



spring 2026

cairn

The magazine of the Cairngorms National Park



Byelaw begins

Fires and barbecues
ban comes into
force this April

Inside

Tractor teens
Developing rural
skills in Kingussie

Way ahead
£1m upgrade to
paths and trails



For more information head to [cairngorms.co.uk/magazine](https://www.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](https://www.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: Ranger handing out a fires and barbecues leaflet in front of a van with *Protect our National Park. No flame, no spark.* signage © Hector Bryden. **Other images** © Alan Jones / CR Contracting, Balmoral Ranger Service, Becki Redmond, Ben Dolphin / National Trust for Scotland, Blair Atholl and Struan Community Council, Brenna Jessie, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Calum Kippen / BrightSparks, Catriona Parmenter, Damian Shields, Pete Short, Dee District Salmon Fishery Board, Ed Smith, Ellen Grant / Countryside Learning Scotland, Glenmore Lodge, GrowBiz, Hector Bryden, Ian Pratt, Jacki Munro, Jodie Hagan, Joel Johnson, John Threlfall, Jonathan Willet, Katie Crerar, Lucy Ford, Mairi Brown, Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION, Marvelous!, Niven Photography, Open Studios, Rebecca Watts, River Dee Trust, Rosalyn Watson, RSPB, Rupert Shanks, RZSS / Highland Wildlife Park, Sarah Lawther, VisitScotland, Will Hall.

Fàilte / Welcome

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

In September last year, Scottish Ministers approved a new byelaw to reduce the growing risk of wildfires in the Cairngorms.

The new byelaw means that recreational fires and barbecues will be banned between 1 April and 30 September every year.

In this special fire byelaw edition of *Cairn*, we will be sharing what has been happening on the ground over the past six months, as well as some practical advice on how you can play your part in tackling wildfire risk.

We'll also be hearing from people across the National Park – including gamekeepers, businesses and rangers – about what the byelaw means for them. Look out for the short interviews dotted throughout this issue.

At the heart of our new byelaw campaign is a very simple message: **Protect our National Park. No flame, no spark.** As you head out and about in the Cairngorms over the coming weeks, please help us spread the word and ensure everyone enjoys the National Park responsibly.



Judy Baxter,
Cairngorms National
Park Authority Ranger

Last summer, everything was so dry, you could smell resin in the pine trees. They smelled vulnerable, flammable. Many people that we speak to think they are having fires in a safe way, but accidents can happen and you can't always

plan for that – we know this from the wildfires we've seen in the National Park in the past. The Cairngorms is home to over a quarter of the UK's rare and endangered species. The idea all that might be at risk through wildfire is very scary.

**I DON'T
START
FIRES**

**Because lots of
incredible landscapes,
habitats and species
are at risk**

Highlights



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Storming back



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Making plans



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Fire byelaw



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Walk in the park

Story of a storm

A decade on, Storm Frank's impact on Ballater is still fresh in the memories of residents and business owners.

The Ballater Flood Issues Group has been working with the Park Authority to help the community adapt to and prepare for future flooding events. Their story is the subject of a new short film – scan the QR code or go to cairngorms.co.uk/ballater-flood



Travel focus

Thank you to those who have provided valuable feedback on improved designs for pavements and crossings in Aviemore and Boat of Garten.

As part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme, we are working with Transport Scotland and Mott MacDonald to improve travel for pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists. Your feedback helps us develop effective, informed designs that make active travel safer and easier.



Future funding

A wide range of funding is available from the Park Authority, helping great ideas come to life across the National Park. Whether you want to boost nature, adapt to the changing climate, strengthen your community, support youth-led initiatives or celebrate cultural heritage, support is on offer.

Much of this is delivered in partnership with the Cairngorms Trust, which has recently made new appointments. Karen Derrick (left) has become Chair after serving as a trustee on the board since 2019, and Rachel Dominy (right) has joined as Cairngorms Trust Manager. We look forward to working with Karen and Rachel to deliver funding support for communities across the National Park.

Whilst there are several specific funds open, we don't want to limit your ideas! We are now accepting expressions of interest for 2026 and 2027, so if you have a budding project but are not sure where it fits, please get in touch.

To find out more, scan the QR code or go to cairngorms.co.uk/funding



2030 vision

Heather Hall, one of many volunteers devoting her free time to supporting Cairngorms 2030 projects, describes it as "an opportunity to make a lasting difference".

