



For more information head to cairngorms.co.uk/magazine or scan the QR code



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 Grantown-on-Spey PH26 3HG

Front cover image: Helen Stewart, senior partner at Knockbarry Farm © Wunner Film. Other images © Airborne Lens, Ben Addy / Moxon Architects, Brenna Jessie, Cairngorm Vets, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Cathleen Nicol, Dan Harris, Graham Niven Photography, Horseback UK, Jakub Iwanicki, Kaye Nicolson, Landmark Forest Adventure Park, Liam Anderstrem, Louise Took, Malcolm Smith, Neil G Paterson Photography, Paul Davison, Pete Short, Rachel Keenan, Ronan Dugan / WildLand Limited, RSPB, RZSS, VisitAberdeenshire, VisitScotland, Wunner Film.

Fàilte / Welcome

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

With the days stretching and the weather improving, there's no better time to make the most of our beautiful surroundings here in the National Park. But if you don't know where to start, this edition will hopefully bring you some fresh inspiration and a welcome reminder of the health benefits of nature.

An early highlight of the year has been the launch of our deer larder project, part of our Cairngorms 2030 programme supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. We've been working closely with two farming families to address the



overpopulation of deer on their land. The project aims to solve that problem, while giving nutritious meals to people in food poverty and engaging budding cooks in local schools.

Meanwhile the UK's first outdoor dementia resource centre at Badaguish has inspired a similar project in Edinburgh, and more people than ever are getting involved in our nature prescriptions service – bringing the therapeutic benefit of the outdoors to a wider audience.

This issue also marks the publication of our first ever resident and worker survey. Alongside a range of key issues, it's notable that over 80% of you said that living in the National Park is good for your mental and physical health. So whether it's a bike ride through the hills or a short stroll on a community path, be sure to head out and enjoy your National Park this spring.

Let us know what you think about this issue of *Cairn*: call **01479 873 535** or email haveyoursay@cairngorms.co.uk

This document is available in other formats on request.



Use your smartphone to scan the **QR codes** to quickly access further information.

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Please pass this on when you're finished, or recycle

Highlights



Dementia care



A Park for All



Our survey says



Field to food banks

Spring in your step

With spring (finally) in the air, many of us will be spending more time outdoors.

The physical and mental health benefits of connecting with nature are well known; however, it's not always easy for people to do.

Working with the NHS in Badenoch and Strathspey – as part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme – we have developed a 'nature prescriptions' service to help those who do not traditionally connect with nature benefit from time in the outdoors.

The project offers tailored support to join activities like accessible nature walks, gardening projects or forest bathing. Nearly 50 people have already benefited from the service.

Green Health Week takes place this May and now is the perfect time to get involved. If you are registered with a practice in Grantown-on-Spey, Aviemore, Kingussie or Laggan speak with your local GP. Or if you know someone who may benefit from the service, you can signpost them to their registered GP's website to self-refer.





Bringing the outdoors in

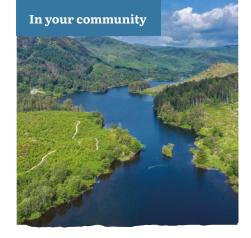
As part of Cairngorms 2030, the Park Authority partnered with Alzheimer Scotland to create the UK's first Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre at Badaguish.

Studies suggest that contact with the natural world can offer comfort, stimulation and a sense of freedom and meaning to people living with dementia, and the centre was designed to maximise contact with its natural surroundings.

Just a few years later, we're delighted to report that Alzheimer Scotland and The Forget-Me-Not Trust are now opening a second centre in June this year in the grounds of Lauriston Castle, Edinburgh, inspired by Badaguish's example.

Meanwhile, back in the Cairngorms, centre staff partnered with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland to run activities in care homes throughout Strathspey during the winter months. These visits involved interactive, sensory activities including sounds and smells relating to animals and their habitats.

The groups looked at pictures and models, listened to animal sounds and even learned to identify which animals were visiting by what they leave behind. The sessions were designed to evoke memories and enable everyone to connect with nature, even when the weather prevents them from going outside.



Galloway gatherings

A 14-week public consultation on Scottish Government's proposal for a new national park in Galloway ended in February.

NatureScot ran over 30 consultation events and more than 1,000 people attended from across the region. They are now analysing all the responses they received and will publish their findings – alongside their advice to Scottish Government – later this spring.

Scottish Government also published a draft Natural Environment Bill in February, which set out over 100 actions to protect and restore Scotland's nature. The bill includes a change to the aims of Scotland's national parks, recognising the central role they play in tackling the nature and climate crisis.

