

# FUTURESCAPES

space for nature, land for life

## Badenoch and Strathspey farmed floodplain

### CREATING AN AMAZING PLACE FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

Situated between the Cairngorm and Monadhliath mountain ranges, the Badenoch and Strathspey Farmed Floodplain Futurescape is one of nature's gems. The Gaelic place names capture the essence of the landscape: STRATHSPEY is from Srath, which means "valley through which a river runs"; BADENOCH is from Bàideanach, and means "the drowned place".

For several hundred years, humans have been attempting to tame the River Spey in order to farm the fertile floodplain. Wet grassland, meadows, fens and marshes remain a feature of the landscape where drainage has not occurred or not been successful. The floodplain is still liable to periodic inundation, largely due to melting snow and prolonged rainfall. The low-lying farmed areas, that are subject to inundation, are important areas for breeding waders. In fact, so varied and extensive is the range of habitats that this land is one of the most important inland sites in Britain for breeding waders, including lapwings, redshanks, snipe and curlews.

This Futurescape encompasses grasslands, wetlands, arable mosaics of the floodplain and tributaries of the River Spey. The richness of the area is reflected in the many conservation designations that apply to some or all of it, including Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area, Ramsar, Special Area of Conservation and National Nature Reserve.

### OUR WORK SO FAR

At the heart of the Futurescape is the RSPB Insh Marshes reserve that covers around 1,000 hectares of the River Spey floodplain between Kingussie and Kincaig. The unique wetland habitats contain many rare and endangered species of wildlife, including over 500 pairs of breeding waders.

The focus of management activity at Insh Marshes is the conservation of the population of waders. Grazing management is undertaken in partnership with local farmers and other activities include cutting rank vegetation on rotation and reducing scrub cover. Our work off the reserve aims to support the health of the farmed floodplain environment, including the important breeding wader populations, while at the same time maintaining viable levels of agricultural productivity.

We have been working in partnership with farmers, landowners and farm agents, as well as Scottish Natural Heritage and the Cairngorms National Park Authority. So far this has focused on supporting and facilitating successful Scottish Rural Development Programme applications, providing training and enabling free use of rush management machinery. Much of this work has been progressed through the Strathspey Wetland and Wader Initiative.

