



summer 2023

cairn

The magazine of the Cairngorms National Park



Park for all

Gearing up for
summer in the
National Park

Inside

Cool for cats

Wildcats released
in the Cairngorms

Sowing the seed

Meet the farmer on
track for net zero



To find out more information on the stories within this magazine please scan the QR code



**Cairngorms
National Park**

**Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaiddh Ruaidh**

Do you have a question about something in the National Park? The contacts on this page will help you to get to the correct person or organisation to help you.



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 & 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 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: A person in an offroad wheelchair at Loch Morlich © David Lintern. **Other images** © Alaska Stikova, Alex Macleod, Alice Fogg, Beaver Trust, Becky Wilson, Black Scottish Adventurers, Bo Mansell, Cairngorms Connect, Charlotte Milburn, David Lintern, Ed Smith, Fiona Toovey, James Lee, Jamie Martin, Jenny Allen, Joanna Hampson, Mark Craig / Airborne Lens, Markus Stitz, Pat Douglass, Paul Hughes, Peter Cairns / Northshots, Rachel Keenan, Scotland: The Big Picture, Wee Epics.

Fáilte / 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.

Summer is always a busy time of year, with one million visitors expected to come to the Cairngorms over the next few months. These visitors are hugely important to the local economy – more people are employed in tourism than any other sector – and the warm welcome visitors receive is one of the main reasons why people return again and again to the area.

We also recognise, though, that high visitor numbers can bring real challenges to our communities. It's for this reason that we've committed to stabilising visitor numbers in the peak season and encouraging more people to come during the off-season.

And whilst we don't own or manage any land directly, we're working closely with partners over the summer to ensure everyone enjoys the Cairngorms responsibly. In this issue you'll find out a little bit more about what that involves, together with all the latest nature and community news from every corner of the National Park.



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We'd love to hear what you think of this summer edition.

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



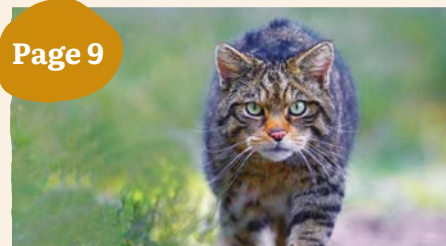
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Issue highlights



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Feline good



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All aboard!



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Future farming



In your community

Dulnain Bridge to Grantown offroad route steps up a gear

Funding from Scottish Government's Active Travel Transformation Fund means that work can begin on the construction of a safe offroad route between Grantown on Spey and Dulnain Bridge.

The Park Authority applied to the fund on behalf of the Dulnain Bridge community who – with support from

Sustrans – have led the project to this crucial stage. £630,000 has been allocated, with further funding coming from the planning gain process associated with the Cairn Distillery.

The new route will include sections of old road as well as purpose-built sections, allowing people to walk, cycle or use a wheelchair to travel between Grantown and Dulnain Bridge without having to use the busy A95 trunk road.



Finn, Tilly, Katherine and Leah on a willow walk

Gathering together

Hundreds of people visited us at the Atholl Gathering to make 'seed bombs' with the rangers and find out more about our work in the National Park.

We will be attending the Grantown Show and the Lonach Gathering later in the year so do stop by if you see us.



Willow walks

Last month, four of the Cairngorms National Park junior rangers joined the third ever 'willow walk', a fantastic event run by Cairngorms Connect.

Transporting and planting 4,000 willow saplings is part of an effort to restore the montane woodland high up in the Cairngorms. Recent monitoring of this work demonstrates that this is a habitat of hope for future generations.



Aviemore Adventurer

Two new Stagecoach bus services have launched. The 36A will serve Aviemore to Aberlour and Dufftown via Grantown and the A95. The 30, also known as the 'Aviemore Adventurer', is taking passengers from Aviemore to Cairngorm Mountain. The bus has lockers for skis, bikes and outdoor equipment, giving people an easy option for getting to the start of their adventure!

Scaling new heights

We were delighted to welcome Black Scottish Adventurers to the Cairngorms National Park in May.

Black Scottish Adventurers are a fast-growing community of adventure seekers who are passionate about introducing new people to the outdoors, no matter what their background.

We're pleased they chose to come to the Cairngorms to explore Meall a' Bhuachaille, followed by some time at Loch Insh.

