



For information

Title: CEO Report and Convener Update

Prepared by: Grant Moir, Chief Executive

Purpose

To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Nature and Climate Change

- 1. Farming** - The first meeting of the Cairngorms Agricultural Advisory Group was held on Tuesday 5 March. Members of the group have a representative role from agencies and organisations involved in agriculture and from the farming and crofting community across the whole Cairngorms National Park. The group's focus will be on facilitating good engagement and information flow, providing advice and guidance on Park Authority plans and policies, and collaborating on delivery of National Park Partnership Plan objectives. It was agreed to reconfigure the current beaver group to move from being a group set up to plan for beaver reintroduction to a practical, adaptive management and mitigation on-the-ground group.
- 2. Landscape-scale partnerships:** The Park Authority, in collaboration with partner agencies, organisations and community representatives, is coordinating a Dee Resilience Plan. The Plan will inform management at a landscape scale across the multiple, inter-related objectives of water quality, flow, flood resilience, abstraction, improving natural capital and ecosystem services, restoration and improving biodiversity, and species conservation. The Plan will consider the costs and relative impacts of different nature-based and engineered interventions and support decision making as to where to best concentrate resource and effort to deliver maximum benefit.
- 3. Moorland management:** Following Stage 2, the Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill includes a power to add additional gamebird species to the licence and there is likely to be a raptor monitoring requirement. It is proposed that the muirburn season will now run from 15 September to 31 March, a change from the current 1 October to



15 or 30 April, and peat depth is defined as being more than 40cm. The East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership is hosting a visit from NatureScot and Scottish Government colleagues to look at how a methodology for measuring peat depth might work in practice. The final Act will be backed up by two Codes of Practice: one on Muirburn and another on Grouse Moor Management. The Codes will be developed by NatureScot involving two working groups. The Park Authority is represented on both groups.

4. **Integrated Fire Management Plan:** Park Authority staff have consulted widely with land managers, practitioners and agencies involved in fire management, agreeing a structure for the Integrated Fire Management Plan. The Plan will comprise three main elements: prevention, response and increasing resilience in a changing landscape. The Plan will be drafted by the end Autumn for further input from stakeholders and subsequent presentation at the Wildfire Conference in November.
5. **Woodland Expansion:** Approximately 2,800ha of new woodland were approved in the National Park in 2023/24. This is a significant upward movement from the approx. 400ha that were approved in 2022/23. However, reductions to the Forest Grant Scheme of approximately 40% in 2024/25 are likely to have a significant impact on woodland expansion in future. Park Authority staff are working closely with Scottish Forestry and representatives from CONFOR to identify how the Woodland Challenge Fund and staff resource can help unblock some of the barriers to applications.
6. **Species recovery:**
 - a) **Beaver** – The latest planned release at Insh Marshes took place on Monday 4 March and beavers have started establishing a territory with a lodge in close proximity to the release site. Site monitoring continues, demonstrating no changes in location or activity from the initial release sites. Proactive mitigation continues, with protection of specialist trees near Insh Marshes release sites completed. The second phase of the flood bank survey is underway, covering from Aviemore to the Spey dam. The survey is done in collaboration with land managers and is being very well received.
 - b) **Capercaillie** – The National Lottery Heritage Fund funded Cairngorms Capercaillie project is in the legacy planning phase, working with communities, agencies, and land managers in ensuring sustainability of areas of work. Legacy work is underpinned by the Capercaillie Emergency Plan, scheduled for completion by June, when the National Lottery Heritage Fund project formally ends. Ongoing



activity is focussed on a scaled-up approach to diversionary feeding and work with the birdwatching community and with dog walkers to reduce disturbance this breeding season.