People in the Cairngorms are passionate about this place and feel deeply connected to nature and the incredible local landscapes and wildlife. In communities across the National Park, Cairngorms 2030 is driving action on a larger scale than ever before, putting power in the hands of people on the ground to shape their local area, helping nature and people as they go.

For volunteers like Heather – getting her hands dirty planting trees, or helping out at the Alzheimer Scotland Outdoor Brain Health and Dementia Resource Centre – it is having a positive impact on her life. And the actions of volunteers and staff working together across the programme are having an even bigger impact.

Over the past year, 20,000 portions of wild venison have been donated to foodbanks, community groups and schools through Lottery-funded deer larders, and more than 1,700 hectares of peatland are on the road to recovery, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and benefitting nature. A thriving network of more than 100 artists and creatives have formed the Cairngorms Creative Collective, taking their exhibition on tour and using art to engage communities in the fight against climate change. The momentum is growing every day.

The sheer size and scale of the programme means that opportunities for involvement are plenty. With grants for river restoration and sustainable transport on the horizon, businesses and contractors looking to develop local solutions to the challenges we face will be able to get involved and help make a lasting difference too. Go to cairngorms.co.uk/cairngorms2030 for info.



Taking shape

The first meeting of the panel steering the new Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund took place recently, with 18 people who live in and love the National Park getting together to think about what this brand new £1m fund should look like.

Over the coming weeks they will be working with independent charity Involve to decide on guiding principles, priorities and how funding decisions will be made, hearing from a range of experts to help inform their choices. The fund is expected to be open for applications this summer. Scan the QR code or go to cairngorms.co.uk/2030-fund for info.



Becki Redmond, Nature Reserve Officer, Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve

Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve is a rare tapestry of habitats that are unique and vital to protect. In a warming climate, wildfires pose a serious threat. Most people value

these landscapes and would be devastated to think they caused harm, yet some don't realise how a single spark can trigger far-reaching consequences.

I DON'T START FIRES

Because I have seen the damage wildfire can do and the time it takes for recovery to begin





Planning ahead

We are launching a call for sites and ideas to help shape our next Local Development Plan.

As part of this we are inviting communities, individuals and organisations to share their ideas and get involved.

Ideas of all kinds are welcome, and you can find out more and submit ideas using the online questionnaire at cairngorms.co.uk/ldp until Friday 12 June. Landowners and others are invited to propose development sites for uses such as housing, commercial and community projects.

Seed of an idea

A GrowBiz project is offering fresh inspiration to budding young entrepreneurs in the National Park.

Through a series of workshops, the Self-Employment and Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) scheme will encourage Cairngorms school pupils to turn their skills and talents into a self-employed career. The work will include a focus on young people with additional support needs.



Mountain safety

Spring is here but, no matter the season, it's important to be prepared before heading out into the hills.

With wintery conditions often lingering long after the clocks change, there's no room for complacency. Check the forecast, plan a route suitable for the weather and your skills, pack appropriate gear and remember it's okay to turn back if conditions aren't as expected. Taking time to prepare will only help you enjoy your adventure more.

More to Glenmore

Gaelic speakers have been relishing the chance to get together at a new breakfast club at Glenmore Visitor Centre and Café.

Whether you're a beginner or a fluent speaker, everyone is welcome to join for a blether at the monthly meeting, led by Gaelic Badenoch and Strathspey. The venue has been a hive of activity lately, with the launch of a new community baking scheme to supply the cafe, working closely with local bakers. It is also now a member of the Cairngorms Pride Social Spaces Network after signing up to its LGBTQ+ friendly pledge, with hopes to host a Cairngorms Pride event later this year.

To find out more about the breakfast club, go to gaelicbadenoch.co.uk





Axton Stanton,
13 year old living in
Grantown-on-Spey



I've lived in the National Park my whole life. It's not just somewhere to visit, it's my home. It's where I first learned to ride a bike, and now my friends and I spend hours trying tricks at the bike park in Anagach Woods. Last summer, when the fires happened, everything felt different. The sky was thick with smoke and it was sad to think my favourite place could be destroyed.

**I DON'T
START
FIRES**

**Because I want
to protect the
place I love**



Step into health walks

There are now 14 free weekly health walks across the Cairngorms, which focus on walking together and feeling better. The success of the short, inclusive walks launched last year at Kincaig, Aviemore and Tomintoul is down to the enthusiasm of volunteer leaders and walkers. We're keen to hear from people who might be interested in joining a health walk in other communities, such as Dalwhinnie and Blair Atholl. Interested? Get in touch: healthwalks@cairngorms.co.uk



Tractor teens

Teenagers have been getting behind the wheel in a series of events led by Countryside Learning Scotland and Developing the Young Workforce.

