

## Annex 4

### Operational Plan 2026/27

| Corporate plan |   |   | Financial requirements £ |           |     |  | Staff resource FTE |       |
|----------------|---|---|--------------------------|-----------|-----|--|--------------------|-------|
| Aim            | Park Authority delivery   | Thumbnail sketch  | Resource                 | Capital   | NRF | C2030  | Operational plan   | C2030 |
| <b>A1</b>      | <b>Net zero</b>   |   |                          |           |     |  |                    |       |
|                | Delivering baseline report, monitor and annually report on progress towards Cairngorms National Park achieving net-zero and subsequently acting as a carbon sink. | Climate Adaptation Fund   |                          | 344,500   |     |  | 0.25               |       |
|                | Lead on delivering Cairngorms 2030 (C2030), empowering people to contribute to net zero ambitions.  | See C2030 programme   |                          |           |     |  |                    |       |
| <b>A2</b>      | <b>Woodland expansion</b>   |   |                          |           |     |  |                    |       |
|                | Deliver 1,000 hectares (ha) of new or expanded woodland with new and innovative uses of the Forest Grant Scheme as part of C2030.                                 | Woodland creation schemes will enhance biodiversity and landscape.  |                          |           |     | 123,000<br>Plus funding given directly to partners | 0.5                | 0.3   |
|                | Promote and administer a Woodland Challenge Fund to support land managers in the preparation of Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) applications.                         | The Woodland Challenge Fund can cover pre application survey costs which often stymie woodland creation at an early stage.  | 12,500                   |           |     |  |                    |       |
| <b>A3</b>      | <b>Peatland restoration</b>   |   |                          |           |     |  |                    |       |
|                | Support and finance the restoration of peatland, with 6,500ha restored by 2027.   | The provisional programme includes 19 projects. Six will be directly delivered by Peatland officers and the remainder by agents. The team will continue to develop projects for 2027/28 delivery. | 30,000                   | 3,500,000 |     |  | 8.5                | 0.5   |

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| <b>A4</b>      | <b>Deer and herbivore impacts</b>  |  |                          |         |     |         |                    |       |
|                | Work with Deer Management Groups (DMG), as part of C2030, to deliver strategic land management plans to support a reduction in deer numbers.             | Deer reductions are being achieved in some areas of the Cairngorms National Park through a Section 7 Agreement. The funding will be applied to action the deer policy within National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) 4 and 5.  | 10,000                   |         |     |         | 0.8                | 0.2   |
|                | Species management - geese   | Resident greylag geese in the Dulnain strath and parts of Strathspey have been subject to control for 18 months. There is some evidence that resident numbers have reduced significantly. Numbers will be assessed by September 2025 and decisions made on future control. | 15,000                   |         |     |         |                    |       |
|                | Investigate and trial models which achieve policy outcomes and retain skills and employment in the sector  | Red Deer Hind Incentive Scheme – dependent on receiving income from SG.  | 40,000<br>(40,000)       |         |     |         |                    |       |
|                | C2030<br>3 Nature Recovery   |  |                          |         |     | 540,000 |                    |       |
| <b>A5</b>      | <b>Moorland management</b>   |  |                          |         |     |         |                    |       |
|                | Lead the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership (ECMP) as a demonstration of sustainable moorland management delivering both public and private interests. | Supporting the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership and wider moorland management, including raptor monitoring.  | 27,000                   |         |     |         | 0.4                |       |
| <b>A6</b>      | <b>Gamebird management</b>   |  |                          |         |     |         |                    |       |

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|                | Establish baseline and assess impact of gamebird releases on native biodiversity. Produce report and recommendations on potential options based on impact assessment.  | A partnership project with Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) is underway to determine numbers of gamebirds released within six catchments in the Cairngorms National Park. Further work in subsequent years will seek to determine the ecological and socio-economic impacts of those releases.  | 3,000                    |         |     |           | 0.1                |       |
| <b>A7</b>      | <b>Fire management</b>   |  |                          |         |     |           |                    |       |
|                | Develop an integrated wildfire management plan.  | Actioning the completed Integrated Wildfire Management Plan (IWMP) to increase wildfire resilience across the Park.  | 10,000                   | 30,000  |     |           | 0.1                |       |
| <b>A8</b>      | <b>Farming</b>   |  |                          |         |     |           |                    |       |
|                | Deliver C2030 Future Farming projects supporting farmers in achieving carbon neutrality and helping address the twin crises in the context of a profitable farm business.<br><br>Work with partners to support farmers and crofters through transitions. | Increasing biodiversity and business resilience across farms in the Cairngorms National Park.<br><br>Nature Friendly Farming- ie waders, species rich grassland and flood resilience projects / initiatives.<br><br>Supporting delivery of enhancing farmland biodiversity and building resilience to climate change alongside productive farm businesses. Support biodiversity and carbon auditing. | 100,000                  |         |     | 185,050   | 0.4                | 0.6   |
| <b>A9</b>      | <b>Freshwater systems</b>  |  |                          |         |     |           |                    |       |
|                | Deliver C2030 Climate Resilient Catchment projects demonstrating restoration complimentary to surrounding land use that benefits communities and wildlife.   |  |                          |         |     | 1,117,633 | 0.4                | 1.6   |