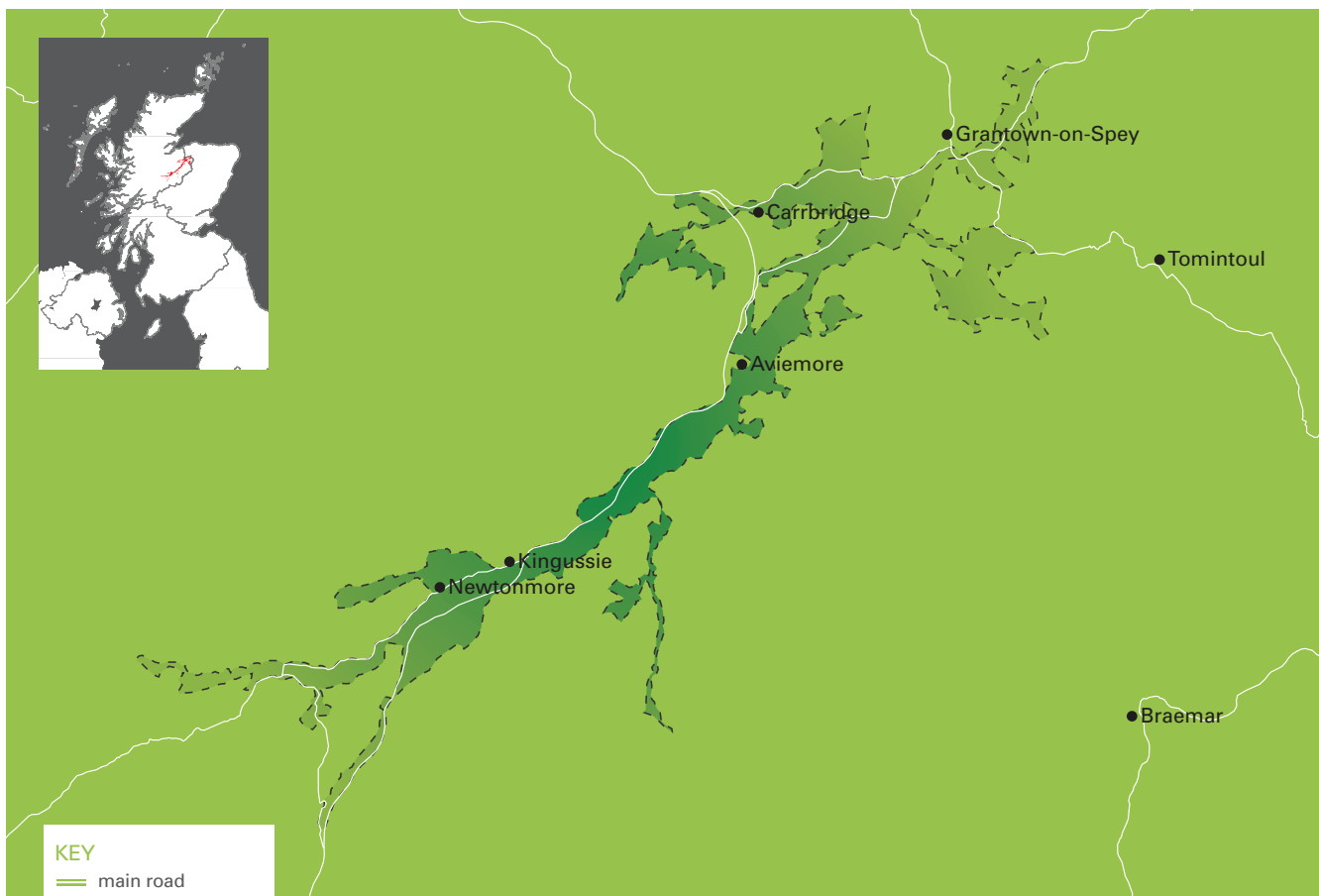


### TRENDS IN WADER NUMBERS

The Strathspey Wader Survey takes place every five years. Recent surveys have highlighted an alarming decline in the numbers of some important species – notably lapwings, snipe, redshanks and curlews. Lapwing numbers declined by 60% between 2000 and 2010, and redshank by 55% in the same period. The traditional farmed landscape of Badenoch and Strathspey is key to the survival of sustainable numbers of breeding waders. Spring sown crops and the continuing existence of grazed wet grassland near the river are enduring features of the area and critical habitats for breeding waders.



RSPB Insh Marshes



“ The landscape of Badenoch and Strathspey has been shaped by generations of farmers. The fertile floodplain provides the best farming opportunity in Strathspey and is essential to the economy of the area. We are proud of the peewits that are on our farms and concerned with the decline in numbers. We want to see the declines halted. The farmed landscape and associated rich wildlife needs help and support to ensure its continued survival. ”

Ruaridh Ormiston, Farmer, Strathspey

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Fully integrating the needs of all desired uses for the land is absolutely vital. Protecting and enhancing the farmed landscape is dependent on a way forward developed by stakeholders delivering outputs with maximal multiple benefits. This joint vision is fundamental to the Futurescape approach. Each piece of land does not need to deliver all benefits (social, economic and environmental), but the landscape as a whole does. RSPB Scotland is keen to talk to all potential partners to this end. We plan to continue to work with farmers to maximise agri-environment

scheme funding for habitat enhancement work, but are keen to build on this and move towards long-term sustainable solutions to maximise benefit.

Surveys of the breeding wader population will continue to build on the existing work that has taken place for over 10 years. This will be key to understanding the reasons for declines in certain species and monitoring the response of the population to positive action on the ground.

## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Please get in touch with us, whether you are a farmer, landowner, community organisation or individual. You may have an area of ground that could be enhanced, be looking for advice, interested in volunteering, want a presentation or just to discuss the project and whether there may be a mutual interest. Together we can make the Badenoch and Strathspey Futurescape even better for people and wildlife.

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