



For information

Title: Chief Executive Officer Report and Convener update

Prepared by: Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer

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 (NPPP).

Nature and Climate Change

1. Park Authority staff attended a meeting between NatureScot and signatories of the Caenlochan Section 7 Agreement on 04 June 2026. This followed on from an earlier meeting where NatureScot had explained that signatories had fallen short of cull targets for 2025/26 and that the Agreement might be considered to have failed. However, the cull targets required in 2026/27 to meet the terms of the Section 7 Agreement are now relatively small and all sides have agreed they can be achieved.
2. Climate Adaptation Fund grant offers totalling £305,301 have been issued to successful applicants in week ending 12 June. The Park Authority's processes have therefore given over nine months of the year for successful applicants to complete their project proposals.
3. £1.01 million Nature Restoration Funding has been secured to deliver species recovery work on freshwater pearl mussel, capercaillie and wood ants as well as supporting pond, aspen and montane nature network delivery. Building on the approach on the Dee a catchment audit will be undertaken in the Spey to identify opportunities for catchment scale restoration and climate resilience.
4. Results from the Capercaillie lek counts are encouraging, with the number of male capercaillie at breeding lek sites in the Park rising by 30% this year. A total of 170 birds were recorded this year in the Cairngorms National Park, up from 131 in 2025. This is an encouraging result and marks a significant milestone for the



Capercaillie Emergency Plan, reflect the dedication of land managers, agencies and volunteers across the Park to support capercaillie recovery.

5. The national breeding merlin survey is underway between April - July 2026. The last full UK merlin survey was 16 years ago, and the current status of the population in the National Park is unknown. To ensure full coverage and representation, the Park Authority has commissioned independent contractors working in cooperation with land managers to supplement data gathering in areas where there are gaps in the national recording efforts.
6. The Dee Resilience Group has strengthened its governance with formal representation and agreed terms of reference. Following extensive engagement with land managers and strategic partners, we have co-designed case studies to trial new approaches that address barriers to catchment-scale climate resilience and support the wider Public Service Reform programme. Evaluations of the cost of natural flood management and soil-erosion interventions are underway across the Upper Dee and South Esk, with indicative whole-catchment costs. A new natural capital feasibility study is now assessing asset value, market demand, prospective buyers, and commercial routes to monetising natural capital for habitat restoration.

Planning and Place

7. Contracts have been let for safety and landscaping improvements to the snow roads installations at “Still” and “The Watchers” with works to take place during the summer.
8. The construction work to improve and expand the Forestry and Land Scotland Loch Morlich beach car park which was part funded by the Park Authority was completed in April with small scale snagging works and installation of signage still to follow.
9. Applications for funding from the Visitor Infrastructure Improvement Programme closed in May and following assessments a number of grant offers have been made for partner led projects.



10. Recruitment for the Park Authority Ranger Service has been completed in advance of the peak season with the last few seasonal rangers in post from late April and four trainee rangers recruited and started on 16 June.
11. Training for both Park Authority and partner rangers was delivered by Police Scotland in early May to ensure rangers are able to carry out engagement and enforcement regarding the new fire byelaw. As well as covering the appropriate legal processes and areas such as evidence gathering the course also focussed on how staff can keep themselves safe in potentially challenging situations. A training session on visitor engagement and outdoor access was also run for estate staff who come into contact with visitors but are not in a ranger or warden role.
12. A Cairngorms 2030 (C2030) programme grant scheme supporting the development of community cycle hubs and related cycling activities ran during early spring. Applications were assessed during May and offers have been made to projects in Aviemore, Ballater, Glenmore, Grantown-on-Spey and Kingussie as well as one Park wide initiative.
13. **Local Development Plan (LDP):** The Evidence Report for our next LDP has been submitted to the Scottish Government's (SG) Division for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) for its 'gatecheck' review to ensure the evidence is sufficient. The gatecheck process is expected to take around three months, and the DPEA target date for completing it is 07 July. In parallel with the gatecheck process, a Call for Sites and Ideas was undertaken from late March until mid-June. This enabled communities, individuals, organisations and landowners to suggest ideas that could help shape future planning policies and to suggest potential development sites for consideration. The LDP team are now assessing all the submissions.
14. **Planning casework:** Since the last Formal Board meeting in March, the Planning Committee has granted planning permission for a forestry extraction track at Newtonmore, a hydro-electric scheme at a hotel near Spittal of Glenshee, an estate larder near Tomintoul, and a minor variation to a house plot on an existing planning permission at Station Yard, Nethy Bridge. The Committee also met on 12 June to consider planning applications for a motorhome site at Ballater, a new mountain biking track at the Lecht Ski Centre and a variation to a condition on an



existing planning permission for a new distillery near Laggan, as well as a retrospective planning application for a storage building at the Revack Estate.

