



Draft minutes of the Performance Committee meeting

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown-on-Spey

Hybrid

12 December 2026 at 01.15pm

Present in person

Kenny Deans (Chair)

Steve Micklewright (Deputy Chair)

John Kirk

Michael Williamson

Sandy Bremner

Eleanor Mackintosh

Present online

Ann Ross

In attendance

Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer

David Cameron, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Director of Corporate Services

Gavin Miles, Director of Planning and Place

Sarah Henshall, Head of Conservation

Karen Johnstone, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

None

Welcome and introduction

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Performance Committee, giving a special welcome to Michael Williamson on his first meeting.



Approval of minutes of previous meetings

2. The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 September 2025 were approved with the following amendments:
 - a) At paragraph 3 - change to " The Chair of the Performance Committee questioned when the Park Authority will consider the figures and funding of the climate adaptation fund. CEO explained that they will share with the Committee who was allocated funds and can look further into funding allocations and project types once all funding is in place and bring this back to the Committee."

3. The draft confidential minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 September 2025 were approved with no amendments.
 - a) The Chair questions if Head of Cairngorms 2030 had attended the last Economic Steering Group meeting. CEO confirmed that he had attended the meeting.

Matters arising not covered elsewhere

4. The Chair mentioned a previous discussion on providing more information regarding baseline checks and enhancements achieved on peatland restoration, such as biodiversity gain and where water is being stored. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services explained the peatland team have discussed next year's programme and potential budget allocations and this element will be included in future reporting; a paper will be brought to either the Performance Committee or Formal Board early 2026.

ACTION	Status
Action points arising from previous meetings	
13 December 2024	
AOCB At para 26 i. Ranger service update to be incorporated into the Active Cairngorms action plan paper.	Closed
Update:	



Annual update paper will be taken to Formal Full Board in November 2025.

Declarations of interest

5. There were no declarations of interest.

Performance Committee 2026 Annual Agenda (Paper 1)

6. David Cameron, Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services introduced the paper which presents the proposed workplan and associated agenda for the Performance Committee in 2026 as well as setting out the terms of reference for Committee members.
7. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:
 - a) Committee agreed to the proposed agenda for 2026.
8. Action Points Arising: None.

Cairngorms 2030 programme update: quarter three 2025 (July - September (Paper 2)

9. David Cameron, Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services introduced the paper which presents the status of the Cairngorms 2030 (C2030) programme and risk management, based on information in project reports for the period from July to September 2025, and updated where appropriate to reflect current position as at the time of writing, and the planned work to end December 2025.
10. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:
 - a) A Board Member raised concern regarding the health and wellbeing outdoor dementia centre, questioning where the funding came from and if this would be sustainable. CEO explained this project was funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) which will cover the dementia centre until 2028/29. Discussions are ongoing with Alzheimer's Scotland's brain health team to create a legacy plan from 2030 onwards as well as working on how



to embed the program into NHS Highland and to be able to expand this further.

- b) A Board Member questioned if there was anything in the delivery phase of the active transport community projects that would prove difficult. CEO explained they would need to apply for funding from Transport Scotland for the next phase, which due to elections would likely not be allocated until September, giving them a limited amount of time to complete the works.
- c) A Board Member recommended an organisation who provides funding for dementia projects. Member agreed to email this to CEO.
- d) A Board Member questioned the level of engagement within the future farming project, asking if farmers have found this helpful. CEO explained there has been two events this year, one in Atholl with about 20 attendees and one in Boat of Garten with about 30 attendees. The feedback from these events have been positive, sharing what different people are doing in different areas, which has been useful.
- e) CEO noted that there would be a funding application opening in January to provide consultancy time and help with understanding funding options available as well as funding to attend conferences. A Board Member questioned how this would work alongside advisors in the National Park offering the same services. CEO explained the Park Authority would highlight what funding is available, then farmers could choose who they go to, however this will be confirmed and information provided at the next committee.
- f) A Board Member noted there was a financial meeting in November, asking for an update from this meeting. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services explained that Head of Cairngorms 2030 met with Highlands and Island Enterprise (HIE) for a final assessment of the potential HIE financial contributions to the programme which was positive. HIE are keen to be involved with the projects, giving general commitment. A confirmation is likely to come in early 2026.

11. The Performance Committee noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:
- a) Note progress to date and future plans for Cairngorms 2030 delivery.
 - b) Note specific points of Cairngorms 2030 delivery risk.
 - c) Highlight any issues arising that members may feel need specific consideration by staff from a strategic and board perspective.



12. Action Points Arising:

- i. CEO to confirm if applicants of the new fund are able to choose the services / providers themselves with the funding allocated.