Visitor Service and Active Travel

7. **Active Cairngorms Action Plan:** Staff are progressing the spatial plan for managing recreational impacts on sensitive species and habitats. Currently this includes auditing what existing visitor management measures are in place at sensitive sites and identifying “quick wins” to take forward in 2024.
8. **Paths and Long-distance Routes:**
 - a) **Speyside Way** – A significant surface upgrade project is underway on a popular section of the route near Aviemore, namely between Dougal Drive and the junction with National Cycle Route 7. The project will implement a full re-surface of the path along with reinstatement of the original path width, re-grading of subbase and drainage improvements.
 - b) **Community Paths**
 - i. Braemar to Keiloch Path- Planning permission has been granted for the middle section of the new path. Outdoor Access Trust Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council and the Park Authority have agreed revised costs with the contractor. A start date has yet to be finalised.
 - ii. The recreation and access team in collaboration with the Ranger Team have undertaken detailed path inspections to develop a Geographical Information System based network level assessment of the core path network. This information has also been invaluable in helping address recent storm damage.
 - iii. The first of the revised community path leaflets (Carrbridge) has been produced in a new branding design. [View the leaflet](#)
9. **Ranger Services:** Recruitment of seasonal rangers has been under way since January and all appointments should be finalised prior to the Board meeting allowing Easter patrols to take place. In broad terms levels will be the same as in 2023 but in Badenoch & Strathspey we are trialling two weekend only posts to try and help target patrols at the busiest times.



With the wider family of ranger services, three Regional Ranger Groups have been set up along with a programme of planned meetings / site visits taking place for each throughout the year to help co-ordinate work, training and messaging. To support this a new Ranger Service Handbook has been created and a Ranger Induction Presentation has been created for use by all of the Family of Ranger Services with new staff.

At present indications are that the national Better Places Fund which helped fund many partner ranger services will not run in 2024 which may mean fewer rangers are recruited by partners and this may lead to increased demand for support from Park Authority rangers which would be difficult to sustain.

10. Visitor Infrastructure: The conclusion of the Cairngorms 2030 development phase means a Transport Manager is now being recruited which in turn has allowed the Infrastructure manager to return to their original role. This will focus on delivery of the Tourism Infrastructure Plan approved in late 2022 and subsequently updated to incorporate relevant projects arising from the Cairngorms 2030 development phase. This has included including many transport projects in an Active Travel Network Plan which forms an appendix to the Infrastructure Plan but can also be used as a standalone document that accompanies active travel funding applications.

11. Volunteering and Health Walks: 26 new volunteer rangers have been recruited spread across the National Park with a mix of ages and backgrounds and good numbers from the south of the National Park that can support Perthshire and the Angus Glens as well as from Deeside. The first training session was held on 24 February, with more to follow and on-site inductions planned for April.

The Volunteer Experience Programme which provides volunteer experiences through third sector partners has seen new partners join – Connecting Young Carers Badenoch and Strathspey and Moray Refugee Care and we are planning dates for existing partners the Perth Rape and Sexual Violence Centre, Aberdeen Refugee Care, and Home Start East Highland.

We have recently welcomed 12 new Health Walk Leaders to the volunteer team, bringing our total number of active Health Walk Leaders to 55. Our programme of training and ongoing support for the team continues including a recent first aid course and forthcoming strength and balance course allowing walk leaders to support local people to remain independent for longer. In addition to our 12 ongoing



Health Walks two new Health Walks in Strathspey are currently under development, along with initial work to grow the number of groups who have attained the 'Dementia Friendly Health Walk' standard.

12. Youth Action Team: In January this year members of the Cairngorms Youth Action Team joined other young people from around rural and island Scotland to attend a debate on rural youth issues tabled by Cabinet Secretary Marie Gougeon. During the debate there was cross party support for including the voice of young people in decisions that would affect their futures. They also had the opportunity to meet the First Minister and discuss their list of issues with Cabinet members.

Cairngorms Youth Local Action Group just completed the 4th round of funding approvals, specifically aimed at individuals. 20 applications were received - total ask £8,897 and they decided to fund 15 projects - total spend £6,504. This brings the total number of projects funded to 84 and a total awarded of £84,000.

At a recent Cairngorms Youth Action Team residential (1-3 March) they participated in a Local Development Plan consultation activity with members of the Planning Team, developed their annual programme for 2024 and reviewed the Youth Fund. Youth fund recipients joined them for lunch and to share their stories of how the fund has made a difference to them.

