



For information

Title: Corporate plan delivery update

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Purpose

This paper draws the performance report for 2024/25 against our corporate plan objectives specifically to the board's attention. This takes a more focused look at the Park Authority's delivery toward agreed strategic objectives in the context of the wider update on Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) delivery considered by the board at its previous meeting.

[Formal-board-meeting-paper-3-Partnership-Plan-annual-update-26-September-2025.pdf](#) and

[Formal-board-meeting-paper-3-annex-1-Partnership-Plan-annual-update-26-September-2025.pdf](#)

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- a) To review the status of delivery toward Corporate Plan objectives as set out in the Performance Report included in the Annual Report.
- b) To consider any actions needed to address delivery of those Corporate Plan objectives, particularly those corporate objectives highlighted as at increased delivery risk.

Strategic context

1. The Park Authority's Corporate Plan for 2023 to 2027 sets out the organisation's planned contributions toward achievement of the Cairngorms NPPP. The corporate plan establishes the Park Authority's agreed strategic corporate objectives for the period to 2027. The Board considered an update on the status of delivery against the NPPP at its previous meeting in September. This report now provides an update on delivery of the Park Authority's own direct and indirect contributions to the NPPP.



2. The Annual Report and Accounts for 2024/25 is presented as a separate item to this board meeting. Our Operating Performance Summary included in the annual report and accounts, set out in pages 24 to 42 of Annex 1 to paper 4, presents progress over the course of the year in delivering against our corporate plan strategic objectives. By nature of the Park Authority's role – seeking to lead collaborative effort in tackling the big issues for the Cairngorms – our performance measures are rarely directly controllable by the Park Authority alone. Rather, they require collaboration and engagement of the Park Authority and our partners. In this way, they act as measures of the effectiveness of our leadership and influencing abilities, combined with our own direct investment of finance and staff resources, in tackling these priorities.

Strategic policy consideration

3. Approval of the Annual Report and Accounts and the external audit of the annual accounts is overseen by the Audit and Risk Committee on behalf of the board, as set out in the terms of reference for the board's committees. The draft accounts, which remain subject to clearance by the Auditor General for Scotland and laying in Parliament, are presented in full as a separate item to this board meeting.
4. The Operating Performance Summary referred to at paragraph 2 of this paper includes a dashboard analysis of delivery against strategic objectives. This indicates whether progress has been broadly on track and meeting expectations (rated 'green'); or has experienced delay or some shortfall against objectives which can be remedied before the end of the corporate plan period (rated 'amber'). A 'red' rating would be used for any strategic objectives unlikely to be substantially complete by the end of the corporate plan period. There are no strategic objectives classified as red at this stage. The performance dashboard has been replicated at Annex 1 to this paper for ease of reference.
5. Attention is drawn to the fact that the assessment of delivery against strategic objectives is generally the status as of the end of the prior financial and operational year, 31 March 2025. While some more current actions and results may be reflected, in general some time has passed from the overview of corporate delivery position now presented. Those objectives highlighted at some increased risks have been drawn out in the "Supporting Information" section of this paper and updates provided on current status.



Stakeholder engagement

6. As noted at the outset of this paper, given the nature of the Park Authority's role – seeking to lead collaborative effort in tackling the big issues for the Cairngorms – achievement of our corporate objectives typically requires the necessary collaboration and engagement of our partners. The assessment of progress against objectives is made in context of the collaborative work undertaken between the Park Authority and our delivery partners. Fuller information on the partnership delivery has been provided in the previous board meeting update on NPPP delivery.

Strategic risk management

7. Our strategic risk register has been developed to support delivery of the strategic objectives covered in the performance report. There are no new risk implications arising from the overview of corporate plan delivery as of 31 March 2025. The strategic risk register has been updated following the board's recent horizon scanning discussions and subsequently reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 14 November 2025.

Implications

8. Our annual operational plan and budget is established to give a balance of investment which will collectively achieve our strategic objectives. The evidence from 2024/25 performance assessment suggests that the balance of investment has been appropriate in support of the successful delivery of the Park Authority's wide range of strategic objectives.
9. The Park Authority continues to deliver against these strategic objectives over the course of 2025/26. The Resources Committee has reviewed the position of current year budget management and noted that we remain on track from a financial perspective to deliver a range of initiatives and investments further progressing these objectives within a balanced budget position.
10. The implications for corporate delivery into 2026/27 will be considered with the board in December 2025 to March 2026 as we develop budget and operational plan proposals for 2026/27 informed by the Scottish Government's (SG) budget.



Success measures

11. The performance report dashboard comprises a key element of the Park Authority's corporate performance framework and success measures. This gives a high-level strategic overview of progress being made toward achievement of agreed corporate plan objectives.