Bringing beavers back project (Paper 3)

13. Sarah Henshall, Head of Conservation introduced the paper which presents the latest delivery updates on the Bringing beavers back project

14. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:

- a) A Board Member commented that the numbers of beavers now are manageable, however as they develop this will get more difficult. Head of Conservation explained the key thing is not to track every individual beaver, but to keep track of territories, and with the staff, rangers, gillies and public helping with this, the Park Authority are confident that they can track beavers well.
- b) A Board Member noted that some gillies' jobs are currently under threat, therefore if they can be saved through the beaver network, this would be beneficial. Head of Conservation explained that NatureScot are running training for Park Authority staff, rangers and gillies on dam removal, which is positive for the future of gillies.
- c) A Board Member questioned how far the beavers are spreading out from where they were released, asking if they are tagged. Head of Conservation explained the beavers are microchipped but cannot be tagged. It was noted that the beavers are largely in the upper Spey catchment, two individuals have moved, however beavers will stay where there is good habitat which is mainly around the upper Spey.
- d) A Board Member questioned if there was any awareness around giardia. CEO explained this was discussed at the previous Beaver Management and Mitigation group meeting, highlighting that all beavers go through a thorough health check, therefore no beaver will be released if testing positive for giardia. CEO went on to explain that giardia is already in the environment and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Water and the Park Authority need to share this message to make the public aware.
- e) A Board Member questioned the long-term monitoring plans to understand the changes to habitat and biodiversity impacts. Head of Conservation



explained there are visible impact surveys done through drone work. Most of the monitoring will be done through partnerships, such as links with the Fishery Board, Aberdeen University and Stirling University embedding this monitoring into research programmes that are already underway.

- f) A Board Member questioned the relationships between the Park Authority and the Beaver Management and Mitigation Group. Head of Conservation explained the meetings are generally positive, providing a space for discussing issues, sharing information and highlighting areas for improvement. There is a clear remit of the group, and the relationship continues to improve.
- g) A Board Member questioned if there was a concern on the spend for mitigation. Head of Conservation explained there hasn't been a huge amount spent on mitigation and all well within the budget.

15. The Performance Committee noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:

- a) Progress towards the project's objectives.
- b) Any strategically significant impacts on delivery of the Cairngorm National Park Authority's Corporate Plan and National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP).
- c) Any material impacts on the Park Authority's strategic risk management.

16. Action Points Arising: None.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (Paper 4)

17. Sarah Henshall, Head of Conservation introduced the paper which presents an update on the development of the next Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.

18. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:

- a) Head of Conservation highlighted that recommendations b and c should not have been included in the paper. It was also noted the word "partners" was missing from first box in the diagram on page 4.
- b) A Board Member questioned staff capacity for delivering this as it is a large amount of crucial work all happening at the same time. CEO explained this is all subject to what the Park Authority do in the NPPP, noting delivery mechanisms on the NPPP may change over the next year. The aim is to simplify this, however there are a lot of complex issues involved. Head of



Conservation explained the Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group now has a better link with Cairngorms Agricultural Advisory Group (CAAG) and Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group (CUAG), and feedback from them was to incorporate community benefits and designs into this. Annabelle Davidson-Knight, Community Benefits from Nature Advisor is working to help to empower communities and improve involvement.

- c) A Board Member asked for examples of community benefits. Head of Conservation explained that there are already training events for bird and plants helping to improve habitats. CEO explained as part of the Cairngorms 2030 Nature Recovery project, there are funds going into skills and training to help communities.
- d) Discussions were had around community benefits, eg reduction in flood risks is nature based but can help to reduce insurance costs, deer management can improve jobs in certain places, skills and training, together with further downstream benefits of actions which ultimately have positive impacts for communities. Community benefits are not always about financial gain, but wider benefits to communities and individuals. It was noted that the Park Authority need to ensure they do not set expectations higher than what can be delivered.
- e) A Board Member questioned if the Park Authority is now carbon neutral as they are working towards being carbon negative. Head of Planning and Place explained they will be meeting with Small World Consulting in January, they have gathered recent stats to show where the Cairngorms National Park is on the curve. It was noted that the data will be two years behind.
- f) A Board Member suggested using a different term for "community benefits" as it is the benefit for people through investing in nature. Committee Members and Officer's agreed that this is something that should be considered.

19. The Performance Committee noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:

- a) Note the revised timeline for production.

20. Action Points Arising:

- i. Consider a new term for "community benefits".

AOCB

21. None



Date of Next Meeting

22. The date of the next meeting is 03 April 2026 online.

23. *The meeting concluded at 14.08*

ACTION	Status
Action points arising from previous meetings	
12 December	
Approval of minutes At para 2a <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. CEO to share with the Committee who was allocated funds through the Climate Adaptation Fund including funding allocations and project types.	
Update:	
Cairngorms Nature Action Plan At para 19f <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Consider a new term for "community benefits".	
Update:	