13. Active and Sustainable Transport: Bids have been submitted to Sustrans for stage 3 / 4 for Cairngorms 2030 (£1.3M across 6 projects, decision in April). The Park Authority are also supporting Aberdeenshire Council who are taking forward some of the Braemar plans themselves. The Park Authority have part funded a small study with HIE about active travel access to Cairngorm Mountain.

Planning and Rural Development

14. Local Development Plan: The team are building the evidence base for the next Local Development Plan and have started the wide pre-plan engagement with stakeholders that the Scottish Government's guidance advises. In addition to participating in Community Action Planning events that helps provide evidence of local issues and aspirations, the team have undertaken work with the Cairngorms Youth Action Team.



- 15. Planning Casework:** the Planning Committee have determined applications for housing, visitor accommodation, attractions and infrastructure and a battery storage facility at recent planning committee meetings. On 8 March a temporary planning permission for the use of land as a beer garden while maintaining public access to the River Spey core path was approved.
- 16. Wellbeing Economy:** Following the Informal board session in February, a wellbeing and sustainable bill workshop, facilitated through Wellbeing Alliance Scotland (WEAll), and attendance at the first Regional Economic Partnership subgroup on Community Wealth Building, officers are finalising our Wellbeing Economy Action Plan, in preparation for the next Economic Steering Group, and to come back to the board for approval in June.
- 17. Community Action Plans:** The development of local Community Action Plans is facilitated and supported through our partnerships and funding to Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS) and Marr Area Partnership (MAP) The Nethy Bridge Community Action Plan has been completed and is now live on our [website](#), in addition the Aviemore and Kincaig action plans are currently live, in the survey / information stage. The action planning meetings with the local community will take place on 22/23 March for Aviemore, and 10/11 May for Kincaig. MAP is supporting work on the Strathdon and Braemar Community Action Plans.
- 18. Sustainable Tourism Action Plan:** A report highlighting the progress which has been made within the first year of the five year plan is being presented to the Board. The action plan is significant not only for the park authority, but our key partners including the destination management organisations Cairngorms Business Partnership, Visit Moray Speyside and Visit Aberdeenshire, Local Authorities and Visit Scotland, Through the work of the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership, chaired by Xander McDade, there has been great progress to date on delivery of the action plan, and our sustainable tourism officer is instrumental in ensuring this work going forward. One of the main focuses for next year is to continue to support community led tourism within the National Park.
- 19. Visitor and Attitudinal Survey:** Following a tendering exercise, MEL Research have been awarded the contact for the next 5 years for our Visitor and Attitudinal Residents surveys. The visitor survey will take place every second year, will involve roughly 1,200 surveys per season carried out through market researchers across the park completing face to face interviews, in a range of visitor attractions, community



locations and tourism hotspots, to capture visitors' views on the National Park and their experience. Additionally, for the first time there will also be the opportunity to complete this online. Previously, this survey has been carried out every 5 years, and the change in methodology reflects that significant changes can take place within 5 years, which we need to understand. The draft of this survey has been shared with the Cairngorms Business Partnership through workshops, through our Cairngorms Tourism Partnership, and with our Equalities Advisory Panel, and we are finalising this during March.

For the first time, in addition to the visitor survey, an online attitudinal survey of residents will take place every second year, during summer 2024, 2026 and 2028, advertised primarily through Cairn Magazine, to gain understanding of residents' views of living and working within the National Park. This survey design is at the early stages, and more information will be shared in subsequent reports.

20. Business Barometer, Real Living Wage Update: During the last quarter, we asked some key questions within Cairngorms Business Partnership Business Barometer, to gauge awareness and payment of the of Real Living Wage within the National Park. Of the 33 business who responded that employ staff, 22 (67%) pay a real living wage to all employees in their business, regardless of contract type. A quarter of these businesses promote that they pay the real living wage when advertising for staff.

Communications

21. Active Cairngorms: In early February we launched a 10-week fire management consultation, asking the public for their views on the possible introduction of fire byelaws in the Cairngorms National Park. Amongst other things, the campaign has included the creation of a consultation webpage and survey, social media and press assets, a doordrop to all households in the National Park and an article in Cairn magazine. At the time of writing, we had received over 300 responses to the consultation, with several weeks still remaining. The consultation closes on 17 April.