Thank you to the team and to all the 93 members who came along — we look forward to welcoming you again soon.

For more information visit **blackscottishadventurers.com**



Broadband boost

Superfast broadband is being rolled out across Scotland and, for those premises not covered by new infrastructure, Scottish Government have set up a scheme to ensure that every home and business will have access.

A subsidy of up to £5,000 is available to all eligible premises and covers all direct installation costs. To see when superfast broadband is coming to your area – and whether your home or business is eligible for the R100 Scottish broadband voucher scheme – visit **scotlandsuperfast.com** and use their address checker.

Taking action

Wildfire is a growing concern given the changing climate and we have been doing a lot of work with partners to promote the message of 'no campfires' and 'no disposable barbecues' during times of high fire risk.

There are over 45 rangers dealing with issues as they arise and there are plans for joint patrols at Glenmore with Police Scotland, who have wider powers of enforcement.

We are currently exploring all options available to tackle this problem, one of which is the potential to create fire management byelaws. These options will be considered at our September board meeting.



Free-wheeling

A new cycling destination page has been launched by VisitCairngorms for locals and visitors to explore the National Park by bike.

The Cairngorms Business Partnership have worked with bike shops to digitally map routes from the centre of villages

and explore our varied path networks, the majority of which are offroad. The routes have been curated to showcase the best of the Cairngorms, whilst giving riders the information they need to enjoy this special place responsibly. Routes will help guide cyclists with turn-by-turn instructions and can be downloaded to mobile and GPS devices for free via [visitcairngorms.com/cycle](https://www.visitcairngorms.com/cycle)

Loos flash

After being closed for five years, the Burnfield toilets in Grantown are set to re-open this summer.

The Grantown Initiative, a local community development trust run by volunteers, acquired the site by community asset transfer from Highland Council and Colin Lawson Builders have been working on the improvements, which include a larger disabled toilet and a motorhome waste disposal unit for visitors.

Pupils from Grantown Grammar School are creating decorative wall tiles featuring scenes and activities of Grantown. The Park Authority contributed £25,000 to the project.

Lasting connections

A new volunteer programme is helping marginalised groups benefit from being out in nature.

Designed for those seeking refugee and asylum support, sexual violence survivors and local families under extreme financial pressure, the programme works with charitable groups to facilitate safe, positive and memorable experiences in the National Park.

Each of these is not just a day out in nature, but a day where people can leave a lasting impact and connect with wildlife and the outdoors – supporting their recovery, building confidence and

developing green skills for those who wouldn't otherwise have a chance to do so.

Park Authority staff have also been volunteering as part of 'The Big Help Out' for the King's coronation. In total 17 staff helped dig ponds, monitor raptors, tend community gardens and head out on patrol with our volunteer rangers. Our staff love where they live and work and really enjoyed giving back to this special place.

If you're interested in volunteering email volunteering@cairngorms.co.uk and we'll help find an activity that suits you.



Breaking down barriers

Our Equalities Advisory Panel provides feedback, advice and guidance on a wide range of equalities and inclusion topics. The panel is on the lookout for new members and we'd love to hear from people across the Cairngorms National Park who might be interested in getting involved.

The panel was first established in September 2020 to provide informed, evidence-based advice to support the Park Authority, and ensure equality and inclusion are thoroughly embedded in all areas of our work. This covers everything from the way we communicate to the way we recruit and engage with different communities and under-represented groups. The panel also helps promote equality and inclusion work with our partners across the National Park.

Over the past 12 months, the panel has made significant contributions to key projects such as the National Park Partnership Plan, the Cairngorms 2030 programme, our tourism infrastructure and sustainable tourism plans, as well as influencing our wider communications approach and helping diversify our recruitment process and corporate policies. They have also provided advice to a wide range of partner organisations.

Panel members are volunteers and are recruited through an open recruitment process. The panel meets virtually every month and meetings take place in the evenings to allow more people to attend. For more information on the panel and to find out how you can get involved, **scan the QR code** below or email **equalities@cairngorms.co.uk**. The deadline for applications is 20 August 2023.

“The Equality Advisory Panel is a space to unpack and perhaps begin to resolve some of the barriers to people feeling welcome living in and visiting the Cairngorms.”

**Bo (they/them),
Equality Advisory Panel member**



Community gains

Two exciting new grant funding opportunities are now open to communities in the National Park.