The bill will now be debated by the Scottish Parliament and we look forward to playing an active part in this work going forward.

Fire away

A detailed plan has been drawn up to help land managers tackle wildfire risk across the Cairngorms National Park.

The Integrated Wildfire Management Plan offers guidance in reducing risk, tackling wildfires and making the landscape more resilient. This is separate to the National Park seasonal fire byelaw, which is now with Scottish Government for review following a second public consultation.





For more info on the plan go to **shorturl.at/ebBT8** or scan the **QR code**

Promising developments

Thank you to everyone who has come along to events over the past few months as we prepare for the next Local Development Plan.

Community action planning events have taken place in Strathdon,
Dulnain Bridge and Boat of Garten,
where we've heard from residents about their priorities and ambitions.

There have also been events with young people at Kingussie High School and members of the Badenoch and Strathspey Access Forum, where we used the Place Standard Tool. The tool helps to identify what works well and what needs improvement in the National

Park, with themes including housing, access to services and public spaces.

In February an event in Aviemore saw community members participating in a game, developed in partnership with the University of Edinburgh, that encourages discussion on policy matters and highlights priorities and issues.

Further community events are planned for the rest of 2025 all over the National Park.



For more info go to cairngormsIdp. commonplace.is or scan the QR code

Fèis Spè hitting the right note

Telling stories and sharing connections through music is part of the rich fabric of Highland culture.

We are working with Fèis Spè young musicians and the University of Edinburgh on a new piece as part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme.

The band will visit the National Centre of Excellence for Traditional Music and receive tuition from world-renowned musicians, in preparation for a debut performance of the work on the international stage at Celtic Connections in 2026.



Farmiliar face



A respected Strathspey farmer has been appointed as the Park Authority's new

Agricultural Adviser.

Malcolm Smith will act as the first point of contact with the farming and crofting community and will be out and about a lot over the coming months.

Malcolm will be taking forward a range of projects to support sustainable farm businesses in producing quality food, increasing biodiversity, and mitigating and adapting to the nature and climate crisis. He will also work closely with the newly formed Cairngorms Agricultural Advisory Group.



A job well done

Glen Tanar Charitable Trust rangers have been working with Horseback UK to support young people who may have struggled at school, or with finding direction since leaving education.

The 12-week programme aims to inspire and empower participants through working with horses and other outdoor activities, helping them realise their strengths and think about their future with confidence and purpose. The ranger service also supports young people to achieve the John Muir Award as part of their King's Trust certification.

The most recent programme saw young people taking part in conservation work and camping overnight on Glen Tanar Estate. The group were particularly interested in the many wells built on the estate in the late 1800s. Over the course of their community projects fortnight, the group decided to map the wells, clean them up to expose their inscriptions and find out the stories behind them.

This was a huge task requiring a lot of teamwork and planning, particularly as one of the young people uses a wheelchair and some of the wells are remote and not very accessible.

For more information on the programme, visit horseback.org.uk/courses/youth-development

Pot of gold

Last year we awarded £370,000 to 18 projects in the National Park through the Climate Adaptation Fund – and the funding pot is open again for 2025.

The projects all needed capital for activity that would address climate change, such as equipment to manage wildfires, flood prevention measures, green energy solutions and nature-friendly farming.

One of the recipients was
Newtonmore-based timber cladding

manufacturer Russwood. A £24,000 grant assisted Russwood to invest significantly in its largest solar upgrade to date. This included extending existing installations, adding panels to its flooring shed, and equipping two battery storage 'hubs' to support the running of production machinery and charging of electric vehicles at their office.

Applications for the first round of this year's Climate Adaptation Fund close on Sunday 20 April. For more information and to apply head to **cairngorms.co.uk/funding** or call **01479 873 535**.



Free range

Winter might be a quieter season for much of the Cairngorms, but not for our Junior Rangers!



Since the last issue of *Cairn* they've won the Youth Action Award at RSPB Scotland's Nature of Scotland Awards, helped out at the Highland Wildlife Park, planted trees with WildLand Limited and removed plastic tree guards from woodland at Castle Fraser. The free programme for 11-18 year-olds continues this year.

For more information, email rangers@cairngorms.co.uk

A Park for All

Five groups have been selected as the first recipients of the Cairngorms Trust's 'Park For All' fund.

The pioneering initiative, which aims to increase access to the outdoors for a variety of ethnic minority communities, attracted considerable interest.

Over £5,000 has been awarded to projects ranging from guided hillwalking with the local Chinese Association, to creating a safe space for asylum seekers and refugees. They were selected by a lived experience group made up of people from different ethnic minority backgrounds. The group helped to design the fund to promote inclusivity, environmental awareness and wellbeing.



