



summer 2025

cairn

The magazine of the Cairngorms National Park

Cairngorms 2030

New spin on
the school run in
the Cairngorms

Inside

Making plans

Tackling the affordable
housing shortage

Farming focus

Latest from our Future
Farming project



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



**Cairngorms
National Park**

**Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh 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
Grantown-on-Spey
PH26 3HG

Front cover image: Children taking part in a bike bus with the SPIN Project, as part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme © Angus Trinder.
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Fàilte / Welcome

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

We hope your summer is off to a good start – it's certainly been a busy one so far. Our work spans many different areas but there is a common thread of collaboration, from working with estates and contractors on peatland restoration, to liaising with social enterprises on cycling projects.

The Cairngorms 2030 Future Farming project is only possible thanks to the commitment of the farmers involved, alongside support from volunteer rangers. And speaking of volunteers, they're now leading more free health



walks than ever. This summer is an ideal time to try these out if you haven't already done so.

Meanwhile the next generation is being offered inspiration through a series of careers events and activities over the holidays. Encouraging more young people to live and work here is a key part of our Partnership Plan, and that's why we're working closely with Scottish Government, local authorities and housing associations to secure more affordable housing across the National Park.

Thank you to everyone involved in this huge collective effort. The Cairngorms is home to so many dedicated communities, working together for people and nature.

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

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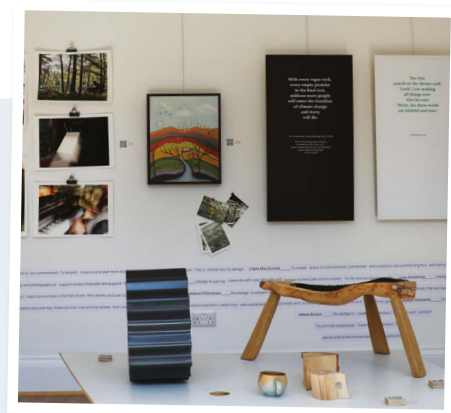
Cardboard Contours

Set deep in the Cairngorms, Loch A'an is remote and difficult to access, but the recent Cardboard Contours project encouraged people to think about it in a different way.

At five drop-in sessions around Badenoch and Strathspey, families cut, glued and layered cardboard

to create 3D contour models of the loch. Their creations offered an opportunity to discuss the area and learn more about the wildlife which can be found there – now and in the future.

The sessions were led by Cairngorms Connect Next Generation Officer Robbie Synge, whose post was funded by the Cairngorms National Park Authority.



It's a fine art!

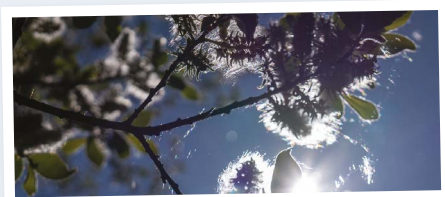
A newly-formed group, set up to encourage collaboration between artists and creatives in the National Park, hosted their first exhibition at OPENSPACE Gallery recently. Part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme, the group connected landscape and community with artwork that pushed boundaries and inspired discussions on climate change, biodiversity loss, health and wellbeing. Over 300 people visited the exhibition on its first weekend and more exhibitions are in the pipeline.

Folklore on film

In Gaelic mythology, the Cailleach is a goddess and guardian of land and wildlife. Now she's being reimagined in a new project by the Cateran Ecomuseum. The project combines

poetry, film and music to highlight our connection to the spectacular landscapes around us and the need to protect them for future generations. 'Becoming Cailleach' features four long-form poems written by Ecomuseum Makar Jim Mackintosh,

alongside music composed by David MacFarlane. The film can be viewed on YouTube and by scanning the **QR code**.



Artistic Alford

In May, Alford Academy pupils took part in three days of volunteering as part of their involvement in the Cairngorms 2030 programme.