- 15. Community Led Local Development (CLLD):** The Cairngorms Trust, supported by the Park Authority as its Accountable Body for SG CLLD Funding, has received an allocation totalling £364,336 for the 2026/27 financial year. The Trust has opened applications for this fund with the first round of decision-making on project funding held at the Trust's board meeting of 13 May. An updated Memorandum of Agreement between the Park Authority and the Cairngorms Trust has been signed following consideration of this document by the Board's Performance Committee. The Cairngorms Trust continues to play a lead role in the formation of a new National CLLD Network for Scotland, including all 20 Scottish Local Action Groups as members of that network, with the aim of positively influencing the development of SG CLLD policy and funding.

Communications and Engagement

- 16.** The total digital reach of the fire byelaws campaign now stands at just shy of 1.7 million unique individuals, or 7.3 million impressions. Our video adverts have been viewed 745,000 times. Our digital agency Bright Signals have highlighted that the click-through rate is over three times higher than the average for campaigns of this type, with the vast majority of audience members having never engaged with our content before. We have also shortlisted a number of social media influencers to help spread the word about the byelaw ahead of the summer season, including a mix of bushcraft, outdoors or 'van life' content creators (largely reaching younger visitors to the National Park).
- 17.** Over 250 separate pieces of media coverage were published / aired in the week leading up to the launch of the byelaw including special reports on Channel 4, Channel 5, STV News and BBC Reporting Scotland, as well as an interview with Grant Moir on BBC Breakfast News. The story appeared in print / online with Sky News, the Press and Journal, Herald, Scotsman, Sun, Daily Mail and the BBC, as well as in specialist publications such as The Scottish Farmer, Forestry Journal, Land Business and Scottish Mountaineer. The byelaw was also the focus for a special episode of Landward in May. Further press and media activity is planned around the byelaw, including our use of thermal drones to detect fires on the ground.



18. Over 100 businesses and community groups have got involved in the fire byelaw campaign so far, taking advantage of a suite of online and physical resources, from window stickers to pin badges and bespoke signage. This includes the team at Cairngorm Brewery, who have kindly agreed to distribute our 'no flame, no spark' beer mats to bars and pubs across the region. We have organised a series of online business drop-in events with Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) to promote the byelaw, explain how businesses can get involved and answer any questions. We are also working with Scottish Land and Estates (SLE) to get the message out to partner estates, and our offer of bespoke signage has been picked up by Aviemore and Glenmore Trust at Glenmore Visitor Centre, amongst others.
19. Social media impressions have been particularly high over the past few months, rising 365% year-on-year to 7.4 million. However, by comparison engagements have risen 24% (to 95,000), indicating that the paid-for fire byelaw advertising campaign may be having an impact on our organic figures. Our total audience across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Bluesky rose by 3,406 over the three-month period (or 3.8%) to 93,032. Video views were up 113% to 524,742, likely driven by a redoubled focus on short, shareable content such as the fire byelaw, Communities Fund and Nature Restoration Fund short interviews to camera.
20. On our website we had 28,804 active users (no comparable figures for 2024). Large-scale developments included the creation of a specific Gaelic site in line with our Gaelic Language Plan commitments. The copy for this has been translated and the build is in progress, likely to be completed by the end of summer. We are also making improvements to the news and views section of the site, aimed at encouraging more repeat visits.
21. Seven sessions (a mix of online and face-to-face) have now taken place for the new C2030 Communities Fund panel. So far, the group have discussed everything from the number and size of pots available to eligibility criteria, equalities, diversity and inclusion considerations and how the application process should function. Working closely with participation charity Involve, the panel will look to finalise the fund design over the coming weeks, ahead of a launch date later this summer. You can see also a short video piece featuring panel members [here](#)).



