



winter 2023

cairn

The magazine of the Cairngorms National Park



Nature news

Breeding
success for
birds of prey

Inside

Big birthday
20 years of the
National Park

Beavering away
Species a step
closer to return?



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 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 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

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Fàilte / Welcome

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

On 1 September 2003, the Cairngorms National Park was opened by Liz Hanna – the great, great granddaughter of John Muir, founder of the national park movement – and Allan Wilson, the Deputy Environment Minister.

In this edition of *Cairn* we celebrate 20 years of the National Park and explore what lies ahead for the nature and communities of the Cairngorms.

Back in 2003 our first Convener Andrew Thin outlined what he believed would be a key priority for the new National Park:

“Above all we believe... that this must be a Park for all. Not just a Park for the fit and the few, not just a Park for the better off, but a Park that is welcoming and attractive to all... whatever their age, ability or circumstances.”

Whilst much has changed over the past two decades, these words feel every bit as relevant now as they did all those years ago. This is, and always will be, your National Park.

We'd love to hear what you think of this winter 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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Page 8

Issue highlights



Page 6

Beaver away



Page 7

Royal appointment



Page 12

Top gear



Page 14

Looking to the future

Bog standards

The Park Authority has teamed up with Cairngorms Connect and NatureScot to teach local school pupils how to monitor peatland.

Park Authority Rangers Polly and Judy, Cairngorms Connect Community Learning Officer Lotte and Seasonal Reserve Assistant Kirstin showed the pupils from Aboyne Academy, Kingussie High and Grantown Grammar the ins and outs over a series of days this autumn.

This is the start of a yearly school programme and the monitoring will feed into the Moorlands as Indicators of Climate Change Initiative, a UK-wide network of students carrying out peatland monitoring in their local national parks.



Nature nurtured

The nature and wildlife of Scotland's national parks is set to benefit from a new £550,000 award from Scottish Government.

The Nature Restoration Fund will support ecological restoration and species recovery projects in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms over the next 12 months.

Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity Lorna Slater MSP made the announcement on a recent visit to the Cairngorms. She explained: "Both national parks have

a vital role to play in securing a more sustainable future for Scotland and helping us meet our ambitious target to restore biodiversity by 2045.

"This funding will help achieve landscape-scale conservation of species and habitat across our national parks, helping some of Scotland's most special wildlife to thrive. It will also help support smaller, grassroots initiatives and inspire everyone to play their part in restoring nature."

The Cairngorms is home to 25% of Britain's threatened bird, animal and plant species and is one of the most important areas for nature conservation in the UK.

Tales of the riverbank

Tree planting on riverbanks can help reduce flooding downstream, stabilising the banks and slowing rainwater run-off.

The River Dee catchment in Glen Clunie is a key area for restoration work, with over 5,000 native broadleaf trees having been planted so far and another 3,700 to follow. A fantastic team of volunteers have helped with the project, which is funded by the Cairngorms Trust's Nature Resilience Fund, Mossy Earth and the Woodland Trust.



Use your Ed

The Cairngorms Business Partnership have been working with standup comedian, author and keen hiker Ed Byrne on a series of videos encouraging visitors to enjoy the Cairngorms responsibly.

Topics include wild camping, dog walking, water safety and fires. Head to [visitcairngorms.com](https://www.visitcairngorms.com) to watch the short videos.

Flying high

Mar Lodge Estate is celebrating a successful breeding season with a record number of bird of prey chicks documented at the National Nature Reserve.

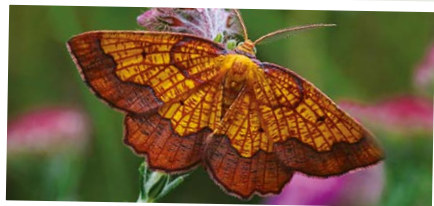
National Trust for Scotland recorded 32 hen harrier chicks this year, the most productive season since the species colonised the area in 2016.

The number of breeding pairs has grown year on year, reaching a high of 11 pairs in 2023, with eight breeding successfully.

A pair of white-tailed eagles also bred for the second successive year and produced two chicks, both of which fledged successfully.

The Park Authority has also welcomed Isla Graham as its new Raptor Conservation Officer. Isla will work closely with partners to develop an evidence-based approach to raptor conservation across the Cairngorms, raise awareness about raptors and their importance, and deliver a programme of work to secure the future of species such as golden eagle, hen harrier and peregrine falcon.