Applications for the Nature Resilience Fund and the Community Led Vision Fund are being invited, with a total of £60,000 and £167,500 available across the two funds. The Cairngorms Trust are looking for projects that promote capacity building and upskilling of communities. Visit **cairngormstrust.org.uk** for more information on how to apply.

Making tracks

A brand new blue grade mountain bike trail, part-funded by the Park Authority, is being created at Laggan Wolfrax.

Aimed at less experienced cyclists and families, the trail opens later in 2023 and complements existing trails, as well as helping spread visitors to quieter areas of the National Park.

Sustainable steps

With over two million visitors each year, we need to take steps to ensure the Cairngorms is a sustainable destination. We've

held the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas since 2005 and were recently reassessed. We'll find out later this year if we've been successful.

Planning ahead

Ensuring the National Park is a place where people and nature thrive is at the heart of all we do as a Park Authority, nowhere more so than in our planning function. Ensuring that the right kind of development takes place is one thing but it also needs to happen in the right place and that is where Local Place Plans come in.

Local Place Plans have been introduced by Scottish Government to encourage

communities to set out their own priorities that will be taken into account when we work on the next Local Development Plan. They provide an opportunity for residents and businesses to feed into the next plan by setting out their ideas and aspirations, as well as proposals, on how land is developed and used in their local area.

Many communities within the National Park are already involved in preparing Community Action Plans. Local Place Plans will not replace these but can sit alongside them and both plans may be taken into account in the Local Development Plan process.

We're inviting community councils and other community bodies to get to work on creating their own community-led Local Place Plans in good time. It is up to each community body to decide if they want to prepare one – it is not a legal requirement. However, it's important there is enough time for it to be submitted and checked. Based on current timescales this would mean having Local Place Plans submitted to the Park Authority by the end of May 2024. For advice and guidance on how to take this forward in your community, or if you have any questions, visit cairngorms.co.uk/local-place-plans

Call of the wild

The Saving Wildcats project has reached an historic milestone as part of landmark efforts to help restore Scotland's critically endangered wildcat population.

Following years of preparation, around 20 wildcats are being released into the Cairngorms Connect project area. The team have undertaken widespread engagement with local communities and drawn on global conservation and scientific expertise to further understand wildcat ecology and behaviour.

Ahead of their release, cats were moved into large, natural enclosures at the Highland Wildlife Park, designed to help them prepare for the challenges of life in the wild. The cats were also fitted with GPS collars to allow the team to monitor their movements.

Wildcats are elusive creatures and sightings will be incredibly rare. If you do catch a glimpse, please inform the Saving Wildcats team but don't share the location with others (especially not on social media) as leaving them undisturbed gives them the best chance of survival. You can report sightings directly at savingwildcats.org.uk/haveyouseenawildcat



Standing up

Aspen is a unique tree which regenerates by putting out suckers; in this way, a stand of aspen can come from a single parent.

Found in areas throughout the National Park, aspen support an array of rare and specialist wildlife. We're working with the Cairngorms Aspen Group, Scotland: The Big Picture and landowners to map aspen and connect existing stands to create a network of trees at different stages, helping them support more wildlife.

Two bee or not two bee

We've joined forces with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust to help monitor bumblebees in the National Park.

For the next few years, volunteers will visit various sites between March and October to count and record the different species of bees along a fixed route (or transect).

These locations include farms involved in the Cairngorms Future Farming project, part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme. Monitoring efforts will help establish if there are changes to the number and species of bumblebees as farmers work to support more biodiversity on their farms.

The project is also looking for volunteers. You will be trained in what to look for and how to record them. For more info visit bumblebeeconservation.org/skills-for-bees-scotland



Making connections

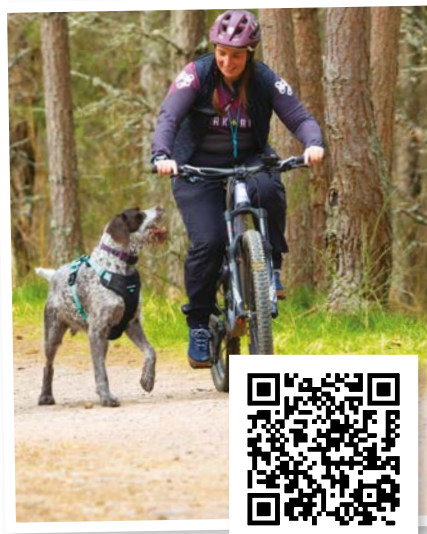
The Highland Wildlife Park has launched a new weekly group to give people a chance to spend time together in nature. It includes a fully accessible programme of activities such as pond dipping and birdwatching. For more info contact Jess Wise: jwise@rzss.org.uk