Working with Murray Park in Alford to identify and protect tree saplings, the students also designed a 3D story and art map based on places that are important to them. The next step in this project will see the students create a mural in the school community garden, based on the theme of inclusivity and diversity. There are 18 languages spoken at Alford Academy, so their artwork will be based on flowers from each of the countries represented in the school – we can't wait to see it!

At your service

This summer, over 100 people will be out and about across the Cairngorms welcoming, guiding and supporting visitors to enjoy their stay and help look after our precious National Park.

The core Park Authority team includes 21 countryside rangers: four trainees, 12 seasonal and five permanent. They work closely with a further 28 rangers from partner services, as well as a team of 86 volunteer rangers, most of whom are local residents keen to share their love and knowledge of the area.

Whilst there is no typical day for a countryside ranger, the teams engage with visitors across popular routes, pick up litter and report issues like broken fences and gates, fire sites, fallen trees or washed away paths. They also help people connect with nature and explore the National Park in a responsible way.

A key part of this is tackling the threat of wildfires in the National Park. Since the start of this year, the

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has issued several very high or extreme wildfire warnings. Park Authority rangers are providing extra support to our landowner partners, including undertaking additional evening patrols in popular camping areas.

The teams talk to thousands of visitors each year, advising them not to light any fires or barbeques, ensure cigarettes are fully extinguished and that visitors take litter – including glass, which can magnify the sun's rays and cause a fire – away with them. They also advise everyone to call 999 if they discover a fire. As a resident, we'd be grateful for your help in spreading this message.

Rangers are also playing a crucial role in encouraging dog owners to do the right thing when they are out in the countryside. This includes keeping dogs on leads near farmland or in sensitive areas of woodland; closing gates behind you; and picking up dog poo to avoid contaminating the environment and prevent parasites harming livestock.



Community gathering

Community councils and development trusts from across the Cairngorms gathered at the Victoria Halls in Ballater for a packed day of discussions. Topics included volunteering, succession planning and community fundraising.

We plan to host these events at least annually – **sign up to our communities' newsletter** for more info.



The path ahead

The Core Paths Plan is a network of paths which provides sufficient and reasonable access throughout the National Park. We are currently reviewing the plan to ensure it is fit for purpose. If you would like to share your thoughts, go to cairngorms.co.uk/consultations/core-paths-plan.

Visitor survey

As well as our recent resident and worker survey, the Park Authority has commissioned an independent visitor survey to tell us more about the people who visit the National Park, what they do when they're here and what they thought of their experience. We'll be releasing the results later this summer – keep an eye on our website for updates.

Community gains

The Park Authority and the Scottish Land Commission have joined forces to appoint Scotland's first Community Benefits from Nature Adviser, part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Annabel Davidson Knight will work with landowners, developers and investors to involve local communities from the start, agree fair outcomes and ensure large-scale projects like peatland restoration and woodland creation bring real benefits to people who live and work locally.



If your community is interested in getting involved, check out the Scottish Land Commission's route map at landcommission.gov.scot or scan the QR code.



Business boost

Running a rural business can feel isolating at times, but the Cairngorms-based GrowBiz team is here to help.

Part-funded by the Park Authority, GrowBiz runs monthly coffee mornings for business owners and self-employed individuals to meet, share ideas and support each other. They also offer one-to-one guidance, online workshops and an accredited



business mentoring programme. For more info go to growbiz.co.uk or scan the QR code.

Just the job

Balmoral Estate and Countryside Learning Scotland teamed up in June to host a rural skills and careers event for senior school pupils, part-funded by the Park Authority.

Around 60 young people from Alford, Aboyne, Banchory and Kemnay secondaries were given an insight into a variety of rural jobs, from gardening to gamekeeping, fishing to forestry.

Pupils had the chance to take part in two practical activities with different Balmoral Estate departments. Staff were on hand to answer questions about what a typical day involves, what training was required and how best to pursue a career in their field.

The event aimed to connect young people with local estates and rural businesses who are looking for enthusiastic, skilled people to work for them.