Kingussie High and Grantown Grammar pupils took part in two-day tractor driving courses for 13 to 15 year olds, with instruction from Ringlink and SRUC. It was a true team effort, with local farmers offering fields and machinery for the training. The courses were funded through Lantra's Next Generation Practical Training Fund. To find out more scan the QR code or go to countrysidelearningscotland.org.uk



Open art

Grantown Open Studios is an artist-led celebration of creativity within the Cairngorms National Park, bringing together open galleries, exhibitions and a growing programme of experiences and workshops. Venues in and around Grantown-on-Spey will open their doors from Friday 1 to Monday 4 May. Visit grantownopenstudios.com for all the latest.



Landscape views

We want to know what people think is special about the National Park landscape, to help inform decisions on future landscape changes. Fill in our short survey and, as a thank you, you can enter a prize draw for a £50 gift voucher. There are no right or wrong answers, it's your opinion that matters! Scan the QR code or go to cairngorms.co.uk/landscape





Byelaw begins



“We know that it only takes one rogue spark to start a wildfire and when there’s so much to lose, we just can’t take the risk.” In one sentence Lucy Ford, Ranger Service Manager at the Park Authority, sums up why the new fire byelaw is such an important step towards protecting communities and nature across the National Park.

The byelaw comes into force for the first time this spring – a major milestone, months in the making. So, what does it mean? In short: no fires or barbecues between 1 April and 30 September.

“Our rangers are at the heart of this. Their role is still first and foremost

to engage with people out enjoying the National Park,” says Lucy. “But we now have a clear message, backed up by legislation, which will empower them if they come across anyone with a fire or barbecue.

“We saw first-hand last summer how damaging wildfires can be. This is about putting a set of practical measures in place to reduce the risks and encouraging everyone to do the right thing and protect this beautiful National Park.”

From recruiting a record number of rangers on the ground to training everybody on the practicalities of enforcement (working closely with Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue and the Procurator Fiscal), a lot has been going on behind the scenes.

Lucy adds: “We really hope the byelaw will be more of a deterrent, with enforcement (a fine of £500) a last resort. We’re grateful for the support of our family of partner rangers, who we’ll continue to work closely with over the months ahead.”

As in previous years, joint patrols will be carried out across the National Park, with a Police Scotland presence in key areas including Glenmore and parts of Deeside. A new thermal drone will also be used to locate fires more quickly and target patrols on the ground.

Raising awareness about the byelaw will start long before people head out for a visit thanks to a high-profile campaign covering everything from roadside signage to social media and press.



As Grant Moir, Chief Executive at the Park Authority, explains: “The first step is making sure that people know what the rules are. The message is simple: **Protect our National Park. No flame, no spark.** We need the help of residents and local businesses to ensure this reaches as wide an audience as possible and has maximum impact.

“We’re investing heavily in a targeted communications campaign, ensuring that visitors from all over the country know what to expect before making the journey. This will be backed up



“This is about encouraging everyone to do the right thing and protect this beautiful National Park.”

Lucy Ford,
Ranger Service Manager

by on-site signage, ranger patrols, local business engagement and much more. Ultimately, we’re asking everyone to play their part in looking after the people, wildlife and habitats of the Cairngorms.”

Deputy Assistant Chief Officer Kenny Barbour is Head of Prevention at the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and the new Chair of the Scottish Wildfire Forum. He knows well the damage wildfires can do.

“Our teams responded to more than 200 wildfires across the country last year, including the major incident at Dava / Carrbridge, with each case posing a real risk to people, properties and nature. These callouts also have a significant impact on our resources and are often in remote locations, which take time to reach.

“Extreme weather events are becoming more common across Scotland and we know that communities in the Cairngorms have felt this acutely in recent years, with floods, drought and wildfires. This byelaw is an important new tool to tackle wildfire risk and safeguard the National Park.”

Five ways to help

Please spread the word to ensure everyone who visits, lives in and loves the National Park is aware of the new byelaw.