Cairngorms 2030

Over the past year we've been gathering views from people across the National Park to inform Cairngorms 2030, our programme to tackle the nature and climate crisis. Thank you to the over 4,000 of you who took part in one of nearly 150 events. Your views have helped shape a final proposal to The National Lottery Heritage Fund. If successful, the next stage will kick off in January and last for five years. For all the latest and to see how you can get involved see cairngorms2030.commonplace.is

Climate action

Teaching staff from five National Park high schools gathered in Tomintoul in June for a shared learning event as part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme's Climate Learning and Education project. Teachers were presented with key findings from the project work so far, including the key climate priorities that students have identified as most important to them.



Top dogs

The National Park is a special place to enjoy the outdoors with our dogs but it is also home to some of the UK's rarest wildlife.

Capercaillie are now raising their young until late August and dogs can easily cause them harm. We've collaborated with local dog walker Kaz Dalby at Bark + Ride Sports on a short video packed with tips on how you can help. **Scan the QR code** to watch Kaz's video.

Flower power

An exciting project is aiming to help rare plant populations in the Cairngorms by encouraging volunteers to raise twinflower cuttings in their own gardens, before being replanted back in the wild. The project is led by Plantlife Scotland and supported by the Park Authority and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Meanwhile on Deeside, Balmoral Estate staff have set up a twinflower clone bank. Plants are being propagated for translocation to reinforce existing populations with new genetic material. It is hoped this will enable cross-pollination to ensure new plants have a wider gene base, boosting the resilience of the species.





Beaver blethers

A six-week formal engagement on beavers starts in early August, giving everyone a chance to share their thoughts on the return of the species to the upper Spey. The drop-in sessions will give residents and land managers a chance to hear about our proposals, ask any questions and explore any issues that need to be addressed.

Quite the catch

Feargal Sharkey, former Undertones frontman and passionate angler, has lent his support to the **Spey Catchment Initiative**. Newly launched as a charity, the initiative works closely with communities and land managers to deliver vital river restoration projects. They plan to restore large stretches of the river over the coming years and we are proud to partner with such a proactive organisation, addressing key environmental issues on the Spey. Find out more at speycatchment.org



Peatland progress

The **Park Authority's Peatland Action team** have helped deliver over 1,000 hectares of peatland restoration in a single year for the first time. Working closely with landowners and land managers across the National Park, the team completed 15 projects across 10 different estates. Activity focused on blocking man-made drains, re-vegetating and re-wetting actively eroding areas.



Top of the range

In every corner of the **National Park**, teams of passionate, dedicated and knowledgeable people are helping ensure visitors enjoy the **Cairngorms** responsibly.

Alongside our in-house team of 20 Park Authority rangers, we work with 13 additional ranger services who are employed by a variety of organisations, including local authorities, private estates and charities.

Rangers play a vital role in the National Park, promoting responsible behaviour, staffing volunteer events

and facilitating visits from schools and under-represented groups. They also get involved in biological monitoring and maintenance work of paths and other infrastructure.

The work of rangers is paid for by their employer and in many cases is supported by grant aid from the Park Authority, as well as contributions from the public through donations, car park charges and so on.

Working together as a single family of Cairngorms National Park rangers, this partnership is what helps to make our National Park a place where everyone feels welcome, connected and safe.

Reconvening

Every Park Authority board needs a Convener to chair meetings and ensure everything runs smoothly and for the past five years that role has fallen to Xander McDade.

Xander became the youngest ever Convener of the Park Authority board when he was elected to the role in 2018 aged 23. Having led the board through the Covid-19 pandemic, the creation of a Park Authority ranger service, the launch of our fourth Partnership Plan and the development of our Cairngorms 2030 programme, he feels that now is the time for fresh leadership.

We are grateful to Xander for his contribution to the board at a time of extraordinary change and growth for the National Park, and welcome his successor Sandy Bremner, who was elected by his fellow board members in late June and will serve for an initial three-year term from August.