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|                | Develop long term approach to water management and abstraction.  | Support Catchment Management Partnerships and Fisheries Boards. Three full time employees (FTE) supported to develop and deliver restoration projects across Dee, Esk and Don catchments.   |                          | 84,000  |         |       |                    |       |
|                |  | River and wetland restoration monitoring and research to evaluate the effectiveness of restoration activities, allow adaptive management, track biodiversity recovery and inform future works.  | 45,000                   |         |         |       |                    |       |
|                |  | Freshwater ecological restoration focused on riparian planting and large woody structures to improve juvenile mussel habitat on the Dee, Esk and Spey.  |                          |         | 110,000 |       |                    |       |
|                |  | Support development and delivery of the Catchment Resilience Strategy.  | 25,000                   |         |         |       |                    |       |
| <b>A10</b>     | <b>Ecological network</b>  |   |                          |         |         |       |                    |       |
|                | Design, deliver and showcase a template for Nature Networks to guide habitat restoration priorities and support land use decision making.    | Opportunity mapping and ground truthing to inform Nature Networks and nature friendly farming project development and delivery.   | 30,000                   |         |         |       | 0.6                |       |
|                | Develop, publicise and administer a system for encouraging land managers to engage with creating Nature Networks including a call for sites. | Montane, pond, aspen and riparian woodland network delivery. Multiple projects working with delivery partners ie aspen network with Trees for Life. Delivery of aspen and pond nature networks. Improving the condition and strengthening the aspen network in Strathspey, ensuring aspen dependant |                          |         | 150,000 |       |                    |       |

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|                |  | priority species can thrive. Pond management and creation to strengthen the freshwater nature network and recovery of northern damselfly populations.                                   |                          |         |         |       |                    |       |
|                |  | Support for landowner development of Nature Network delivery projects, match support.   |                          | 25,000  |         |       |                    |       |
|                |  | Final report, mapping resources and web launch of Nature Networks enabling a call for sites.  | 5,000                    |         |         |       |                    |       |
| <b>A11</b>     | <b>Ecological restoration</b>  |   |                          |         |         |       |                    |       |
|                | Define and establish a baseline on land managed principally for ecosystem restoration. Encourage more land in the National Park to be managed principally for ecosystem restoration to meet the target in the Park Plan. | Building on the 2025/26 pilot work. Using the facility and tested methods establish and translocate 36 wood ant colonies to new sites improving ecological function of these woodlands. |                          |         | 60,000  |       | 0.7                |       |
|                |  | Facilitation of conservation grazing in woodland and species rich grassland to improve field layer, species diversity and boost biodiversity.   |                          | 20,000  |         |       |                    |       |
|                | Facilitate landscape scale partnerships  | Supporting landscape scale partnerships and initiatives ie Angus Glens forum and Cairngorms Connect.  | 10,000                   |         |         |       |                    |       |
|                |  | Following on from the Dee catchment Aduit, replicate work on the upper Spey and South Esk to identify what changes could make these rivers more resilient to                            |                          |         | 135,000 |       |                    |       |



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|                |  | flooding and climate change and enable more informed decisions and stakeholder support, a better understanding is required of the land in the upper catchment.  |                          |         |         |       |                    |       |
| <b>A12</b>     | <b>Cairngorms Nature Index</b>                                 |   |                          |         |         |       |                    |       |
|                | Design, deliver and showcase a Cairngorms Nature Index.        | Website portal development and engagement. Analysis and data cost. Ecological monitoring post 2025 wildfires. Ongoing ECMP bird surveys.  | 40,000                   |         |         |       | 1.0                |       |
| <b>A13</b>     | <b>Species recovery</b>  |   |                          |         |         |       |                    |       |
|                | Lead on beaver reintroduction.                                 | Preparatory works for year four releases, ongoing survey and monitoring; delivery of management and mitigation plan; research, comms and engagement.  | 10,000                   | 45,000  |         |       | 4.9                |       |
|                | Lead on a capercaillie emergency plan and long -term strategy. | Support delivery of the project Legacy and Emergency Plan including contribution caper monitoring officer (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)). Delivery of urgently needed works to continue to improve and expand habitat through grazing, robo-cutting, restructuring and removal of redundant fencing. Following phase 2 of reinforcement feasibility, address additional questions and options should reinforcement be required. |                          |         | 500,000 |       |                    |       |