22. The Engagement team have been finalising details of this year's roadshow and community events. Community drop-ins were held in Dalwhinnie / Laggan on Thursday 04 June, Blair Atholl on Saturday 20 June and planned for Angus Glens in October, with the Park Authority having a presence at events including the Lonach Gathering, Highland Pride, Grantown Show, Tomintoul Highland Games and Ballater Winter Festival. This latest set of events will mean that the team has visited every major settlement in the National Park within the last two years.
23. The next Cultural Heritage Network event has been organised for Tuesday 13 October at Boat Hall. This session will build on a previous gathering of over 20 cultural heritage practitioners back in March, agreeing and taking forward key priorities for the network, including a connected archiving project.
24. The summer edition of Cairn magazine is currently in production and is due to hit doorsteps towards the end of July. In addition to the usual mix of nature and community stories, this issue will feature an update on the fire byelaw, an in-depth guide to our peatland restoration work, an interview with Angus Glens Ranger, George Patterson, and the latest from our future farming project.
25. Our two pocket-sized leaflets on fires and barbecues and 'tread lightly' in the National Park have proved hugely popular during the fire byelaw rollout, to the extent that we are doing a reprint of 10,000 copies each. The tread lightly version is also being translated into 10 languages following a request from Police Scotland. Work is also ongoing to replace the old camping and campervans leaflet, previously produced by CBP. A new Tomintoul paths leaflet has also been developed, in collaboration with the local community and Crown Estate Scotland. The leaflet features a new map and updated information. Next in line are Nethy Bridge and Boat of Garten.

Organisational Development

26. Staffing update: Since March, the following staff changes took place:
27. Staff leaving the organisation:
 - a) Jodie Hagan's short-term internships (four months) ended.
28. Staff joining the organisation:



- a) Manouk Wilkinson joined as Peatland Action Project Officer, replacing Simon Thomas.
29. Ranger update:
- a) We appointed four Trainee Rangers. There were over 180 applications for these three-month contracts. The new Trainee Rangers are Bernice Swift, Emma Tivey, Jake Duncan and Kirsty Barr.
30. Staff appointments:
- a) There were no staff appointments during the reporting period.
31. Roles appointed for future dates:
- a) We have appointed a Finance Manager. This role was re-shaped following Mark Tucker's resignation.
- b) Live recruitment - posts currently being recruited are Conservation Officer – 12-month fixed term post to add resilience to the team and support the work to deliver the Nature Restoration Fund.
- c) Information Management Intern – six-month internship to support the Information Management team manage the data and information generated.
32. Youth Development – there has been ongoing support for career events in local schools, most recently a staff member was on the judging panel of the Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) at Kingussie High School.
33. Organisational Development:
- a) The Organisational Development and People Strategy (ODPS) has now been finalised, taking account of the various internal and external drivers of change over the last few years, together with the staff survey result, and the Workforce Management Strategy that was presented to board late last year, and subsequently approved by the Resources Committee. Following approval of the ODPS by the Resources Committee, it has now been consulted with staff. The next stage is to fully develop an action plan to deliver the four key themes that the strategy has identified. These themes are:



- i. Planning for the workforce for the future.
- ii. Sustaining and improving a skilled, flexible and motivated workforce.
- iii. Building leadership and management capacity.
- iv. Facilitating a culture that empowers our diverse team to embrace change, adapt quickly and deliver on our ambitions.

34. Wellbeing, engagement and equality:

- a) The Park Authority participated in Highland Pride in Inverness in early June. Staff joined the march and also served on a stand where the focus was on engaging with people about Cairngorms 2030, the special landscapes survey, fire bylaws, and LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Park Authority.

Grant Moir

11 June 2026

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Title: Convener's update

Prepared by: Sandy Bremner, Board Convener

Purpose

To highlight to board members and Senior Management Team (SMT) and staff of the meetings and events the Board Convener has been attending since the last Formal Board meeting.