For the second consecutive year, we worked with the Cairngorms Business Partnership on a winter marketing campaign entitled 'where winter comes to life'. The campaign was based on a 2021 research project by Team Consulting, which suggested that the Cairngorms has an opportunity to claim the territory of 'UK capital of winter' due to its mixture of spectacular, snow-filled landscapes and cosy,



indoors retreats.

Targeting previous summer visitors across the Central Belt, Aberdeen and North East England via Google, social media and Spotify ads, we have so far reached 472,283 people and generated over 5,000 click-throughs to the VisitCairngorms landing page. The campaign also provided marketing resources for local businesses to tie into the campaign, and 15 businesses featured in a dedicated short film called 'The longest shortest day'. Cairngorms Business Partnership will organise a business workshop towards the end of the campaign to gather feedback on how they feel it has performed.

Over the winter we launched our first #RangerRambles video series on social media, featuring rangers from the Park Authority and family of ranger services. The series was designed to share more about the breadth of work our rangers undertake, demonstrate their passion and inform our audiences about how best to support the rangers in the National Park. Overall, the 21 posts reached 63,924 people (79,480 impressions), 41,302 video views and 1,852 likes / reactions.

22. Cairngorms Nature: The end of 2023 was dominated by press and wider comms activity surrounding the return of beavers to the Cairngorms for the first time in 400 years. Following the granting of a licence in early December, a comprehensive media plan was pulled together including [a partner media release](#) and a series of interviews with broadcasters such as BBC Alba (for wider BBC News), STV and Scotland Out of Doors.

On 20 December, we announced that the [first beaver releases had taken place](#) at Rothiemurchus and on land owned by Wildland Cairngorms Ltd. Media interest in the event was significant and the story was covered by outlets including the BBC, Press and Journal, Sky News, The National, The Scotsman and The Times. The team also fulfilled interviews with BBC News, STV and various third-party news agencies. A [further release took place on 4 March](#) and the story was again covered extensively, including by the BBC and Daily Mail.

As part of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project and in partnership with Seafield Estate, we will be trialling behavioural 'nudge' techniques to encourage greater levels of responsible dog walking in areas sensitive for capercaillie. The learning from the trial will be used to inform future work for managing recreational impacts on sensitive species and habitats.



23. Public engagement: A protest outside the Park Authority offices in January by members of the Cairngorms Farmers' and Crofters' Group attracted significant media interest. We handled enquiries from outlets including the BBC, STV, The Herald, The Scotsman, Scottish Farmer and the Press and Journal, and [published a follow-up blog from Grant Moir a few days later](#), reflecting on the meeting and summarising the Park Authority's work with farmers to date. Follow up interviews were arranged with the Press and Journal and the BBC, and the story was also included in the latest edition of *Cairn residents'* magazine.

On 25 January we began a six-week consultation on the draft third edition of our Gaelic Language Plan. We have agreed a set of key priorities with Bòrd na Gàidhlig to increase the use of Gaelic, the learning of Gaelic and promote a positive image of Gaelic, and the plan sets out how we and partners intend to support the development of the language over the next five years. At the time of writing, we had received 396 responses in English and 31 in Gaelic. The consultation closed on 7 March, with an amended draft of the plan coming to the board in June for consideration.

24. Corporate communications: In February, First Minister Humza Yousaf and Minister Lorna Slater joined us and representatives from The National Lottery Heritage Fund at Mar Lodge Estate to [launch Cairngorms 2030](#). A huge amount of coordination went into briefing and planning for the event; interviews took place with the BBC and MFR on the day, and the story was covered by outlets including BBC News, Sky News, the Press and Journal, The Scotsman and The National.

Other press stories during the period include the National Park receiving a [prestigious sustainable tourism award](#), a [new capercaillie lek experience at Balmoral](#), [the appointment of a new Planning Convener](#), and consultations on our [draft Gaelic Language Plan](#) and [fire management within the National Park](#).

