



## For discussion

**Title:** Budget monitoring

**Prepared by:** Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations

### Purpose

This paper sets out an overview of the Park Authority's budget management position at the end of December - month nine of the 2025/26 financial year.

### Recommendations

The Resources Committee is asked to:

- a) Consider the budget management position for 2025/26.

### Overview

1. Annex 1 provides a summary of expenditure against the budget.
2. A phased budget has been prepared based on the distribution of costs across the previous year. The particular distribution of spend across each month will depend on the nature of the projects to be delivered during that year. Nevertheless, last year's spend profile provides a benchmark against which to compare this year's performance.
3. At the end of the third quarter, 53% of the annual budget (agreed by the Board in March and updated for late funding awards) had been spent.

### Budget changes

4. The annual Spring Budget Review (SBR) was carried out by Scottish Government (SG) in November 2025. The Park Authority returned £360,000 of funding awarded for peatland restoration but not required to meet this year's delivery targets.

### Staff and Board

5. Payroll costs incurred to the end of December 2025 are 75% of the total annual budget; this is a reasonable position at the end of the third quarter.



6. The annual pay award for 2025/26 was re-opened with SG, and an additional cost of living rise of 1% agreed and implemented from 01 January 2026. The final outturn for payroll at 31 March 2026 is expected to be close to £6.2million, against the full year budget of £6.25 million.

### **Programme management**

7. Work is underway on the design of the Aviemore and Boat of Garten Active Communities projects (Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage three). To date, costs of £217,000 have been invoiced against agreed costs of £620,000 for this financial year.
8. It is anticipated that not all work originally planned will be completed by 31 March, and the Transport Team is in discussion with Mott Macdonald and Transport Scotland to tailor delivery in a way that makes best use of the funding available for 2025/26.
9. The second claim of the year to the National Lottery in respect of the Cairngorms 2030 (C2030) project was made in late December 2025 and funds were received to the Authority's bank account in mid-January 2026.
10. Our annual commitment of £450,000 to C2030 has not been fully acknowledged in the figures. The advance payment of £300,000 made at the end of 2024/25, means that we are obliged to contribute only a further £150,000, although it seems likely that funds will allow us to make the full commitment. A contribution of £150,000 has been disclosed as a commitment against the corporate budget within the operational plan in the figures to 22 January 2026.

### **Operational plan**

11. Annex 2 provides a view of expenditure on delivery of the Operational Plan at 22 January 2026, including the value of committed spend. The total spent and committed at this date was just under £6 million, representing 72.5% of the Operational Plan budget.
12. The three single budget lines with greatest uncommitted spend were those for Peatland Restoration, Nature Restoration and Contribution to Programmes (C2030). Best information to date is that these funds will be used by 31 March.
13. Outturn to 31 March 2026 is expected to be close to budget. As noted, flexibility with the contribution to C2030 provides welcome flexibility in achieving a balanced outturn.



## Running costs

14. While running costs look low against the profiled budget, the forecast outturn remains close to budget.

## Summary

15. The key points arising from the review of the financial position at the end of December 2025 are:
  - a) The budget agreed by the Board in March 2025 has now been adjusted after the SG's Spring Budget Review to hand back £360,000 of funding not required to meet peatland restoration targets for the year.
  - b) Work continues on the design for the Active Communities transport projects (RIBA three) and we are monitoring progress closely as we near 31 March.
  - c) Running costs and operational plan commitments are forecast to result in an outturn close to budget, we have flexibility to manage the outturn through the contribution to C2030, of which £300,000 was advanced last year.

Louise Allen

[louiseallen@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:louiseallen@cairngorms.co.uk)

29 January 2026