You beauty

The dark-bordered beauty is one of our rarest moths, with only three known populations in the UK (two in the Cairngorms). The Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms Project has reintroduced the species to a site in Strathspey, releasing over 200 larvae onto small aspen tree suckers. Non-lethal light traps were used to see if any of the larvae had made it into adulthood and the team were delighted to find three males drawn to the light. It is hoped that they have begun a new, wild population.

Living the dream

GirlDreamer supports the development of young women of colour to tackle social inequality and pursue their dreams. Alongside our partners Backbone and Glen Tanar Estate, we welcomed a residential group this summer, many of whom had never been north of the Central Belt before. One attendee said: "This retreat felt like I belonged somewhere even when I was miles away from anyone I knew from my usual life."



Cut above

Wildflowers are critical for pollinating insects but 97% of meadows have been lost in the last century. Volunteers on a Crown Estate farm in Glenlivet have been working to address this using the centuries-old technique of scything. As well as being a great communal workout, scything is less impactful to wildlife than mowing and allows seeds to be harvested for future use.

Beavering away

Beavers could be a step closer to returning after an absence of over 400 years, with the Park Authority about to submit a licence application to relocate beavers from Tayside to three locations in the upper River Spey catchment.

The first sites identified for potential releases are Rothiemurchus, Wildland Cairngorms and RSPB Scotland Insh Marshes. A six-week formal engagement period with residents, farmers, land managers and other stakeholders finished at the end of September. Over 100 people attended

six public events and 500 people responded to our online survey. Just under three quarters of survey respondents were supportive of the species returning to the National Park; however, the need for clear mitigation measures was also raised by a number of land managers.

We are currently compiling a report on the public engagement process and this will form a critical part of the licence application to NatureScot. We hope to have a decision in November and, if approved, the process of bringing beavers back could begin before the end of this year. For more information on the project go to cairngorms.co.uk/beaver



A royal appointment

A project to conserve historic farm buildings was celebrated recently as His Majesty The King visited the spiritual site of Scalán in the Braes of Glenlivet.

His Majesty toured the site and viewed a number of restored buildings, built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to provide corn threshing machines for the Glenlivet farming community. Still in place, the threshing machine in North Mill is one of the oldest surviving in Scotland.

The King also viewed the restored waterwheel and lade in the North

Mill, as well as objects and historic graffiti that covers the walls of the buildings, providing an incredible record of farming life from past inhabitants and workers.

At the completion of his tour, The King unveiled a plaque to commemorate the visit and met some of the many project partners and volunteers who were instrumental in bringing the project to fruition.

The project was led by Crown Estate Scotland, the Park Authority and the Scalán Association, with support from the National Lottery-funded Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership.

Perfect prescription

We all know that nature is good for our mental and physical health and a new project is helping ensure the benefits can be felt by people across Badenoch and Strathspey.

The nature prescriptions project – part of Cairngorms 2030 – is supporting people to connect with nature and feel healthier and happier by doing so.

The process begins with a conversation with our Green Health Link Workers to help you decide what activities you would like to do and what fits your lifestyle. There are plenty of activities going on within the National Park's communities, or you may just want to find time for yourself with nature.

To get involved, talk to your GP, healthcare or other support worker, or simply click the 'nature prescriptions self-referral' button on the website of your GP practice.



to start a park

It was a chilly day in March 2003 when the Park Authority board gathered for the first time at Balmoral Estate for their inaugural meeting. 25 members with a range of different perspectives and experience.

The boundary of the National Park had been the subject of some debate. Scottish Natural Heritage (now called NatureScot) had been tasked with scoping out possible areas for this newest of national parks and had presented six options, including one which only included the Cairngorm plateau, before the final decision was made.

"There was a real sense of excitement and everyone in the room felt that they had been given a blank sheet of paper," recalls Andrew Thin, the Park

Authority's first Convener. "National parks in Scotland were markedly different to England and Wales because there was new legislation which had added a key fourth aim – to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

"I think we all hoped to respond to the unique legislative approach taken to Scotland's national parks in 2000 by establishing something that was genuinely novel and innovative. We were full of optimism that we were going to break out of the stale conflict between environment and community that had bedevilled Scotland for decades."