Supporting information

Update on corporate objectives with escalated risk assessments

12. The majority of strategic objectives are assessed as on track for delivery as expected by the end of the corporate plan period, March 2027.
13. At the end of 2023/24 we reported that the following objectives were at heightened delivery risk. Remedial action has now brought these aspects of our work back in line with our expectations.
 - a) A13 Species Recovery
14. Updates on the status of those elements of corporate performance assessed as at some heightened delivery risk at the end of 2024/25 are provided below.

A5	Moorland management	Increase the sustainability of moorland management in the National Park to ensure greater species and structural diversity in moorland areas of the National Park.	
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15. The Park Authority is now funding numerous projects within the East Cairngorm Moorland Partnership area, including the creation of deer fenced enclosures to protect and allow regeneration of aspen, wader surveys, riparian woodland creation projects, raptor monitoring and the establishment of large woody structures in some tributaries of the Dee. We expect this investment in due course to contribute to a more positive overall position on our delivery of our moorland management objectives.
16. A Park wide peregrine survey was undertaken in 2024 in collaboration with Raptor Study Groups and land managers. The number of peregrines within the National Park in 2024 (31 pairs) was less than half the number recorded in 2002, reflecting



long-term declines in the overall Scottish population and populations in upland areas in the UK. The merlin survey will be completed in 2026, this survey along with the national hen harrier survey and golden eagle modelling work will provide a complete picture of the status of priority raptor species in the managed uplands of the Park.

A6	Gamebird management	Ensure that all pheasant and partridge shoots adhere to best practice and that all gamebird releases are sustainable and do not negatively impact on native biodiversity.	
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17. Work by Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) has established a baseline of the numbers of gamebirds being released in the National Park and work will now focus on the impacts of releases on native biodiversity.

A12	Cairngorms Nature Index	Develop a more complete understanding of the National Park's species, habitats and ecosystems, and help monitor long-term progress through a dedicated Cairngorms Nature Index.	
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18. The Cairngorms Nature Index will provide a scientifically robust way of assessing the health of ecosystems in the National Park. Progress to develop the index has been slower than expected due to a critical long-term staff absence, with completion now expected during 2026.

B1	Working age population	The proportion of young and working age people in the National Park increases relative to the total resident population, which remains stable.	
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19. The Corporate Plan actions that support this strategic objective are linked to the Park Authority's role in the planning system. The Local Development Plan (LDP) Evidence report preparation is nearly complete and within the timescales set out in the Development Plan Scheme. Progress has been delayed slightly because of uncertainty about the requirements of the Evidence Gatecheck process, given the failure of the majority of planning authorities' submissions so far. Staff are working



to ensure any lessons from other authorities' experiences are addressed prior to seeking Board approval to submit the evidence report for the Gatecheck.

B10	A Park for All	Better opportunities for everyone to enjoy the National Park and the visitor profile will be more diverse.	
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20. The rating is amber because the percentage of black and global ethnic majority visitors to the National Park remains lower than the of the population of Scotland. Nevertheless, the Park Authority's work with these groups has stepped up and the percentage of visitors from these groups is slowly increasing.

C1	Access to housing	Ensure that there is sufficient affordable housing stock to enable people to live and work within the National Park.	
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C2	New housing	Deliver new housing in the National Park and ensure as much as possible is secured for key workers and / or to resolve affordability issues.	
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21. The Park Authority's direct role in the strategic objectives related to affordable housing and to new housing is mainly through the planning system and the Local Development Plan's allocations and policies as well as decisions on significant planning applications for housing. The current Development Plan comprises the National Planning Framework and the Cairngorms National Park Local Development 2022 and it is only when a new LDP is adopted that the strategic intentions of the NPPP will be translated in to planning policy.

C3	Housing and community benefit	Work with communities to ensure that the majority of land allocated for development around villages and towns in the National Park is controlled by communities or public	
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		bodies to help manage long-term development needs.	
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22. Community groups continue to explore housing projects in a number of communities but in the context of uncertain future funding from SG and rising costs for development. A “Call for sites and ideas” will be undertaken as part of the LDP process to help promote this objective and help communities start to think about the long term opportunities and needs.