Remember the rhyme:
‘Protect our National Park. No flame, no spark’



Do not light fires and barbecues outside your own garden (and take extreme care with the latter)



If you see a fire, call 999. If you see or suspect anyone acting suspiciously, call **Police Scotland on 101** or **Scotland Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111**



Always follow advice from rangers, site staff and local signs



If you run a business or community space, contact us to order a window sticker at **haveyoursay@ Cairngorms.co.uk**



Find out more by scanning the **QR code** or going to **Cairngorms.co.uk/fires**



NO FIRES OR BARBECUES

**1 APRIL TO
30 SEPTEMBER
MAXIMUM FINE £500**



For more information on the Cairngorms National Park Fire Management Byelaw, scan the QR code or go to cairngorms.co.uk/fires
Failure to comply with this byelaw can lead to a fine of up to £500.



**PROTECT OUR NATIONAL PARK
NO FLAME, NO SPARK**

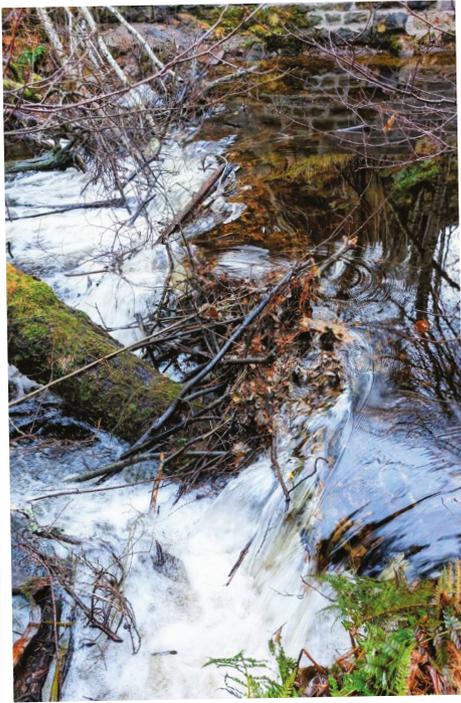


Cairngorms
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaìdh Ruaidh

Cut out and display in your window





Who gives a dam?

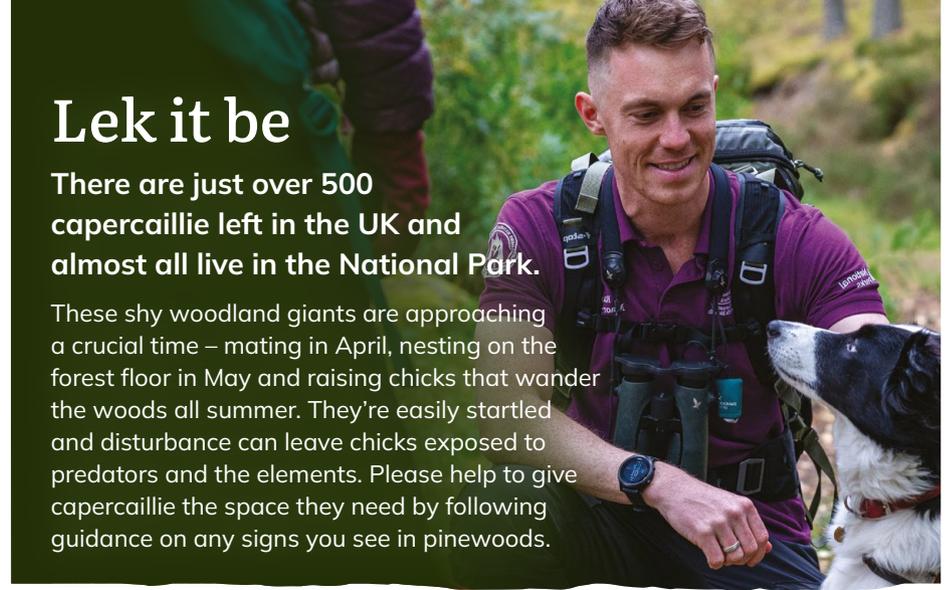
Beavers do! Often called 'nature's engineers', our beavers have been busy building dams since their arrival in the National Park.

Dams help protect beavers from predators by hiding the entrances to their lodges underwater, but there are multiple benefits for other species too, including people. Even a small dam can hold back many litres of water, keeping wetlands wet during periods of drought and slowing the flow during heavy rainfall, reducing possible flood events further down the river.

Lek it be

There are just over 500 capercaillie left in the UK and almost all live in the National Park.

These shy woodland giants are approaching a crucial time – mating in April, nesting on the forest floor in May and raising chicks that wander the woods all summer. They're easily startled and disturbance can leave chicks exposed to predators and the elements. Please help to give capercaillie the space they need by following guidance on any signs you see in pinewoods.