For more info on the successful projects go to cairngormstrust.org.uk or scan the QR code



Fruit of their labours

Our 10th anniversary orchards have been bearing fruit in Glenlivet, where primary pupils have been learning about food production.

They harvested apples to make 340 bottles of juice, which they sold to raise money for the school.

Starry starry hide

A new sky hide in Tomintoul is now open to the public. The hide is circular, has seating, and provides a semienclosed area where stargazers and aurora hunters can come together to view and learn about our night skies.

Riverside repairs

Part of the riverside path at Dulnain Bridge has been upgraded thanks to funding from the Park Authority, with support from the local community. The path was resurfaced and drainage problems resolved to improve conditions underfoot.

Drumin's drammin' dig

A dig at Upper Drumin has won the prestigious Current Archaeology Research Project of the Year award.

The project, a partnership between National Trust for Scotland and The Glenlivet Distillery, excavated the site of an old still room, uncovering the history of distilling in Glenlivet in the 19th century.

In your community

Winter warmer

Over the past three years the Park Authority has worked with the Cairngorms Business Partnership to support local tourism businesses and encourage winter visitors to the National Park.

The campaign – called 'Where Winter Comes to Life' – is part of our Partnership Plan commitment to stabilise visitor numbers over the busy season and support businesses through the quieter winter months. Whilst it is still early days, data shows that visitor numbers remained static between



2019 and 2023 over the summer, but increased by 28% from January to March and October to December.

If your business
would like to take part
in next year's campaign,
contact the Cairngorms
Business Partnership on
office@visitcairngorms.com

Perfect picnic

A picnic cottage enjoyed by Queen Victoria on her visits to Balmoral has been saved from ruin and will open to visitors this summer.

The cottage, near Linn of Quoich on National Trust for Scotland's Mar Lodge Estate, was built around 1850 and has been restored to its former glory.



As part of their research into the cottage's past, archaeologists discovered post holes from an original porch, which has now been reinstated. Specially commissioned furniture has also been created so visitors can immerse themselves in the world as Queen Victoria would have seen it.

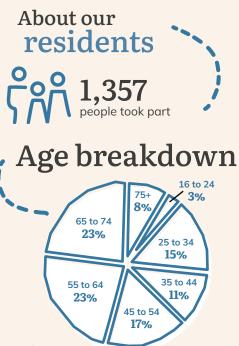
The cottage is accessed by a path from the car park at the end of the estate road. The Park Authority contributed to improved parking and path facilities at the location.

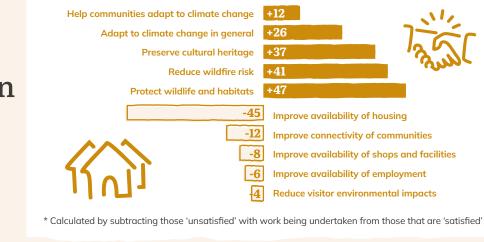


For more info go to nts.org.uk/visit/places/ mar-lodge-estate or scan the QR code

Our survey says...

Earlier this year we asked you to share your views on what it was really like living and working in the Cairngorms National Park. Over 1,300 people took part and now, for the very first time, we can reveal what you told us.





Satisfaction* with work taking place in

Every community

in the National Park represented



In the past 12 months...

49%

viewed our social media

43% read Cairn magazine

Activities and Opinions

31% attended an event or met with an officer

feel the Cairngorms has benefited from becoming a national park

the National Park to...

Cairngorms residents are more satisfied with their life than the average Scottish resident

(7.65 out of 10 versus 6.13)

This is just a snapshot of the findings from our first ever resident and worker survey. To view the full report scan the QR code or go to cairngorms.co.uk/resident-survey



Busy beavers

Beavers released in the Cairngorms National Park at the end of last year have settled in well to their new surroundings, with not even the cold weather. dampening their spirits.

Over the winter our team have been keeping a close eye on all the beaver release sites, checking camera traps and implementing our management and mitigation plan where required.

One example was a report of beavers building a dam in a drainage ditch which could have caused some flooding on agricultural land. Dams that are less than two weeks old can be removed without a licence so, in line with our plan, we were able to intervene and reduce potential impacts.



The beaver team are currently finalising details of the next set of releases in the National Park, in line with our original licence conditions. Keep an eye on our website for all the latest.

Leading the way

Scotland's world-leading **Scottish Outdoor Access** Code, which encourages people to enjoy the outdoors responsibly, is celebrating its 20th birthday and this spring we're encouraging dog owners to lead the way.