Karen Archer, our Press and Corporate Communications Officer, is due to leave the Park Authority on 20 March after nearly 20 years with the organisation. Karen has been instrumental in raising the profile of the National Park and championing the work of the Park Authority pretty much since its inception, and the whole team will miss her greatly. Karen is due to start her new role with Highlife Highland just after Easter.



25. Website and social media: The project to develop the new website for the Cairngorms National Park is progressing well via with our developers Whereverly. The initial research phase has been completed, including around 60 user interviews across a range of audience types, an online survey for existing users and initial 'tree testing' (in which real world users are asked to find specific items within our proposed new menu structure).

In January 2023 we changed our approach to analytics and began collecting monthly figures rather than by campaign. This better allows us to measure overall progress in audience engagement as well as measuring fluctuations in season, to enable better planning. The below provides a snapshot of where we are as of January 2024 across all social media platforms, compared to the previous year:

- 230,421 impressions (up 70,992, or 45%)
- Reach of 184,480 (up 107,922, or 141%)
- 11,938 engagements (up 7,140, or 149%)
- 13,841 video views (up 8,748, or 172%)
- 4,994 likes / reactions (up 3,354, or 205%)

To mark the 200th anniversary of the Lonach Highland and Friendly Society, we spoke to the Gordon family, who have been involved with the Society since it began, to find out more about the Lonach Games and what it means to them. [Click here to read the full interview](#). In another Cairngorms Voices piece, Conservation Officer, Sally Mackenzie, explores [how the Allt Lorgy has become a celebrated example of river restoration](#) in the National Park thanks to the Spey Catchment Initiative and Seafield Estate.

26. Branding and publications: In December we released a poem written by Highland poet John Glenday commemorating 20 years of the Cairngorms National Park. Narrated by Amber Beange, who was raised in the National Park, the poem was inspired by the voices and landscapes of the place and featured characters from across the Cairngorms. The video of the poem, shot and edited by local videographer Rupert Shanks, has been well received and shared by multiple partners, including a screening at a local community event. [You can view the poem here](#).

The [fifth edition of Cairn magazine](#) is due to hit doorsteps at the end of March. In addition to the usual mix of community and conservation news, the magazine featured articles about business support in the National Park, Cairngorms 2030



funding success, recent farming engagement, and an interview with peatland contractor Sean Williamson. A plain text version of the publication has also been created for screen reader users, in line with advice from our Equalities Advisory Panel.

We continue to work closely with partners on a number of interpretation projects, including on a beaver trail at Rothiemurchus (due to launch this Easter), the new wildlife discovery centre at the Highland Wildlife Park, and a refresh of the visitor information centre at Blair Atholl. Work has now been completed on a new set of interpretation templates in the National Park brand, and we are using them as a starting point for the design of new community panels. Panels in Anagach Woods – delivered in partnership with the Anagach Woods Trust – and the new virtual lek installation at Balmoral have both been installed.

Organisational Development

27. Business Continuity Planning: Staff are currently working to 36 hours/week contractual terms, which will be reducing to 35 hours/week from 1st April 2024.

28. Staffing update: Since November:

a) Staff who left the organisation were:

- i. Douglas Carchrie (CCP B&S Trail Coordinator – end of contract)
- ii. Karen Archer (Press Officer) - resignation

b) There were no external appointments in the period reported, but there has been very active recruitment underway for the Seasonal Rangers posts, as well as Cairngorms 2030 posts.

c) Internal recruitment:

Cairngorms 2020 posts were appointed following a competitive internal recruitment process:

- i. Pat Douglass was appointed to the Cairngorms 2030 Cycling Development Officer post.
- ii. Josie Slade was appointed to the Cairngorms 2030 Community Engagement Officer post.
- iii. Matthew Hawkins was appointed to the Cairngorms 2030 Nature Based Solutions Manager post.
- iv. James Ade was appointed to the Cairngorms 2030 Learning Coordinator post.