Jess Wise, Visitor Operations Manager, Highland Wildlife Park



We're seeing the effects of climate change all around us, with longer dry spells and unpredictable rainfall. Since Covid, more people are spending time outdoors, which is great, but not everyone knows how to do so safely and confidently. Wildfires aren't only

caused by campfires; even discarded glass can cause serious damage. We need to raise awareness and help people enjoy nature responsibly. Clear, fair enforcement can protect the special places, species and people here in the National Park.

I DON'T START FIRES

Because a moment's mistake isn't worth decades of consequences

How bazaar

An exciting partnership between the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Japanese video game company Marvelous and creative agency Jelly Media is helping to conserve one of our rarest invertebrates.

Players of the *Story of Seasons: Grand Bazaar* video game can download a pine hoverfly outfit set for characters to



wear. All proceeds from each £2 pine hoverfly clothing purchase in the game go directly towards work to conserve the species in the National Park.

Hidden treasures

Peatlands aren't just ecological treasures, they're cultural ones too. Peat can protect traces of human life often hidden just beneath the surface.

The Cairngorms Peatland ACTION team spent a day with Highland Archaeology Services recently for a course in historic environment surveying. The training soon paid off when the 'Queen's Well' was found on Atholl Estates. Gamekeepers knew of its existence, but it wasn't listed on the Historic Environment Record. The team recorded and mapped the feature with an exclusion buffer to protect it during restoration work.



Save the Spring

Work to restore Atlantic salmon populations on the River Dee is seeing positive results. The Save the Spring partnership has been working with Balmoral Estate to help fish by reconnecting a side channel of the River Muick, previously cut off during severe winter flood events. In a matter of months, salmon were already seen spawning there – good news for this iconic species.

Dorm-ant

Our wood ant breeding facility has had an upgrade! Over the winter our ants have been moved to a renovated 'ant shed', which allows the ants to be kept at just the right temperature and humidity to encourage them to breed. Last year, the project produced two breeding nests – this year, we're hoping for as many as 45, which will be translocated in the National Park.



Aspiring aspen

Aspen trees usually reproduce by growing suckers, only flowering about once a decade after prolonged dry spells like we had last summer.

This is good news, as seeds from the flowers produce a stronger sapling than suckers. Conservationists across the National Park are waiting for the 'fluff' to show so they can harvest seeds for replanting next year to safeguard this important tree.

Farming in mind

A recent survey found that nine out of 10 farmers believe poor mental health is the biggest hidden danger they face, with long hours, isolation and uncertainty all contributing factors.

The Park Authority recently teamed up with RSABI to host a mental health first aid training course for people working in the agricultural community. Farmers, vets and advisers were among those to attend. RSABI also offers help directly – scan the QR code to find out more or visit rsabi.org.uk/how-we-can-help



Grass-land kit

Two specialist machines are now available to book for managing and protecting species-rich grasslands in Badenoch and Strathspey, Livet / Avon and Deeside. These include a large Ryetec Contractor Flail Mower Collector for tractors and a smaller Chapman Flail Mower for ATVs. For enquiries and to book, please contact landmanagement@ Cairngorms.co.uk

Glory be!

Once seen across the UK, the Kentish glory is now almost exclusively found in the Cairngorms National Park. The Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms project will be out looking for the moth this spring, hoping to find new sites where the moth has not previously been recorded. If you fancy volunteering on the project, contact rare.invertebrates@rspb.org.uk



Calum Kippen,
Head Keeper,
Corrybrough Estate



Last summer, I helped tackle the wildfires at Dava and Carrbridge. What stays with me is when a distressed man approached us, asking whether his house, miles away, would burn. I'm on the fence about the fire byelaw but I think it will help alongside the range of other measures planned. I'd like to see designated barbecue areas, as seen in other countries, and more information available on how to enjoy the outdoors safely. The new signage also has a critical role to play, reflecting the varying fire risk levels across the vast National Park area.

**DON'T
START
FIRES**

During high risk warnings as I've seen how wildfires can devastate land and impact local people



People power

Anagach Woods Trust in Granttown-on-Spey is running two volunteering days every month this year.

Sessions focus on path maintenance, nature restoration and woodworking, with activities including tree thinning, removing non-native plant species and fence removal. The work improves habitats for a range of flora and fauna in the 383-hectare woodland, including capercaillie, pine hoverfly and twinflower.

Exploring the National Park

There are many fantastic paths and trails across the National Park and we're committed to keeping these accessible and enjoyable for all, investing over £1m in the past three years.

To help improve the whole experience, we've also funded a new car park for Beinn a' Ghhlò **1** and made improvements at the start of the Loch Brandy path in Glen Clova **2**.