Springtime means lambing and bird nesting season so – whether you are out and about on the Cairngorms plateau in the company of dotterel and ptarmigan, or around fields of sheep – it's vital to keep dogs on a lead or under close control. Just the presence of a loose dog can cause havoc.

This season RSPB Abernethy will be rewarding responsible dogs, and their owners, with a branded buff or patch as a thank you for helping spread the word. To take part, visit @rspb.abernethy on Instagram.



Cat coop-eration

As the Saving Wildcats project enters its third year, the partnership is committed to working closely with residents and land managers.

Some have been affected by chicken predation and pheasant disturbance by the released wildcats.

The project has been offering coops to small-scale chicken holders and farmers, as well as considering funding for upgrades to larger coops. A couple

of released wildcats have also targeted pheasant pens. The project is in discussion with gamekeepers on how best to mitigate this issue.





Hope and glory

The Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms project is gearing up for its ninth year of action.

This award-winning partnership gims to conserve and enhance populations of the most threatened minibeasts in the Cairngorms.

This spring the project will focus on collecting data on the Kentish glory, a spectacular moth that used to be found across the UK but is now restricted to the Cairngorms National Park. The caterpillars feed on young birch scrub and emerge as adults in April, when RSPB Scotland will be working with local volunteers to discover new breeding locations.

If you would like to volunteer head to cairngorms.co.uk/volunteer



Lynx latest

Back in January, four lynx were released illegally in the Cairngorms National Park.

An expert team from the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, working closely with Police Scotland, WildLand Limited and Park Authority rangers,



were able to safely trap the animals and return them to captivity.

Sadly one of the lynx died overnight, but the remaining three were transported to Edinburgh Zoo for quarantine. We are pleased to report that all three cats are healthy and recovering at the Zoo, with an appeal now launched to support their ongoing veterinary care.

As with the more recent incidents of feral pigs being released in the National Park, the Park Authority condemns the illegal release of wild animals in the strongest terms and will continue to assist Police Scotland with their enquiries.

From field to food banks

Helen Stewart is the wearer of many hats. Senior partner at Knockbarry Farm near Pitlochry, gin distiller, director of a community interest company and one of two farming partners in the National Park's groundbreaking deer larder project.

"There's people in our immediate community that are really needing help," says Helen. "We've experienced agricultural damage from extremely high deer numbers on the farm and I wanted to find an ethical and sustainable way to reduce deer numbers."

The solution was simple yet effective. Working closely with Mike Cottam, the Park Authority's Land Management Adviser, the two farming partners involved would receive funding to purchase and manage deer larders, where deer culled in and around the National Park could be butchered.

This would create a local, low-food-miles market for venison, which in turn would support regular donations of meat to local food banks and schools. The project – which is part of the five-year Cairngorms 2030 programme, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund – aims to inspire land managers in other parts of rural Scotland and beyond to try something similar.

"The majority of the venison we produce will end up going to local food banks in sausages, meatballs and burgers," Helen explains. "We're hoping to sell the steaks and tenderloin and that will fund paying for the butcher, and we'll donate the rest. If we donate about half of those deer, it's about half a million meatballs."

Food banks and schools – from Grantown-on-Spey to Alford and Aberfeldy – have already received large donations of prepared, proteinrich wild venison and these will continue throughout the project's life.



Lauren Houstoun, project partner and co-owner of Glenkilrie Larder, is passionate about educating people on the benefits of local produce. She and her husband Andrew have already supplied more than 100kg of venison to school home economics departments since installing a larder on their farm.

"The response from schools to date is hugely exciting," she says. "We want to build a strong network where high quality, nutritious venison is accessible to schools in the National Park and beyond."

Plans are also afoot for schools to visit Glenkilrie Larder, learn about the nutritional benefits of venison and try their hand at making venison meals at the on-site cookery school.

"I think there are a lot of preconceived ideas about venison - that it's hard to cook, that its very expensive – and I think we can help young people see past that and make healthier choices when it comes to food."



"The majority of the

venison we produce will end up going to local food banks in sausages, meatballs and burgers."

Helen Stewart. **Knockbarry Farm**



Importantly, to ensure the larders become financially self-sustaining, the wild venison will also be sold to local retail outlets, hotels and restaurants through alreadyestablished routes to market, forged by the farm businesses themselves.

Mike Cottam, the Park Authority's lead on the project, is delighted to see over 12 months' work come to fruition: "It's incredible how far we've come over the past year. From those first conversations with the two farms and the local deer management group to now where we've got deliveries going out to schools and food banks, it's hugely rewarding. None of this would have been possible without the drive and passion of Helen, Lauren and our partners."