Views on vision

Oxygen Conservation – which bought the Dorback Estate in December – hosted a community drop-in event earlier this year.

The new owners invited feedback on a land use vision map which sets out plans for the estate, including native woodland expansion, conservation grazing and peatland restoration. Oxygen Conservation is working with consultants to review the feedback and explore how to incorporate residents' ideas into the plans.



Going with the flow

'Managing periods in the wild', a pilot training session funded by Education Scotland and supported by Cairngorms 2030, was held with rangers from across the National Park recently. The session was designed to help rangers develop skills to support young people during menstruation, empowering visitors to have adventures safely and comfortably, including during their period.

Walk of life

Three new weekly walks – an evening walk in Tomintoul plus walks during the day in Aviemore and Kincaig – have been added to the growing network of health walks taking place across the National Park.

Free to attend, health walks are short, safe, social, local and led walks, all about walking together and feeling better. Whether you feel able to walk for 10 minutes or an hour, health walks are open to all. For more information and to find a health walk near you, go to cairngorms.co.uk/health-walks or scan the QR code.



First aid success

Well done to the 24 Cairngorms National Park junior rangers who are now accredited emergency outdoor first aiders, thanks to grant funding from the Cairngorms Youth Local Action Group. The training, delivered by the First Aid Training Co-operative at Glenlivet Estate visitor centre this spring, covered a variety of topics from CPR, defibrillator use, contacting emergency services, and addressing minor injuries and burns.



Fun in the sun

Members of Black Scottish Adventurers travelled from across the country for their latest hike in the Cairngorms. Around 70 people gathered for a circuit around Uath Lochans, before rounding the day off at Loch Insh Outdoor Centre. Black Scottish Adventurers encourages more people to enjoy the benefits of the great outdoors and improve wellbeing.

Reaching out

The Cairngorms National Park lived experience group is currently recruiting for members.

The group is made up of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds who live in or near the National Park, with little or no previous experience engaging with the outdoors. The aim of the group is to work with the Park Authority to better deliver for the communities that the members are from. Email ruraldevelopment@cairngorms.co.uk if you are interested in joining the panel.



Peak peat

The Cairngorms Peatland ACTION team supported restoration work on 2,181 hectares of degraded peatland this year, smashing their target by 600 hectares.

To put that into context, this is an area roughly four times the size of Aviemore. Work took place in

16 locations across the National Park, including Atholl, Wildland Cairngorms, Abernethy, Delnadamph and Invercauld Estates.

Annabel Everard has also joined the team in the new role of Peatland Science and Monitoring Officer, coordinating the collection, analysis and reporting of data on the programme and helping inform our future work.



Favourable climate

The second round of successful Climate Adaptation Fund recipients has been announced.

This year's fund received over 60 expressions of interest and more than 30 full applications for projects with a total value of over £1 million – a testament to the desire from those who live and work here in the National Park to play their part in addressing the nature and climate crisis.

A total of £270,000 was available and has been awarded to farmers, land managers and businesses to fund immediate and positive action to address the challenges of climate change in the National Park.

For more info on this year's successful applicants and their projects, go to cairngorms.co.uk/climate-adaptation-fund or scan the QR code.



Alvie and Dalraddy Estates / Alvie Partnership received support in 2024 for a wildfire fogging unit to tackle wildfires



Green shoots

Since the 17th century, Atholl Estates have played a prominent role in the development of forestry in Scotland and the estate is now embarking on a new chapter of woodland expansion.

The scheme at Dalnamein has a strong focus on ecological restoration, native species protection and habitat creation. Nearly 800,000 trees will be planted, converting an area of open heath and grassland into woodland and linking areas of existing native woodland in Glen Garry. This will contribute to the National Park Partnership Plan target of at least 35,000 hectares of new woodland by 2045.