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|                | Lead on the Cairngorms raptor project.   | Survey and monitoring focusing on merlin; support for hen harrier surveys in ECMP, raptor tagging, research and engagement.   | 10,000                   | 70,000  |        |       |                    |       |
|                | Freshwater pearl mussel  | Delivery of Recovery Strategy activities including Spey in-catchment translocation Autumn 2026. Improve and secure juvenile mussel habitat - riparian planting and large woody structures to prepare sites for future reintroductions. Support development of captive breeding facility for Dee population, seeking to bring first mussels into the facility in 2027. |                          |         | 90,000 |       |                    |       |
|                | Species recovery partner project support   | Supporting Cairngorms Nature Action Plan partnership projects- Rare Invertebrates Cairngorms (RIC), Rare Plants x 2, Saving Wildcats, Skills for Bees, Strathspey Farming for Waders (SFFW), Wader Monitoring post. Survey of priority species and Cairngorms Nature Index (CNI) indicator species.   | 10,000                   | 50,000  |        |       |                    |       |
|                | Communications and engagement  | Land management and Cairngorms Nature engagement, showcasing conservation and land management activities and best practice across the Cairngorms National Park.   | 5,000                    |         |        |       |                    |       |
|                | Lead oversight of delivery of Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Coordinate and support Cairngorms Nature partnership and Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group | Lead oversight of delivery of Cairngorms Nature Action Plan including investment portfolio. Production and launch event of new Cairngorms Nature Action for 2027 - 2032.  | 25,000                   |         |        |       |                    |       |

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| <b>A14</b>     | <b>Green investment</b>   |   |   |         |     |        |                    |                  |
|                | Pilot approaches to blended public and private finance to deliver net zero and biodiversity targets, whilst also providing long-term benefits for land managers, investors and local communities. | Continue with the Delnadamph pilot peatland restoration project in partnership with Canup Ltd and Palladium and learn lessons from it. Continue to monitor developments in this field through liaison with SG, Scottish Land and Estates (SLE), West Estates Scotland (WES) and others. |   |         |     |        |                    |                  |
|                | C2030<br>6 Green finance and community wealth building project activities   |   |   |         |     | 29,176 |                    | Partner activity |
| <b>B1</b>      | <b>Working-age population</b>   |   |   |         |     |        |                    |                  |
|                | Deliver and monitor Local Development Plan (LDP) 2021   | Deliver and monitor LDP 2021  | LDP costs under Place (C1)  |         |     |        |                    |                  |
|                | Lead development of new LDP   | Ongoing development of the next LDP.  |   |         |     |        |                    |                  |
|                | Lead the coordination and development of Cairngorms Youth Action Team   |   | Cairngorms Youth Action Team supported via B10 provisions and CLLD funding (Corporate objectives) |         |     |        |                    |                  |
| <b>B2</b>      | <b>Wellbeing economy</b>  |   |   |         |     |        |                    |                  |
|                | Lead the development of Cornerstone Indicators  | Cornerstone indicators used to monitor NPPP and Wellbeing Economy Action Plan.  |   |         |     |        | 0.2                |                  |

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| Aim            | Park Authority delivery  | Thumbnail sketch  | Resource                 | Capital | NRF | C2030 | Operational plan   | C2030 |
|                | Lead development of Wellbeing Economy Action Plan to integrate economic and community-led development  |   | 8,000                    |         |     |       |                    | 0.2   |
|                | C2030<br>7 Wellbeing economy   |   |                          |         |     | 2,400 |                    |       |
| <b>B3</b>      | <b>Real Living Wage</b>  |   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |
|                | Promote the development of Real Living Wages through Economic Steering Group as part of Wellbeing Economy Action Plan  | Information sharing and promotion of real living wage benefits and value to businesses and economy.   |                          |         |     |       | 0.1                |       |
| <b>B4</b>      | <b>Skills and training</b>   |   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |
|                | Develop the Park Authority as exemplar of good practice in youth training and skills – emphasis on Planning Service, Peatland, Ranger Service and Outdoor Access and Corporate functions | Junior Ranger programme used to generate interest in countryside careers. Four seasonal trainee ranger posts offered each summer.<br><br>Delivery of event(s) under the Your Future Here umbrella, encouraging young people to stay and find employment in the National Park. | 134,000                  |         |     |       | 1.0                |       |
|                | Financially support targeted skills initiatives, mentoring schemes and collaborative business organisations (eg Growbiz, Countryside Learning Scotland, Cairngorms Business Partnership) | Grants to partner organisations with expertise and networks in this area, including Growbiz, Cairngorms Business Partnership and Countryside Learning Scotland.   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |



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| <b>B5</b>      | <b>Community assets and land</b>  |  |                          |         |     |                    |                    |       |
|                | Coordinate and promote the development of Local Action Plans / Local Place Plans                                    | Programme of refreshing Local Action Plans underway and incorporating a clearer spatial framework to help inform the planning process. |                          |         |     |                    | 0.2                |       |
| <b>B6</b>      | <b>New approaches to citizen participation</b>  |  |                          |         |     |                    |                    |       |
|                | C2030<br>15 community managed grant scheme<br>11 effective community engagement                                     |  |                          |         |     | 303,500<br>127,800 |                    | 6.1   |
| <b>B7</b>      | <b>Community-led planning and development</b>   |  |                          |         |     |                    |                    |       |
|                | Coordinate and promote the development of Local Action Plans / Local Place Plans                                    | Grants to community-based organisations with knowledge and connections in their respective communities.                                | 45,000                   |         |     |                    | 0.8                | 1.0   |
|                |   | Direct support for community projects [project allocation]   | 35,000                   | 25,000  |     |                    |                    |       |
|                |   | Support for Strathdon Development Trust  | 25,000                   |         |     |                    |                    |       |
|                | C2030<br>12 Climate learning and education  |  |                          |         |     | 12,300             |                    |       |
| <b>B8</b>      | <b>Gaelic language and culture</b>  |  |                          |         |     |                    |                    |       |
|                | Develop the Gaelic Language Plan for the Park Authority   |  |                          |         |     |                    | 0.2                |       |
|                | Promote Gaelic especially through work on sustainable tourism, community development and relevant heritage projects |  | 3,500                    |         |     |                    |                    |       |

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| Aim            | Park Authority delivery   | Thumbnail sketch  | Resource                 | Capital | NRF | C2030           | Operational plan   | C2030 |
| <b>B9</b>      | <b>Mental and physical health</b>   |   |                          |         |     |                 |                    |       |
|                | Lead development and delivery of Active Cairngorms Action Plan  | Supporting volunteer led Health Walks programme through training, advice and developing new Health Walk groups.   | 5,000                    |         |     |                 |                    |       |
|                | Deliver C2030 projects<br><br>C2030<br>8 Public health and the outdoors<br>9 Outdoor dementia resource centre | Green Health link workers liaison with NHS / GP practices to offer green health opportunities / nature prescriptions  |                          |         |     | 3,000<br>97,977 |                    | 1.0   |
| <b>B10</b>     | <b>A Park for All</b>   |   |                          |         |     |                 |                    |       |
|                | Lead on developing delivering new Active Cairngorms Action Plan   | Coordination of youth action group and youth funding schemes.<br><br>Operation of a junior ranger programme and related school sessions.<br><br>Support for groups such as schools and disadvantaged groups visiting the National Park. | 75,000                   |         |     |                 |                    |       |
|                | Deliver the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan and Sustainable Tourism Action Plan.                        | Direct capital investment and grant aid to partners to deliver improved / more accessible facilities and path network - see C9.   |                          |         |     |                 |                    | 1.0   |
|                | Develop Equalities Mainstreaming Report and Plan  |   |                          |         |     |                 |                    |       |
|                | Refresh and promote Park for All campaign   | Activity continuing for 2026/27 through B9, B11 and C8.   |                          |         |     |                 |                    |       |
|                | Lead coordination of Equalities Advisory Panel  | Work by the Equalities Advisory Panel (EAP) 18 members will continue, with monthly meetings and ongoing advice on developing our projects, plans and strategies.  | 3,000                    |         |     |                 |                    |       |