There has also been a change in the Deputy Convener role, with Janet Hunter stepping down from the board in September and Eleanor Mackintosh replacing her. Janet chaired the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership and led on the development of a new Sustainable Tourism Action Plan. Eleanor has served on the board since 2003 and previously held the role of Planning Convener. Thanks go to Janet for her leadership and wise counsel over the past eight years.



Xander McDade (right) launching the Partnership Plan with CEO Grant Moir and Lorna Slater MSP

All aboard

Caring for the Cairngorms National Park is a collective responsibility, but one group of people have the specific job of ensuring the priorities set out in the National Park Partnership Plan are delivered: the Park Authority board.

Their role is set out in Scottish law to agree the long-term objectives for the National Park, working with the CEO and staff to set the priorities for

the Park Authority, and ensure that both the natural environment and the local communities in the Cairngorms are cared for and sustained.

The board is made up of 19 people: seven are appointed from local councils, seven are appointed by Scottish Government and five are directly elected by you the residents.

Elections took place earlier in the year, as did some new Scottish Government appointments, and we'd like to introduce you to the new faces for 2023.

Directly elected



Kenny Deans
(Ward 1)

Born in Sutherland and raised in Edinburgh, Kenny taught for 34 years at Kingussie High. An award-winning sports coach and community leader, he is currently a director with Kingussie Community Development Company.



Lauren MacCallum
(Ward 2)

Lauren is an author, broadcaster and general manager of climate action charity Protect Our Winters UK, which helps passionate outdoor people become effective climate advocates to achieve systemic solutions to climate change.



John Kirk
(Ward 3)

A farmer in Nethy Bridge, John also ran his own agricultural / plant hire business until 2021. He is passionate about seeing the wildlife of the National Park improve for future generations.



Eleanor Mackintosh
(Ward 4)

Eleanor is a former financial advisor with Clydesdale Bank and serves on various community groups. She is also the Scottish Northern Representative on the British Wool Board.



Paul Gibb
(Ward 5)

Paul is a geologist and has also spent several years representing the communities of Upper Deeside and Donside. He manages his own business and has an interest in the local economy, affordable housing, transport and river catchment management.



For info on all our board members **scan the QR code**

Government appointed



Sandy Bremner

Formerly a reporter and editor for BBC Scotland for nearly 30 years, Sandy is the current Chair of the River Dee Trust and launched the scheme to plant a million native trees along the Dee's riverbanks.



Dr Pete Cosgrove

Pete has lived and worked in the Cairngorms since 1998 and has public, private and third sector experience on land-use and conservation. His focus is on climate change and its impact on livelihoods and biodiversity.



Dr Hannah Grist

Hannah is a lecturer at Scotland's Rural College and Deputy Programme Director of the University of Edinburgh MSc in Environmental Management and Protection. She is a keen mountain wanderer with a passion for nature and heritage.



Steve Micklewright

A trained ecologist, Steve has worked in nature conservation for over 30 years. He is currently Chief Executive of conservation charity Trees for Life and Convenor of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance.



CAIRNGORMS
NATURE
FESTIVAL

FÈIS NÀDAIR
A'MHONAI DH
RUAIDH

The Cairngorms National Park is world-renowned as an important place for nature and looking after it is very much a joint effort.

The Park Authority draws together many partners, from estates and community groups to organisations and charities, who work on all manner of conservation projects. Each group and individual plays a critical part in helping to conserve and enhance our wildlife and landscapes in the National Park.

The Cairngorms Nature Festival takes place every May and is a celebration of all that work. This year over 60 partners and 10 ranger services came

together to put on the 10-day nature extravaganza, with over 100 events and 1,800 people in attendance. From family-friendly trails to bespoke walks and accessible activities for those with disabilities, the sheer variety of events that took place is a testament to the hard work of our partners and rangers.

The festival is also an opportunity for businesses and communities to celebrate their place in the National Park and get involved, whether that is by hosting an event or running a promotion during the festival week. We offer support and promotion for all our partners and would love to hear from anyone who'd like to get involved next year: email nature@cairngorms.co.uk





In conversation with David Toovey

David Toovey took over Rhindhu Farm near Tomintoul from his father-in-law 20 years ago. Now, as part of the Cairngorms Future Farming project, he and five other farms are exploring ways of reducing their carbon footprint as part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme.