Work has also been taking place on the estate to restore degraded peatlands, with over 800 hectares completed since 2021. That includes more than 350 hectares restored last year by JML Contracts and Taiga Upland. JML, a Perthshire family firm, took on a drain blocking project to re-wet degraded peatlands through the Cairngorms Peatland ACTION New Entrants' Scheme. The scheme trains local contractors in the skills needed to undertake this specialist conservation work.

Hear from a New Entrants' Scheme participant at cairngorms.co.uk/views/in-conversation-with-sean-williamson.

Farming focus

Spring and summer are some of the busiest months on farms. For the six partners involved in the Cairngorms 2030 Future Farming project, a range of new approaches are helping save time and money, lock up carbon and improve habitats for wildlife. Here's a snapshot of what they've been up to.

> Auchnerran Farm, Deeside

The farm has been trialling a device that can measure the number of worms an individual animal is infected with (the so-called 'worm burden') within minutes. This helps tailor and reduce the use of wormer medicines, saving money, avoiding giving sheep treatment they don't need and protecting soil and aquatic life, from beetles to bacteria.

> Clury Farm, Dulnain Bridge

Making space for nature has been on the agenda at Clury Farm, where volunteer rangers have planted aspen saplings in unused corners of some fields as part of habitat enhancement plans.

> Rhindhu Farm, Glenlivet

The farmer has trialled using discs instead of the plough to reduce soil disturbance, helping improve soil structure and retain soil carbon. As with Clury Farm, they have also planted aspen saplings.

> Balanloan Home Farm, Blair Atholl

Plans are in the works for installing water infrastructure on the farm later this year to help mob grazing. This month, the team welcomed farmers from across the National Park for a workshop on regenerative grazing.

> Haugh of Kilnmaichlie Farm, Ballindalloch

The team at Kilnmaichlie have done a deep dive into soil analysis across the farm. They are now exploring how to best use muck and distillery digestate to improve soil health and productivity.

> Tullochgorum Farm, Grantown-on-Spey

The farm has been modelling different scenarios for the cattle system to understand the feasibility, cost and carbon footprint involved for each one.

The Future Farming project is part of Cairngorms 2030, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. It is exploring how farming can have a low carbon footprint, help restore nature and increase business resilience. Learnings will be shared at events with other farmers and crofters in the National Park, who can then apply for funding to trial similar approaches.



Not a typical office job

After decades as a self-employed farmer, Malcolm Smith made the switch to an office-based job as our new Agricultural Adviser. Not that he's often in the office!

Malcolm has been out on the ground meeting with local farmers and crofters, helping to build on the great work they are already doing for nature in the National Park. Key to his role is supporting farm businesses to become more sustainable and profitable. Malcolm has also been helping farmers develop projects for the Climate Adaptation Fund, tackling the nature and climate crisis.

For more information on Malcolm's work please contact landmanagement@cairngorms.co.uk.



Bee kind

Parking the lawnmower and letting flowers grow can make a real difference for pollinators this summer.

Seafield Estate has taken the lead by not strimming sections of the banks of the Spey until the autumn, due to sightings of small scabious mining bees (*Andrena marginata*) in the area. They rely on devil's bit scabious for survival and it's hoped that letting the flower bloom this summer will help this rare bee.

Meanwhile, hillwalkers are being urged to keep an eye out for the blaeberry bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*), usually



found on moorlands over 300m. The bee (pictured) has two yellow stripes on the thorax and bright orange-red hairs covering more than half its lower body. To report a sighting go to [irecord.org.uk](https://www.irecord.org.uk).

Nurturing aspen networks

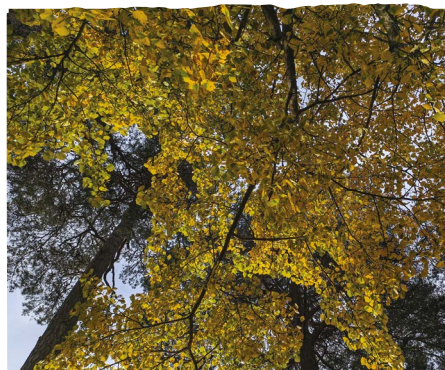
Aspen trees are an important element of Caledonian pinewoods and a host of species depend on them.