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05 November 2025

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Annex 1

Aim		Objective	RAG rating
Nature and climate			
A1	Net Zero	Ensure the Cairngorms National Park reaches net zero as soon as possible and contributes all it can to helping Scotland meet its net zero commitments.	
A2	Woodland expansion	Increase the amount of woodland in the National Park to support larger, more natural woodlands, expanding in places up to a natural treeline, providing connections across river catchments and around the central core of the mountains.	
A3	Peatland restoration	Restore and manage peatland within the National Park to reduce carbon emissions and improve biodiversity.	
A4	Deer and herbivore impacts	Reduce the negative impacts of red deer and other herbivores across the National Park to enable woodlands to expand, heather loss to be reversed, peatlands to recover and wider biodiversity and landscape enhancements to take place.	
A5	Moorland management	Increase the sustainability of moorland management in the National Park to ensure greater species and structural diversity in moorland areas of the National Park.	
A6	Gamebird management	Ensure that all pheasant and partridge shoots adhere to best practice and that all gamebird releases are sustainable and do not negatively impact on native biodiversity.	
A7	Fire management	Ensure that all managed burning (muirburn) follows best practice as defined by the muirburn licensing scheme, supporting habitat restoration and recovery.	
A8	Farming	Work with farms in the National Park to reduce their carbon footprint, conserve soil carbon, encourage sustainable production and deliver increased biodiversity on in-bye land.	



Aim		Objective	RAG rating
A9	Freshwater systems	Restore and connect rivers to thriving wetlands and floodplains as part of a wider restoration of the National Park's freshwater systems, helping mitigate the impacts of climate change.	
A10	Ecological network	Connect habitats and ecosystems across all different types of land use in the National Park to create an ecological network, which will bring wider landscape biodiversity and people benefits.	
A11	Ecological restoration	Improve ecosystem functionality and resilience across the National Park by increasing the area of land managed principally for ecological restoration.	
A12	Cairngorms Nature Index	Develop a more complete understanding of the National Park's species, habitats and ecosystems, and help monitor long-term progress through a dedicated Cairngorms Nature Index.	
A13	Species recovery	Ensure species thrive in the National Park with key assemblages across the Cairngorms within the semi-natural landscape.	
A14	Green investment	Use private green investment in the National Park to fund nature's recovery and share the benefits between communities, landowners, workers and wider society.	
People			
B1	Working age population	The proportion of young and working-age people in the National Park increases relative to the total resident population, which remains stable.	
B2	Wellbeing economy	Develop a wellbeing economy that delivers social justice in a healthy ecosystem, drawing on the special natural and cultural qualities of the Cairngorms.	
B3	Real living wage	Increase the number of Real Living Wage employers in the National Park.	
B4	Skills and training	Increase skills and training opportunities for people in the National Park to meet business needs and ensure opportunities created by the growth in green jobs can be filled by residents and under-represented groups.	



Aim		Objective	RAG rating
B5	Community assets and land	Increase the number of assets in community ownership or management, the number of social enterprises that generate a profit and the area of land where communities are involved in management decisions.	
B6	New approaches to citizen participation	Strengthen the participation structures that support planning and decision-making at a local level.	
B7	Community-led planning and development	Communities have up- to-date community action plans and are supported by a community-led local development funding programme, delivering the National Park Partnership Plan.	
B8	Gaelic language and culture	Encourage greater use of Gaelic in the National Park.	
B9	Mental & Physical Health	Green Health referral programmes in place in all GP practices	
B10	A Park for All	Better opportunities for everyone to enjoy the National Park and the visitor profile will be more diverse.	
B11	Volunteering & Outdoor Learning	At least 200 volunteer rangers by 2030. Increase number of volunteer days every year	
Place			
C1	Access to housing	Ensure that there is sufficient affordable housing stock to enable people to live and work within the National Park.	
C2	New housing	Deliver new housing in the National Park and ensure as much as possible is secured for key workers and / or to resolve affordability issues.	
C3	Housing and community benefit	Work with communities to ensure that the majority of land allocated for development around villages and towns in the National Park is controlled by communities or public bodies to help manage long-term development needs.	



Aim		Objective	RAG rating
C4	Village and town centres	Ensure villages and town centres in the National Park are thriving places where people live, shop and meet.	
C5	Visitors to the National Park	Work to stabilise visitor numbers in the peak season, focusing growth on quieter months and on those areas that have the infrastructure and capacity to manage for additional visitors. Maximise the economic and community benefit of tourism by encouraging longer stays, while maintaining existing high levels of visitor satisfaction.	
C6	A sustainable destination	Secure the National Park's reputation as an international exemplar in sustainable tourism and the management of protected areas.	
C7	Transport to and around the Park	Promote a modal shift towards sustainable and active travel in the way visitors and commuters get to, and everyone moves around, the National Park.	
C8	Accessible path and cycle network	Improve path, cycle and outdoor access networks to give outstanding opportunities to experience the natural and cultural heritage of the National Park to the widest range of people, while minimising disturbance to vulnerable species, habitats and sites.	
C9	High-quality visitor experience	Welcome visitors and provide a high-quality experience while managing their impacts through providing better infrastructure and high-quality ranger services.	
C10	Cultural heritage	Safeguard and promote the Park's cultural heritage and provide opportunities for everyone to experience and learn about the National Park's outstanding historic environment, history and culture.	