New visitor information panels are being installed on routes including the Charter Chest Path at Braemar **3**. And in Dulnain, a hidden gem takes you down to the river's edge, a really wild place in the heart of the village. Recent works included improving the steps and repairing sections of path **4**.

Read on to find out about some other newly improved routes to explore this spring...

Trail of success

We're grateful to partners who have made these projects happen, including: Aberdeenshire Council, Angus Council, Ballater Community Trust, Balmoral Estate, Blair Atholl and Struan Community Council, Crown Estate Scotland, Glenlivet Estate, Insh Community Holdings, Invercauld Estate, NatureScot, NTS Mar Lodge Estate, Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland, Tomintoul and Glenlivet Dark Sky Group and Walking Scotland.

For more inspiration on the full range of walks available, scan the QR code or go to cairngorms.co.uk/visiting/paths-and-trails



Speyside Way

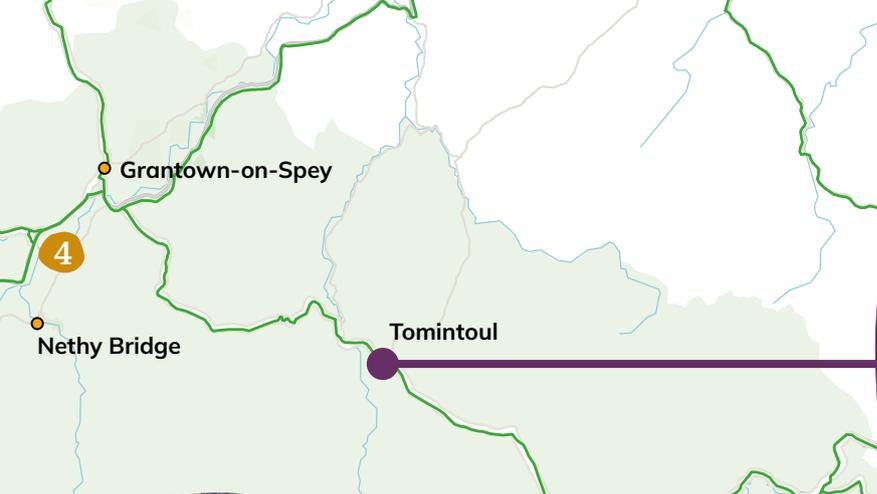
The Speyside Way is one of Scotland's most iconic long-distance paths. Recent upgrades have been made at Cromdale and between Insh and Inveruglas to improve accessibility for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.



Blair Atholl and Old Tilt

A new path connecting Blair Atholl and Old Tilt has been championed by Blair Atholl and Struan Community Council.





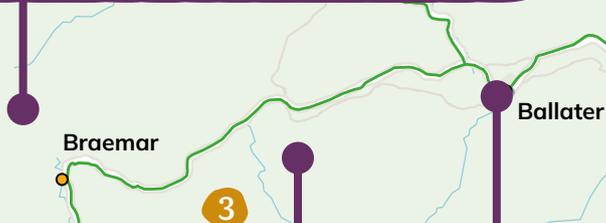
Tomintoul

A planetary walking trail is an exciting new addition to the Cairngorms Dark Sky Park. A sculpture of the sun will mark the beginning of the 6km walk from Glenmullie car park, near Tomintoul. The trail leads walkers to sculptures of each of the planets of our solar system, in order of their distance from the sun. It can be experienced day or night, with reflective waymarkers leading the way in darkness. It builds on other dark sky attractions in Tomintoul and Glenlivet, including the nearby Sky Hide.



Glen Quoch

This popular path on NTS Mar Lodge Estate leads people past the newly renovated Queen Victoria's Picnic Cottage and the iconic Punchbowl. Extensive repair works were carried out in the wake of flooding damage.



Ballater

The Cinder Path connects the village with the Pass of Ballater and the path network beyond, while also linking with the primary school and Monaltrie Park, home of the Highland games. Recent upgrades aim to make this a safe and accessible route for all.



Prince Albert's Cairn

Path improvements and repairs to the Cairn are preserving an iconic part of Balmoral Estate's Victorian heritage, while making this a memorable and safe experience for visitors.

SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE
outdooraccess-scotland.scot



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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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**FOREST
CARBON**



Read the
full story on
page 8

I DON'T START FIRES

Because a single spark can get out of control very quickly

Karen McIntyre, Firefighter

No fires or barbecues
1 April to 30 September
MAXIMUM FINE £500