These include the aspen hoverfly, the dark bordered beauty moth and very rare mosses and lichens. Aspen is a conservation priority and we are working with landowners and partners across the National Park to create a thriving network of aspen habitats.

Earlier this year, two farming partners involved in the Cairngorms 2030 Future Farming project – Clury Farm near Dulnain Bridge and Rhindhu Farm near Glenlivet – worked with six members of the volunteer ranger team to create space for aspen on their farms.

Over 100 saplings were planted, helping to bridge key gaps in the aspen habitat network. Though relatively small at this stage, they will play an important part in the network, acting as stepping stones for mobile species that depend upon the aspen.

Email nature@cairngorms.co.uk if you are interested in planting some aspen on your land.



Eggstatic



A team led by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland have released 400

captive-bred eggs of the endangered dark bordered beauty moth on WildLand Cairngorms, as part of the Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms partnership project.

The eggs were placed at the base of aspen suckers, replicating the moth's egg-laying behaviour, and the team will return later this month to look for adults.

Species support

Projects to safeguard some of our most precious species and habitats have been given a £1.2 million funding boost from Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund.

The grant will support the Capercaillie Emergency Plan – including habitat restoration through cutting and grazing, and research on boosting bird populations – as well as trial translocations of narrow-headed ants and wood ants. The money will also go towards habitat restoration work to improve conditions for freshwater pearl mussels, and the River Dee catchment resilience strategy.



Peregrine peril

Preliminary results from last year's peregrine survey are in and sadly numbers are lower than we'd like.

A full report exploring the potential causes and next steps will be published in the coming months, but early indications suggest that numbers are at their lowest since the 1980s.

The Cairngorms Raptor Project is working to establish the current populations of four raptor species in the National Park: peregrine falcon, golden eagle, hen harrier and merlin, with the latter next to be studied in preparation for a national survey in 2026.

Elsewhere, three golden eagle chicks have been fitted with satellite tags, giving an insight into juvenile eagle movements. We hope to be able to share some of their first journeys later this year.

Sound knowledge

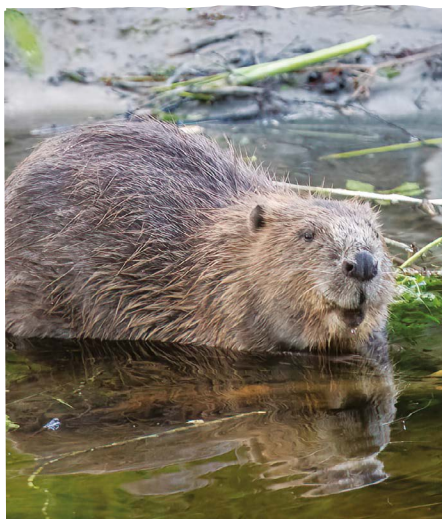
An exciting new project is underway that uses sound to discover what species live in a particular habitat.

Wildlife recording is usually undertaken by people out on the ground, but it risks disturbing the animals and doesn't show what is there the rest of the time. Bio-acoustics uses specialist equipment to record one minute of sound every 15 minutes, 24 hours a day. This creates a 'soundscape' of the habitat and species living there.

To listen to one of the soundscapes



we've recorded, go to **cairngorms.co.uk/news/sound-knowledge** or scan the **QR code**.



Beaver births

Summer is breeding season for beavers and we are delighted to report the birth of at least five kits in the National Park.

Work is also taking place to select suitable sites ahead of the autumn releases – in line with our licence from NatureScot – alongside the ongoing monitoring of all beaver families.

Welcome developments

It's just over a year since the Scottish Government declared a housing emergency, prompting fresh calls for action from campaigners and charities.

The shortage of affordable homes is an acute problem in rural communities across Scotland, affecting residents of all backgrounds, including young people, those living with income poverty and minority groups.

