Captive rearing of the species is still very experimental so if Nick is successful it could have huge implications for restoring the species in areas of the National Park.



Project in numbers

9,500ha
of habitat
restored

23km
of fencing
removed or
marked, reducing
risk of bird
collisions

1,300ha
of habitat
where predator
impacts have
been reduced

200%
increase in
commercial
guides choosing
not to look for
the birds

5,400
hours of
volunteer support

1,000
capercaillie
feathers
collected for
genetic study

6,000
people taking
part in activities,
including 580
children learning
about capercaillie

The caper collective

"Protecting capercaillie has always been a team effort," says Carolyn Robertson, Project Manager of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project. "There is no single solution to saving the species, so everything we do has to be in partnership."

Over the past five years, over 25 organisations, groups and local communities have been working together to do just that – joining forces to build a brighter future for this iconic bird. From cutting-edge genetic research to trialling enhanced predator control and working hand-in-hand with mountain-bikers and dog walkers, the project has built an unprecedented community of likeminded champions for the species.

Just 532 capercaillie remain in Scotland's forests, 85% of which are located in the Cairngorms National Park. So acute is the situation facing the species that, back in the 1990s, experts predicted that the capercaillie would be extinct by around 2010. The fact it is still with us – albeit under real pressure – is testament to the hard

work of hundreds of individuals and organisations dating back several decades.

The Cairngorms Capercaillie Project – led by the Park Authority and funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund – set out to involve more people in capercaillie conservation than ever





before. In particular, it aimed to address the key issue of human disturbance, something which – despite its severe impacts – had never been tackled at scale.

Disturbance can prevent capercaillie from mating, leave eggs and chicks vulnerable if birds are scared away, and raise stress levels, affecting the birds' health and chances of survival. In Scotland, studies show that disturbance can cause capercaillie to avoid up to 40% of the habitat they need to survive.

To address the problem, the project prioritised working with specific communities – both residents and interest groups, such as birdwatchers, dog walkers and mountain-bikers – to better understand how they used their local woodlands. The project team engaged over 2,800 people to identify and take forward a range of actions to reduce human impacts on capercaillie.

This approach has seen some real successes: birdwatchers and wildlife guides locally and internationally have chosen to avoid looking for capercaillie during the breeding season; more dog owners are now walking their dogs on a lead in sensitive parts of target woodland; and mountain-bikers have developed new sustainable trails away from breeding hotspots.

"We've achieved far more for the local trail network while protecting the environment we love," explains Emma Holgate, Chair of the Badenoch and Strathspey Trail Association. "By working together, we've cut mountain-biking disturbance over 450 hectares without losing any trails."



"We've achieved far more for the local trail network while protecting the environment we love."

**Emma Holgate,
Badenoch and Strathspey
Trail Association**

In September a new five-year Capercaillie Emergency Plan was published, setting out what the public, private and third sectors – as well as communities and land managers – can do to protect the species in the long term. Whilst its aims are broader than the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project, its success will depend on the same commitment and hard work from over 100 key stakeholders.

Carolyn is optimistic: "There's so much still to do, but the passion we've seen from so many different communities gives me real confidence that we can turn the tide for capercaillie."

For more info on the Capercaillie Emergency Plan go to shorturl.at/bt0Hv or scan the QR code



Hitting the ground running

We are now one year into the ambitious Cairngorms 2030 programme. Consisting of 20 long-term projects, this transformational vision will see the Cairngorms become the UK's first net zero national park, turning all the talk about tackling climate change into positive action on the ground.

Nature projects have been in full swing, with over 1,000 hectares of peatland under restoration, helping trap harmful greenhouse gases in the ground. We are supporting local farms to create two community deer larders, helping reduce the impacts of deer grazing and provide a sustainable source of food, including donations to support local foodbanks.

Work in communities continues, with over 1,000 secondary school pupils involved so far in various projects. Workshops were held with local artist Claire Macdonald, exploring young people's perspectives on what the future landscape might look like. The results are now on display as a piece of art in Speyside Community High School.

Collaborating with GPs, the nature prescriptions project has seen an increase in referrals, taking forward a new approach that helps boost people's physical and mental wellbeing.

The Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre continues its fantastic work, engaging nearly 1,000 people living with dementia and their families in activities including gardening, cycling, arts and music.

Making it easier and safer for residents and visitors to get around the National Park without a vehicle, the transport team have been working with local communities to develop path and road safety projects in high-traffic areas.

"It's great to see the Cairngorms 2030 programme hit the ground running," says David Clyne, Head of Cairngorms 2030. "Becoming the first national park in the UK to reach net zero is no easy task but we've been bowled over by how much the local community and our partners have embraced the challenge."

Creating 30 new jobs within the National Park and numerous engagement opportunities that will continue throughout the winter and beyond, Cairngorms 2030 is a transformational programme which brings together over 70 partners. It is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, with thanks to National Lottery players.



For more info on Cairngorms 2030, go to **cairngorms2030.commonplace.is** or scan the QR code





Getting into gear with Andy Toop from the SPIN Project

The SPIN Project, led by BackcountryScot and funded through the Cairngorms Trust, is a community-focused initiative based in Aviemore, aiming to make bikes accessible to everyone. We spoke with founder Andy Toop to find out what inspired him to start, and why he believes everyone should have access to affordable bikes.

What is the SPIN Project and what is it trying to do?

The SPIN Project helps people access affordable bikes. Through our refurbished scheme, for example, you can pick up a bike for £25. People donate them and our



volunteers fix them. I see us opening the door, holding it open for people and saying: come in, biking is for you... and you can go cycling!

What are the benefits of cycling and being able to get around on a bike?

The obvious ones are the physical benefits – helping you stay fit and healthy – and the mental health benefit. We can't argue with that. It also benefits the planet, driving towards the National Park's net zero targets.

Cairngorms 2030 is all about people and nature thriving together. How does the SPIN Project fit into this?

I think we're helping tell that story, drive that idea: more bikes, more people, more community. Some people come here just for a blether and that's okay. I want it to be a gathering space where you can come and have a chat; that's always the basis of a strong community. That's part of how we fit in. I want to continue that.



For more info on the Spin Project go to spinproject.scot or scan the QR code



“I see us opening the door, holding it open for people and saying: come in, biking is for you, and it can cost you £25, and you can go cycling!”

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Andy Toop
Founder, the SPIN Project

Produced by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. For more information see cairngorms.co.uk/magazine.

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full story on
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**FOREST
CARBON**