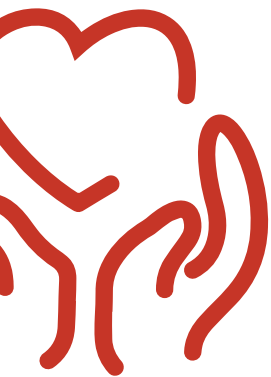
Jane Hope was there too, fresh from setting up Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. Instrumental in writing the legislation, she had been seconded in as interim CEO for an initial six months but was to stay in the role for the next decade.



Cairngorms
NATION

Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhoine

One of over 20
granite markers





The first board meeting



“It was an exciting time,” she reflects. “Some people were apprehensive, not knowing what this new National Park would mean for them, and worried it would bring all sorts of restrictions. But many were excited, seeing new possibilities for the visitor economy and for the natural environment.”



“We had an ambition to create something that would benefit both people and nature.”

**Eleanor Mackintosh,
Park Authority board member**

There were difficult decisions to be made. Would the focus be industry, business and people, or more tourism which would boost the local economy but would also put pressure on the environment? The geography of the National Park makes for very distinct communities and cultures and there was a challenge in how to pull everyone together. Eleanor Mackintosh, who has served on the board since those early days, remembers the discussion on how this could be achieved, including the decision to have an office in Ballater to ensure the focus didn't rest solely on Speyside.

Looking back on 20 years, have those early hopes been achieved? Eleanor believes many of them have. “We had an ambition to create something that would benefit both people and nature and we have managed that in many areas. Some issues – such as local transport and affordable housing – are still not fully resolved, but we are here for the long term and progress is being made.”

Jane Hope agrees that, despite all the challenges, they managed to create something very special. “There is international recognition of the wonder and importance of the Cairngorms National Park. It has been the subject of many TV programmes, but now they are specifically focusing on the Cairngorms National Park and not just a bit of the Highlands. I still get a feeling of pride every time I pass one of the entry markers made from Cairngorms granite – like them we have built something to last.”



Fun and games

It's been a wet summer overall but that didn't stop the calendar of shows and games taking place.

These events are part of the cultural fabric of the Cairngorms and we were delighted to support a number of shows across the National Park. This included the Grantown Show and the Atholl Gathering – both in the sunshine – as well as a very damp (but historic!) Lonach Gathering. More than 500 people stopped by our stands to say hello and local children made hundreds of seed bombs to take home.

Over the next 12 months we'll be coming to a community near you, discussing



the issues that matter most and understanding how the Park Authority can help. Next on the list is the Ballater Winter Festival on 25 November, where we'll also be offering Christmas craft activities. Pop into our offices on Station Square to join in the fun.



Park Pride

The Park Authority attended Highland Pride earlier this summer.

We were grateful to hear from so many attendees about how important it was to support increased visibility, community and accessibility within the National Park, and what we can do to ensure this special place is truly a Park for all.

History highlights

Badenoch: The Storylands continues to showcase the area's rich heritage, culture and landscapes. This includes the annual Badenoch Heritage Festival in September, 13 local trails, a dedicated visitor app, and a unique mix of tales and tunes as part of the Storylands Sessions. Visit badenochstorylands.com



Walk this way

There are 12 health walks taking place each and every week in communities around the National Park.

We know that walking can make us feel better, but it's not always easy to know where to start. Health walks are short, social walks with a trained leader to show you the way. Each walk lasts up to one hour, is open to everyone and all abilities are welcome.

To find your nearest health walk visit cairngorms.co.uk/healthwalks and use the interactive map, or call **01479 873 535**.



Shinty success

Huge congratulations to Kingussie on their Camanachd Cup victory and to Newtonmore for retaining the Sutherland Cup this season. Shinty is deep-rooted in the history and culture of Badenoch. Check out the Shinty Trail to find out more: cairngorms.co.uk/the-shinty-trail

Affordable homes given the go-ahead

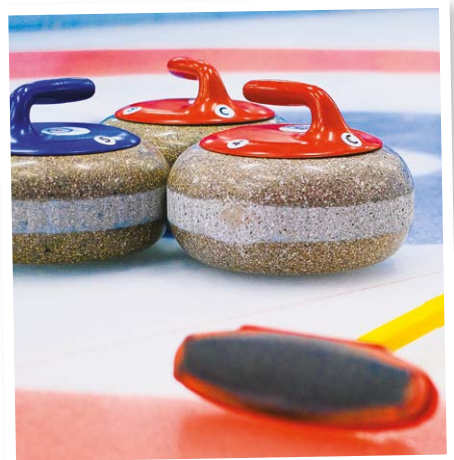
New affordable homes for Aviemore and Nethy Bridge are set to be built after planning permission was granted by our planning committee.