- v. Catriona Strang was appointed to the Cairngorms 2030 Community Climate Grants Officer.
- vi. Anna Ronayne was appointed to the Cairngorms 2030 Sustainable Travel Behaviours Officer.

Other staff moves include:

- vii. Elspeth Grant, a permanent staff member was deployed to the vacant Rural Development Officer post, following the end of her seconded role as CCP Project Officer.

29. Youth Employment:

- a) Calum Guy and Craig Lewis joined the organisation in 2022 in Graduate Trainee roles. They have both developed their skills and been jointly appointed to the promoted post of Payroll, Accounts and Finance Officer post, which became vacant following the previous incumbent's resignation.
- b) Amber Beange joined us on a short term internship, as Content Creation Intern.
- c) Joyce Aranawa joined the organisation on a short term internship as Climate Change Intern.

30. Equalities: The Equalities Advisory Panel participated in a face to face event in March, which included intersectionality training with Talat Yaqoob, as well as a visit to Atholl estate. This was a great opportunity for the 7 new members to meet the existing members, and for members to see and get a feel for the National Park and issues in that region of the National Park.

31. Organisational Development: The Park Authority has awarded a contract to support our Values and Culture work. The Best Companies survey results are in the process of being analysed. The Park Authority has achieved One Star status, which is a significant improvement on the last four surveys that have been conducted since 2016. The results will feed into the overarching Organisational Development Strategy which will be consulted with staff and the Resources Committee.

32. Finance:

- a) As we approach the end of the financial year, we are drawing to completion the financial commitments arising from the year's activities. Over the past 12 months, the Finance Team has been working with Heads of Service and project teams on the regular monitoring and reporting of spend, financial commitments, contracted expenditure, and budget changes. This monitoring has been shared monthly with



the Senior Management Team, and with the Resources Committee throughout the year.

- b) Our payroll modelling for the coming year (2024 / 25) builds on the awards made in 2023 / 24 and is informed by the Scottish Government main group award.
- c) The start of the Cairngorms 2030 programme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has involved us in the design of reporting, and the development of processes and procedures to assist with ongoing monitoring and facilitate the management of cash flow.

Grant Moir



Title: Convener Update

Prepared by: Sandy Bremner, Convener

1. Affordable Housing

The biggest single area of engagement since the last report has been around the crisis in the supply of affordable housing, affecting every community in our National Park, and our Board's determination to tackle the issue.

2. Housing Minister

Met with Scotland's Housing Minister Paul McLennan, explaining the range of issues impacting the provision of affordable housing in the Cairngorms National Park, our Board's deep concern about the situation, and the factors likely to influence supply here and across Scotland for the foreseeable future.

Outlined the initiatives already being progressed to tackle the crisis, including support for pioneering work by Highland Council, while underlining the limited likely impact of existing schemes.

Stressed the need for a fresh, strategic approach to help the Park Authority meet targets agreed with Ministers, building on the work of the Scottish Land Commission, in the process addressing similar problems in other areas of the country.

The Minister committed to reporting back to the First Minister on our discussion and welcomed the opportunity for follow-up meetings to help deliver progress on a long-standing issue.

3. John Swinney

Introductory meeting with John Swinney MSP for Tayside North. Outlined the specific impacts of the shortage of affordable housing on the range of Park Authority goals, from the effects on communities, to the influence on business prospects and the delivery of the National Park's nature aims.



Explained the gap between agreed affordable housing targets and the likelihood of delivering them, and the need for national support to realign an economic supply model that was clearly broken.

Among other issues, discussed the Park Authority's plans for catchment-scale nature restoration and the potential for mitigation against flooding at a time of increasing frequency of severe flood events.

4. Kate Forbes

Introductory meeting with Kate Forbes MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch. Discussed the need for a new approach to the provision of affordable housing, so the issue could be tackled at scale.

Also discussed management for visitors in her constituency, the Park Authority's consultation on the possibility of fire byelaws, the importance of effective resourcing for rangers services, and the potential impacts and opportunities of a Tourism Levy in the National Park.

5. Ariane Burgess

Briefed Ariane Burgess MSP for Highlands and Islands on the special challenges posed by the lack of affordable housing in the National Park, the impacts on communities, as well as the delivery of nature and climate change projects.