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|--------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|---------|-----|-------|--------------------|-------|
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| <b>B11</b>               | <b>Volunteering and outdoor learning</b>  |   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |
|                          | Lead on delivering new Active Cairngorms Action Plan  |   |                          |         |     |       | 2.0                |       |
|                          | Lead on recruitment / training / coordination of volunteers to care for Park                      | Recruitment and training of volunteers. Operation of a volunteering portal to match volunteers with organisations offering volunteer opportunities. Work with third sector partners to allow disadvantaged or difficult to reach groups to experience the Park. | 70,000                   |         |     |       |                    |       |
| <b>C1 / C2 / C3 / C4</b> | <b>Access to housing / New housing / Housing and community benefit / Village and town centres</b> |   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |
|                          | Deliver and monitor LDP 2021  | Deliver and monitor LDP 2021  |                          |         |     |       | 12.0               |       |
|                          | Lead development of new LDP   | Transport appraisal and LDP gate check  | 50,000                   |         |     |       |                    |       |
|                          | Support community-led housing network   | Bringing community housing projects together to share knowledge and experience.   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |
|                          | Promote Review through Wellbeing Economy Action Plan  |   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |
| <b>C5</b>                | <b>Visitors to the National Park</b>  |   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |
|                          | Deliver Sustainable Tourism Action Plan and Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan.                | Coordination and delivery of Sustainable Tourism Action Plan, including acting as secretariat for the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership.   | 20,000                   |         |     |       | 1.0                |       |
|                          | Lead the development of Active Cairngorms Action Plan   |   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |
|                          | Undertake visitor surveys and collate and share visitor data                                      | Delivery of second phase of visitor survey.   | 20,000                   |         |     |       |                    |       |
| <b>C6</b>                | <b>A sustainable destination</b>  |   |                          |         |     |       |                    |       |

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|                | Deliver Sustainable Tourism Action Plan and Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan.   | Infrastructure Plan activity under C9. Advice provided to partners and communities to support their projects.  |                          |         |     |         |                    |       |
|                | C2030<br>13 Climate conscious communities  |  |                          |         |     | 10,400  |                    | 0.2   |
| <b>C7</b>      | <b>Transport to and around the National Park</b>   |  |                          |         |     |         |                    |       |
|                | Deliver Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan.   | Most transport delivery via C2030  |                          |         |     |         |                    |       |
|                | C2030 project activities:<br>17 Cycle friendly Cairngorms<br>18 Active communities<br>19 Sustainable travel<br>20 Changing travel behaviours |  |                          |         |     | 767,423 |                    | 4.1   |
| <b>C8</b>      | <b>Accessible path and cycle network</b>   |  |                          |         |     |         |                    |       |
|                | Speyside Way, community paths and upland path maintenance  | Management and maintenance of and improvements to core paths network and other significant paths.  | 30,000                   | 95,000  |     |         | 1.0                |       |
| <b>C9</b>      | <b>High quality visitor experience</b>   |  |                          |         |     |         |                    |       |
|                | Develop and deliver Active Cairngorms Action Plan.   | Delivery of statutory access duties as required under the land Reform (Scotland) Act.<br><br>Use of digital approaches for monitoring of path network. | 15,000<br><br>5,000      |         |     |         | 1.0                |       |
|                | Coordinate family of Ranger Services   | Financial and training support to partner organisation ranger services.  | 223,000                  |         |     |         | 13.2               |       |

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|                | Safety and upgrade of National Park owned countryside assets  | Park entry marker, snow roads installation work  |                          | 30,000  |     |        |                    |       |
|                | Visitor Infrastructure Improvement Programme (VIIP) grant scheme  | Improvements to visitor infrastructure through directly managed projects and through grant aid to partners who manage publicly available infrastructure.                       |                          | 350,000 |     |        | 1.0                |       |
|                | Fire Byelaws  | Signage –temporary variable messaging and permanent road signs   | 53,736                   | 100,000 |     |        |                    |       |
| <b>C10</b>     | <b>Cultural heritage</b>  |  |                          |         |     |        |                    |       |
|                | Lead development of Cairngorms Cultural Heritage network as part of Wellbeing Economy Action Plan with focus on community involvement and interpretation. | Delivery of projects identified by working group / at cultural heritage event, including potential archive opportunity.  | 25,000                   |         |     |        | 1.0                |       |
|                | C2030<br>14 Communities arts and culture  |  |                          |         |     | 33,500 |                    | 1.2   |
|                | C2030<br>10 Landscape and communities   |  |                          |         |     | 68,000 |                    |       |
| <b>NPPP5</b>   |   |  |                          |         |     |        |                    |       |
|                | Economic data baseline gathering  | Updating economic data to support the development of NPPP5. This was last reviewed over a decade ago and will be valuable for a range of Park Authority outputs in this space. | 30,000                   |         |     |        | 1.0                |       |