12 new rental properties will be built on the site of the old primary school in Aviemore, while 21 affordable homes will be built on a former station yard in Nethy Bridge. Planning consent was also given for the redevelopment of the Invercauld Arms in Braemar – creating serviced apartments and various leisure facilities – as well as a community-owned campsite in Tomintoul.



Playing it cool

With Team GB winning gold and silver medals at the 2022 Winter Olympics, curling is now cool in more ways than one.



Aviemore Ice Rink has been running taster sessions from local curling legends for anyone wanting to give the sport a go.

This is the latest offering from the community-run rink, which has been welcoming skaters since it opened two years ago, allowing many people to take up new ice hobbies, as well as having fun on the rink at ice discos and skating events.

Running an ice rink takes a lot of energy, but owners the Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust plan to reduce consumption by a huge 75% this winter thanks to insulation and new chillers, purchased with funding from the Park Authority, Highland Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Latest developments

Work on gathering evidence and views to help prepare the next Local Development Plan continues. This month we are looking for your views on the landscape, historic and cultural heritage of the National Park. Find out more and get involved at cairngormsldp.commonplace.is

Path it on

If you have a local path in need of improvement, your community might be eligible to apply to the Ian Findlay Path Fund. The fund helps improve paths within and between communities and is supported by Transport Scotland.



Communities can apply for up to £100,000. Find out more about the fund by scanning the QR code.

Glenmore centenary

2023 marks 100 years since Glenmore was purchased from the Duke of Gordon, making it one of the longest periods of continuous public ownership of a forest in Scotland. In that time Glenmore has experienced many changes within the wider forestry sector, from the early years of forest expansion to an increase in recreation and large-scale habitat restoration.

E-spoke

A number of e-bikes have been made available to residents thanks to funding from the Cairngorms Trust.

Aviemore Bikes are now offering to loan bikes for four to six weeks to residents from Dalwhinnie to Glenlivet and in the Tomintoul area, with 17 e-bikes, three cargo e-bikes and an e-trike available. A suggested donation of £10 per week is requested.

The Trust's Community-Led Vision Fund is supporting Backcountry Bikes to develop a community cargo e-bike that will be available for short loans and a community bike recycling project –



taking old bikes and making them good again, for low- or no-cost ownership. The fund has also supported Able2Adventure to purchase hand bikes, as well as adaptive e-bikes, trikes and a minibus to transport them around the Cairngorms.

And finally, the Trust is working with the NHS to help make their three staff e-bikes more accessible – look out for staff from Aviemore hospital doing their rounds on them in the near future!

Top gear

The Cairngorms Youth Local Action Group has been supporting a range of cycling activities as part of its Youth Fund.

Funding has been made available for individuals and groups aged 30

and under for bikes, bike sheds, bike-packing equipment, festivals, coaching, expeditions and filming equipment.

The Youth LAG brings together a group of young people aged 14 to 26 to co-design and run a £15,000 fund which connects young people to nature and helps tackle the nature and climate crisis.



Pumped up

Part-funded by the Cairngorms Trust in 2021, the Woodland Wheels pump track in Boat of Garten is a free-to-use biking facility for both locals and visitors.

This summer the track played host to the Highland and North East Scotland heats for the Ride the Worlds pump track race. The national finals took place in Glasgow as part of the UCI World Championships and two Carrbridge riders, Joe Paterson and Gordy Archer, finished in 2nd and 3rd place. Well done to all that took part.

Community gains

A total of 22 community projects have been awarded over £300,000 as part of the Cairngorms Community-Led Vision Fund, managed by the Cairngorms Trust and supported by Scottish Government.

Successful projects include new community-owned accessible toilets in Grantown, a 'pathways to rural work' project from Countryside Learning Scotland, and a project to conserve and adapt St Margaret's Church in Braemar. For a full list of funding recipients head to cairngormstrust.org.uk



On the horizon

Over the past 18 months the Park Authority has collaborated with over 4,000 members of the public to shape our plans for the future of the Cairngorms 2030 programme.

We have now pulled together all our findings into a final proposal to The National Lottery Heritage Fund. If our bid is successful, the next stage of the programme will kick off in January 2024.

To see how you can get involved and to sign up for updates, check out the programme website: cairngorms2030.commonplace.is



The path ahead

As part of our Cairngorms 2030 programme, we have been exploring ways to make the National Park more walking, cycling and wheelchair friendly.