The project has also created training opportunities and rural jobs. Helen has employed a skilled butcher and a young, recently graduated gamekeeper. As the project grows, more employment and training opportunities are set to become available.

There have been significant benefits on the farm too, as Helen explains. "The high deer numbers previously meant our stock's feed was depleted, stone walls knocked down and grazing decimated. The resulting malnutrition and disease saw us lose a third of our sheep. Thanks to this project, we've recently had the confidence to invest in sheep again, which is hugely important for our business."

For more info on the project watch our video at shorturl.at/xrRXz or scan the **QR** code





Treemendous growth

Being able to deliver conservation on a landscape scale is one of the key benefits of being a National Park. In the last year alone, half a million trees have been planted near Blair Atholl and work is underway for a further 800,000 this year.

Over on Cairngorm Mountain, 30,000 montane trees and shrubs will be planted high up in the Spey catchment, creating vital habitat corridors for nature and improving river health. And the Cairngorms Aspen Network has been busy mapping trees across the



National Park, locating rare species such as the aspen-loving dark bordered beauty moth.

Alongside woodland creation, last year the Peatland ACTION team worked with partners to restore more than 1,500 hectares of peatland in 14 locations across the National Park, with another 2,000 hectares committed for 2025. This work has wider benefits than carbon capture alone, improving habitats and water quality, retaining water upstream and providing local employment for contractors.

Tree planting and nature restoration are a key part of Cairngorms 2030, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Dorback drop-in

Dorback Estate has recently been acquired by Oxygen Conservation and they are holding a community drop-in event on Thursday 24 April to share their plans.

If you have any questions email
Estate Manager Christian Wroe on
christian.wroe@galbraithgroup.com.
If you can't make the date, you can
sign up to their newsletter.



To sign up to their newsletter visit **eepurl.com/iRPEQ6** or scan the **QR code**

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Focus on floodbanks

A detailed study has found that almost 90% of the embankment running along the upper River Spey – covering 87km of floodbanks from Spey Dam to Grantownon-Spey – is in good condition.

The assessment, carried out by consultants cbec, was commissioned by the Park Authority as part of the beaver monitoring and mitigation plan, and follows discussions with the local farming community.

We are grateful for the support of more than 70 land managers who

contributed to the study, many of whom outlined key areas of concern and explained how floodwater typically moves through their land. The results were shared at a gathering of land managers in late February, which also gave farmers a chance to ask questions and discuss next steps.

As we continue to experience more severe weather events associated with climate change, surveys like this will be essential to help us plan ahead, highlighting the areas requiring most attention. The same stretch will be monitored annually over the next three years to ensure we keep track of any changes.



In conversation with Eilidh and Nicola from Cairngorm Vets

Setting up and running a rural business is no easy task, but support is available for the diverse range of businesses that call the Cairngorms home. When Filidh Corr and Nicola Morrison decided to open their own veterinary practice, they reached out to GrowBiz, who - in partnership with the Park Authority – offer free business support to rural enterprises.

What's unique about having a veterinary practice in the National Park?

We wanted to set up our own small animal vets in Grantown-on-Spey. We're both from the local area [Eilidh is from Grantown and Nicola from Knockando] and have family ties here so it was important to us to set up a practice that would serve the local community.



Whilst we don't offer services for farm animals, one of the biggest differences in running a rural vet practice as opposed to a city one is the population of working animals we treat – we see a lot of working dogs! We're mindful that our rural setting means that people often choose us due to geography and that we're serving a wide demographic, so we listen and try to deliver what each individual needs for their animal.

When did you look for business support?

Despite the decades of veterinary experience between us, neither of us had any knowledge of what was involved in setting up a business. We saw an article in the local paper about GrowBiz and decided to get in touch. Knowing that we were contacting someone local for business support was reassuring from the outset – we knew they'd understand the unique landscape here in the National Park.

How has the support helped your business?

Having sessions with the GrowBiz team helped us understand exactly what we needed to do. We left the first meeting with a long to-do list and lots of practical advice. From there we were given tailored support, from cashflow to bookkeeping templates, advice on accounting and even guidance on commercial leasing.

The support we received meant that we opened the doors to Cairngorm Vets in November last year with the confidence that we had the essential elements right for the smooth running of the business.



For more info and business support go to **growbiz.co.uk** or scan the **QR code**



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"Knowing that we were contacting someone local for business support was reassuring from the outset – we knew they'd understand the unique landscape here in the National Park."

Eilidh Corr and Nicola Morrison Cairngorm Vets

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



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FOREST CARBON