Why did you get involved with the Cairngorms Future Farming project?

Over the years I've noticed changes in nature around the farm and the area. More recently I've seen changes happening more often and for the worse in terms of our wildlife and their habitats. I'm keen to help wildlife and their habitats while keeping our farm viable – that can only be a good thing.

Can you tell us about some of the changes you've been exploring?

When we went through the process of measuring our carbon footprint, the results were quite good. We've long been an environmentally-minded farm and have been part of national environmental schemes since the 1990s.

However, this project is specific to the Cairngorms and allows us to measure what we're doing now and see how to reduce our emissions and improve habitats around the farm. It's very relevant to us.

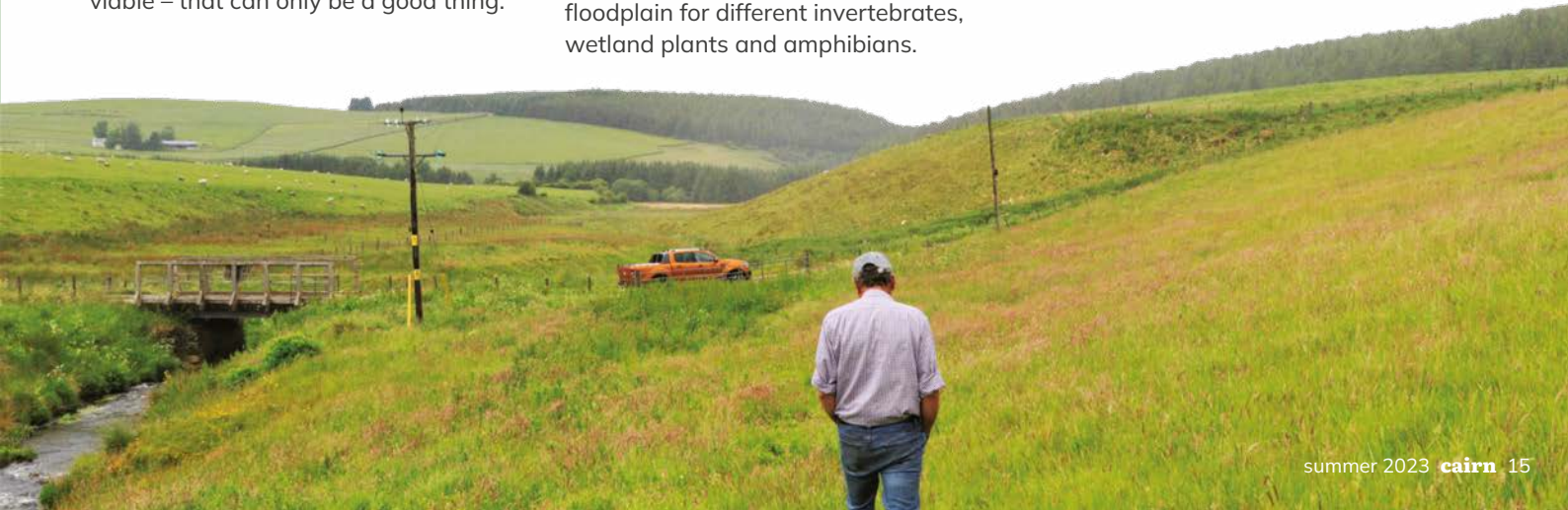
Some of the things we've identified include installing bat and barn owl boxes in existing buildings, introducing strips of pollen and nectar mixes and wild bird cover, managing scrub and existing woodlands (including restructuring the conifer plantation) and creating ponds in the floodplain for different invertebrates, wetland plants and amphibians.

Do you foresee any challenges with this approach?

We have identified many small actions to take and together they will have a big impact. I don't think it will be challenging to implement a combination of the changes we've identified and I don't believe any of them will negatively impact our farming business.

What are your hopes for the future of the project?

I hope through this project and making a combination of changes we can improve things for the next generation. We need to do something now to stop the biodiversity loss that is happening so the next generation can enjoy what we had when we were young. It's not until we lose things that we realise what we have lost but it's not too late to do something about it.





“I'm keen to help wildlife and their habitats while keeping our farm viable – that can only be a good thing.”

David Toovey,
Rhindhu Farm

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**FOREST
CARBON**