Over the past 18 months more than 30 online and in-person events have taken place and 1,200 thoughts and ideas have been contributed by residents. Thank you to everyone who took part.

Based on your feedback, over 100 active travel construction projects have now been identified in communities across the National Park. The plan is for all of these to be delivered by 2045, either by the Park Authority or its partners.

As part of the delivery phase of Cairngorms 2030, we will take forward up to 10 of these projects in different communities.

This includes the creation of two-way cycle lanes in Aviemore, improving Braemar village centre for pedestrians and multiple smaller active travel improvements.

In addition to the projects delivered through the Cairngorms 2030 programme, the Park Authority is working with partners and communities to develop – and seek funding for – other key projects identified by communities.

The development phase of the Cairngorms 2030 active travel projects was supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Places for Everyone, an active travel infrastructure programme funded by Scottish Government and administered by Sustrans.



Power rangers

If you have been out and about this summer you may have met one of our trainee rangers – Jessie, Kate or Craig.

The trainee ranger programme gives individuals who'd like to become a ranger the opportunity to gain vital skills over the busy summer season.

Working alongside the ranger team, our trainees have had first-hand experience welcoming visitors, restoring habitats and doing species conservation work. With a contract designed to fit around the education calendar, they can gain some great work experience and continue with their studies.



Seasonal rangers
Jessie and Craig

Rural futures

Countryside Learning Scotland held a 'Future of Rural' day at Alvie and Dalraddy Estates in September.

Pupils from Kingussie High School and Grantown Grammar School had the opportunity to experience rural careers in action, including forestry, farming and the action-packed adventure tourism industry.

The event explained why we need more of these skills to help tackle the nature and climate crisis, what qualifications are required and what pathways to employment exist. Countryside Learning Scotland worked in partnership with the Park Authority to make the event a reality and will be holding similar events in the near future.

Climate camps

This August, 35 young people from across Europe travelled to Badaguish to attend the Cairngorms Youth Climate Camp.

Participants from the UK, Sweden, Latvia, Romania, Italy and the Netherlands went on field trips looking at different aspects of the area's nature and climate.

The camp also featured a mini-parliament session and a wild adventure and nature connection day on Loch Morlich.

A separate three-day camp at

Badaguish saw over 40 junior rangers come together to take part in a range of fantastic activities including orienteering, art, trying out adaptive bikes and off-road wheelchairs, and helping improve the new outdoor dementia resource centre garden. Participants were also introduced to the Scottish Countryside Ranger Association's Junior Ranger Award, a qualification young people can earn through the project.



In conversation with the Gordon family

Lucy, Alanah and Cameron Gordon's family have been involved with the Lonach Highland and Friendly Society since it began and have been farming at Lost Farm for 300 years. We caught up with them to mark the 200th anniversary of the Lonach Highland and Friendly Society.

What part do you play in the Lonach Games?

We're all involved in the games through the pipe band as well as from a community perspective. Alanah (aged 18) has been playing the pipes for nine years, Lucy (18) has been a tenor drummer for five years and Cameron (15) has played the snare drum for eight years. We all take part in the march; it's an important part of the games and something we're



The Gordon family (left to right): Alanah, George, Cameron, Charles and Lucy

all proud to do. Our dad, along with other members of the committee, met His Majesty The King when he visited for the 200th anniversary.

How important a role do you think highland games play?

The Lonach Games are important to everyone in our community, no matter what their age. The event sees us all celebrate together and keep our traditions and stories going. The Lonach Highland and Friendly Society celebrated its 200th anniversary this year and our family have been farming here for around 300 years, so there's lots of history there. Organising the games takes a lot of work. For the two weeks leading up to the event, our

dad, granda, others on the committee and many volunteers are at the park grounds every night for the set up.





What do the games mean to you?

Everything! It is a huge highlight of the year. It is the one and only day when everything stops and families, neighbours and friends get together and celebrate. Alanah had the opportunity to play at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo this year – a huge honour – but she turned it down as it meant she couldn't attend Lonach. We've attended the games every year since birth and none of us will ever miss it.

Find out more about the Lonach Games at lonach.org



“It is a huge highlight of the year. It is the one and only day when everything stops and families, neighbours and friends get together and celebrate.”

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Alanah, Lucy and Cameron Gordon,
Lonach Highland Gathering and Games

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see cairngorms.co.uk/magazine

Read the
full story on
page 15



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