This issue was strongly reflected in the first Cairngorms National Park resident and worker survey earlier this year. Results showed that 60% of those who responded found it hard to find an affordable place to live. This also influenced views on finding work, with many saying that access to local housing was a key barrier to securing a suitable job.

We want the Cairngorms to be a vibrant place to live and work, and good homes are a cornerstone of that. Housing Minister Paul McLennan agrees: "Good quality, affordable housing is essential to help attract and retain people in rural and island communities."

But meeting this challenge takes hard work and close collaboration. We're committed to working with the Scottish

Government, local authorities, housing associations and trusts to encourage investment and find suitable sites for new developments and regeneration.

Through that partnership work, there has been some welcome progress on housing in the National Park over the past few years. Between 2020 and 2023, 400 new homes were delivered in the National Park, of which approximately 30% were affordable.

Meeting the challenge calls for innovative solutions and different types of development. Take the old Struan Hotel in Carrbridge. Sitting derelict for years on a prominent site just across from Landmark Adventure Park, it had become an eyesore. Highland Council has now transformed the site into Struan Court, made up of much-needed one- and two-bedroom flats for social rent.

When the listed Old School in Ballater was converted into affordable flats and family homes by Grampian Housing Association, the work was done to such a high standard that it was recognised in an architecture competition. And in Tomintoul, the site of the old secondary school – which had sat vacant for two decades – is now a community housing complex, led by Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust.

A recent housing development in Newtonmore



The old Struan Hotel site in Carrbridge





In recognition of the level of affordable housing need in the National Park, our current Local Development Plan includes a requirement that 45% of new housing in four key settlements should be affordable – compared with the national affordable housing requirement of 25%. The current Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan, approved in 2022, includes a key target that, by 2030, 75% of new housing should be for social rental, mid-market rental or other affordable categories.

“This is a challenging area of work,” says Gavin Miles, the Park Authority’s Director of Planning and Place. “Whilst there’s no silver bullet, we’ve made affordable housing a key priority as we draft our next Local Development Plan for 2028.

“The plan guides development in the National Park, including where affordable housing and community

facilities will go. We’d encourage residents to get involved in our consultations to ensure their voices are heard as we shape this important document.”

The Housing Minister says that Scottish Government is focused on delivering at least 11,000 affordable homes in rural and island areas by 2032.

“It’s important that there is strong collaborative working between the Cairngorms National Park and relevant local authorities to enable the delivery of more affordable homes to meet the needs of communities,” he says.

“Demand-led funds such as the Rural and Islands Housing Fund and the Rural Affordable Homes for Key Workers Fund are also a key part of our approach.”

With that national focus in mind, it’s heartening to see work underway at two sites this summer. More than 20 affordable homes are being built off the High Street in Kingussie and 81 houses are under construction in Newtonmore. A quarter of those are designated as affordable housing, with another 20 to be marketed on a priority purchase basis to people already living or working in the National Park.

We know there is much more to do to meet housing need in communities across the National Park and we understand people’s concerns. However, by working together, we are hopeful that these collective efforts will pay off to ensure that the Cairngorms National Park continues to be a desirable place to live and work.



“Good quality, affordable housing is essential to help attract and retain people in rural and island communities.”

**Paul McLennan,
Housing Minister**

Add your voice to our Local Development Plan consultation. Go to cairngorms.co.uk/local-development-plan or scan the QR code.



Wheels in motion

It's a scene familiar to any parent at the start of the school day: having to coax and cajole your child to get ready and leave the house. But in Boat of Garten and Aviemore, a new bike bus project might just have changed all that.

"It's the only day of the week I don't have to hassle them to be ready to leave on time," said Terry Swinton, a parent at Deshar Primary. Thanks to the SPIN Project's bike buses – part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund – children in Boat of Garten and Aviemore are buzzing to cycle to school.



Bike buses are organised rides on set routes, designed to promote getting outside, staying active and encouraging young people's independence and community spirit. Led by two cycle leaders, the weekly sessions are proving popular with parents and children alike, with the youngest members just five years old.