1. **Scottish Parliament** – Attended the Kirking of the seventh session of the Scottish Parliament at St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, representing the Park Authority.
2. **MSPs** – Met individually with a number of returning and newly-elected MSPs following the Kirking of the Scottish Parliament. These included John Swinney, discussing issues including the scope for further action to address the crisis in the supply of affordable rural housing, and other MSPs including Alex Cole Hamilton, Stephen Flynn, Ariane Burgess, Finlay Carson, Helen McDade, Ross Greer, Yi-pei Chou Turvey, Maggie Chapman, Hannah Mary Goodlad, Craig Hoy and Gillian Mackay.
3. **Scottish Land and Estates (SLE)** – Attended the annual conference of SLE, meeting the organisation's Chief Executive, policy officers and individual landowners and managers, discussing a wide range of related issues including strategic mitigations against wildfires, the scope for further common approaches to controlling deer numbers, and preparations for public consultations on the next National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP).
4. **Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) Chairs** – Chaired the regular meeting of CBP Chairs and Chief Executives, discussing the Park Authority support for businesses in the National Park and initiatives to develop communications for partnership members.
5. **Business recognition** – Attended the Northern Star Business Awards, meeting with business and tourism leaders including the Chief Executive of Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce.



6. **National Farmers' Union Scotland (NFUS)** – Met with NFU Scotland's President, discussing potential implications of changed ministerial responsibilities following the Scottish Government elections.
7. **Farmers** – Met with individual farmers, receiving feedback on the benefits of the Park Authority's Climate Adaptation Fund and other initiatives to support the sector.
8. **Crofting** – Met with the CEO of the Crofting Commission, discussing the potential implications of upcoming Public Service Reform.
9. **Crown Estate** – Attended the launch of Crown Estate Scotland's Corporate Plan, taking the organisation through to 2031, meeting the Chief Executive and other senior officers, discussing a range of common issues including strategy for the future of the Glenlivet Estate and opportunities presented by the next NPPP.
10. **Scottish Land Commission (SLC)** – Met the SLC's Adviser on Community Benefits from Nature, discussing strategic approaches to helping communities.
11. **Communications** – Chaired a meeting in Edinburgh of senior Communications officers from Environment and Forestry Directorate public bodies, reviewing strategic approaches in the context of changing consumer patterns.
12. **Dee Resilience Group** – Attended meeting of the Park Authority-chaired group comprising public, private and third-sector organisations, agreeing priority programmes for the catchment which is being treated as a national exemplar for public bodies working together to deliver results.
13. **Dee Engagement** – Spoke at River Dee Engagement stakeholders' event, outlining the Park Authority's commitment to deliver landscape-scale programmes to support nature and vulnerable communities.
14. **Green Finance** – Attended extensive presentation on the scope for different Green Finance models to deliver landscape-scale benefits for nature and communities, and their potential for development on a catchment-wide basis.



15. **Direct General Net Zero** – Met with the Scottish Government’s Director General Net Zero and Director Environment and Forestry for the annual Park Authority governance review, feeding back on the range of Board and Authority activities over the past year and the work being undertaken in preparation for a new NPPP.
16. **EnFor Chairs** – Took part in the regular meeting of Chairs of the Scottish Government’s Environment and Forestry Directorate agencies, discussing potential implications of Public Service Reform, government and inter-agency communications, and the role of EnFor organisations on the international stage.
17. **Board Recruitment** – Conducted interviews along with other panel members for recommendation to the Minister for member appointment to the Park Authority Board.
18. **King’s Foundation** – Met with a member of the King’s Foundation Board of Trustees, updating on developments following the event hosted jointly by the Park Authority and King’s Foundation, bringing together land managers from across the Cairngorms to discuss nature, housing and other issues.
19. **Landward** – Attended a Civic Reception to recognise the 50th anniversary of BBC Scotland’s rural affairs programme Landward, meeting the Park Authority stakeholders from the farming, tourism, wildlife Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and political communities, and members of the production team.
20. **Elphinstone Institute** – Attended an event marking the 30th anniversary of the Elphinstone Institute, discussing the organisation’s contribution to the research and promotion of the culture of North and North-East of Scotland.
21. **Ian Russell** – Represented the Park Authority at a celebration of the life of Professor Ian Russell, founder of the Elphinstone Institute.
22. **National Park Conveners** – Met regularly with the Convener of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Board to discuss issues of mutual interest.
23. **Park Authority Liaison** – Attended weekly liaison meetings with the Park Authority Deputy Convener, CEO and Deputy CEO.



24. All meetings were in addition to individual meetings and discussions with Board members, senior officers, staff and other stakeholder groups on a wide range of subjects.

Sandy Bremner,

11 June 2026

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