6. Rural Housing Scotland

Introductory meeting with the Convener of Rural Housing Scotland to discuss the current crisis in the availability of affordable housing and explore initiatives which would benefit the National Park and other areas of the country facing similar problems.

Attended the annual conference of Rural Housing Scotland at Aviemore, and a pre-conference panel event, exploring the challenges and opportunities in the sector.



7. Convention of the Highlands and Islands

Contributed to the Convention of the Highlands and Islands October meeting, urging the Scottish Government to take a bold approach to the development of an economic model that was more likely to help deliver agreed targets.

The Chair and Deputy First Minister Shona Robison MSP responded, agreeing there were important issues around land values and construction costs especially which deserved attention.

8. Highland Council

Met with Highland Council Convener and fellow Park Authority Board member Bill Lobban to review the provision of affordable housing in the area, assess current plans to increase supply, and agree on areas where the National Park and the local authority can work together further to address the crisis. There was agreement that the current national economic model would not meet demands.

9. Communities Housing Trust

Met with Communities Housing Trust CEO Ronnie MacRae, to discuss how the National Park could help support the provision of affordable housing at an extremely challenging time in the sector. Agreed on the need to encourage flexibility among all key stakeholders to ensure maximum impact, and for the National Park to take the case for a fresh approach to the issue to Scottish Government.

10. Beaver Reintroduction

Met with representatives of National Park crofters and farmers to discuss implementation of the CNPA's enhanced mitigation scheme ahead of the release of beavers into the Spey's upper catchment, and continued dialogue with members of the group.

Subsequently met with a wider group of farmers and crofters to hear requests for improved relations with the Park Authority. Offered assurances that the Board is eager to work positively to foster better relationships, build trust, and achieve common objectives in a collaborative way.



Met later with Robert MacDonald, now chair of Cairngorms Crofters and Farmers Community (CCFC) to hear concerns and discuss areas of common interest where the National Park and the area's farmers and crofters can work together more effectively.

Constructive discussions with individual farmers have continued in the weeks since those meetings.

11. Cairngorms 2030

Met with First Minister Humza Yousaf and Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity Lorna Slater at Mar Lodge for the announcement of £10.7m National Lottery Heritage Fund support for the Cairngorms 2030 programme.

Used the opportunity to brief the First Minister on our Board's concerns about the crisis in the supply of affordable housing, our eagerness to work with Government on fresh thinking to tackle the problem, and the then upcoming meeting with the Housing Minister to discuss the subject. The First Minister committed to seeking a read-out from that meeting.

12. NatureScot

Hosted a meeting for attending Board members with the Chair and Chief Executive of the Scottish Government's nature agency, discussing delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and other Government/Park Authority priorities, and issues around mitigation measures for the reintroduction of beavers to the Cairngorms National Park.

13. New National Parks

Delivered a presentation at a Scottish Government-sponsored workshop for groups preparing bids for nomination as new National Parks, on the role of Board members of the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

14. National Parks Partnerships

Took part in the Extraordinary General Meeting of the National Parks Partnerships to make constitutional changes and approve the limited extension of the Chair's term through a transition in central funding arrangements.



15. Business Development

Took part in an event organised to support small-business owners and new entrepreneurs in the National Park, organised by the charity GrowBiz.

16. Glenmore

Meeting at Glenmore to discuss management for visitors, related roads issues, parking and wildfire concerns, and potential mitigation measures.

17. Hospitality Staffing

Represented the Board at an inaugural meeting in Braemar by the UK charity Only a Pavement Away, aimed at supporting people facing homelessness, prison leavers and service veterans, into careers in hospitality.

Discussion of the opportunities for businesses across the National Park, hampered mainly by the shortage of affordable housing which impacts on so many areas.

18. Mountain Issues

Introductory meeting with the Chair of the North East Mountain Trust, David Windle, focusing on the preservation of mountain landscapes in the face of development pressures, the scope of landscape-scale nature restoration, and the implications for mitigation against flooding events.

Sandy Bremner