The new bike buses in Boat of Garten and Aviemore, facilitated by the SPIN Project, were inspired by a similar initiative led by parents at Carrbridge Primary. Through the Cairngorms 2030 programme, we're supporting other primary school communities in the National Park to become more cycling-friendly.

This is just one element of our extensive transport work, which has the overall aim of making travel around the National Park greener, safer and more accessible for all. The programme is also giving adults fresh inspiration to get on their bikes.

In partnership with the Cairngorms Trust's ACE project, Mikes Bikes Aviemore have been visiting workplaces to offer free bike checks, confidence-building sessions, e-bike and e-cargo bike try-outs and loans. It's hoped this will encourage people to choose cycling for their commutes and other everyday journeys – for some, maybe for the first time in years.



Funding also continues to be rolled out through the £170,000 Transforming Transport Grant Scheme, with communities across the National Park benefitting. For example, new public bike repair stands and a tool station have been installed in Tomintoul, and cyclists have access to new bike parking and storage facilities in Blair Atholl.

Live Life Aberdeenshire and Outfit Moray are delivering cycling confidence sessions for children and adults in Deeside, Donside, Tomintoul and Glenlivet. And Able2Adventure – based at Glenmore Lodge – are making cycling more accessible with adapted bikes for community use and one-to-one confidence-building sessions.

All of this work is in addition to wider proposals to introduce better active travel options for communities, following public consultations during the development of Cairngorms 2030. These take more time to develop due to funding and statutory requirements, but we are on track to deliver them over the next three years.

For more information on the programme and to get involved contact transport@cairngorms.co.uk.



In conversation with Donald Hall from Community ConnXions

Badenoch and Strathspey Community ConnXions is a social enterprise which provides accessible transport and social inclusion services. We caught up with their Chief Executive Donald Hall to find out more about the charity and the people it supports.

How did you get involved in Community ConnXions?

Being born and bred in the area, I was always aware of the charity. Then, in 2019, I volunteered to be an e-trike pilot, taking people out to get a blast of fresh air. It was a real buzz to be a part of.

A few years later I was approached to join the board as a volunteer board member. Then an opportunity came up to get involved as a staff member. Having volunteered previously, I looked at the role with different eyes. My previous experience working in

health and wellbeing, transport and the outdoors all knitted together.

My family have links going back to the 60s and 70s with some of our service users. It's an amazing thing to support people who knew me when I was a child.

How important is the service to the people you support?

We're an essential service, making a difference to people's lives every day. From helping people get to their local shop, to helping tackle isolation and loneliness, we support around 400 service users. We also work closely with other organisations, including Shinty Memories and Alzheimer Scotland. Some of our volunteers are in their 80s themselves – they have amazing purpose – and we are always looking for new people.

The team recently received a new multi-purpose trailer as part of Cairngorms 2030. How is this enhancing the service?

The trailer has ramped access and fits e-bikes and trikes in it, allowing

us to use them at lots of community events. It's had a few outings already, including Wheels around Grantown and the Nethy Gathering, so it's being put to good use.

The trailer also helps us get more people on bikes. The feedback from staff and others has been great, and it will give us more capacity in the minibus for community transport. We've also made it available as a resource for other community groups.

What's next for Community ConnXions?





We'll continue to develop our service to meet the needs of the community. We have aspirations for a new office with our own parking, and recruitment in the future, too.

We've just celebrated our 25th anniversary, which is a huge milestone. We came through a challenging period, but we're a resilient organisation – not just the staff, but volunteers and supporters as well. We want to keep going for (at least!) another 25 years.



Donald Hall,
Chief Executive
of Community
ConnXions



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“We’re an essential service, making a difference to people’s lives every day. From helping people get to their local shop, to helping tackle isolation and loneliness, we support around 400 service users.”

Donald Hall
Community ConnXions

Read the
full story on
page 15



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FOREST
CARBON

