



For decision

Title: Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund – risk register

**Prepared by: Oliver Davies, Head of Communications and
Engagement**

Background

1. At the board business session on 26 September 2025 at the Highland Wildlife Park, the Head of Communications and Engagement and Kelly McBride (Director at the Involve Foundation) outlined our approach to the creation of a £1 million Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund.
2. The Communities Fund will link with other Cairngorm 2030 projects to give communities the power to define, design, fund and deliver projects that help achieve the aims of Cairngorms 2030, ie:
 - a) Transforming the way land is managed and used to benefit nature.
 - b) Empowering communities to shape the future of their local area.
 - c) Making getting around the Cairngorms easier, safer and greener.
 - d) Fostering healthier, happier communities with wellbeing at their heart.
3. Community groups and communities of interest (both within and outside the National Park) will be able to apply to a fund of £1 million from its launch in summer 2026 until the end of the programme in 2028. The fund will be designed by a panel of 18 representatives from the local community, with recruitment beginning in early January 2026 and lasting for six weeks. Our aim is for the panel to reflect a diverse range of audiences – from residents in general to farmers, local businesses to young people and under-represented groups – and for members to be drawn from a wide geographical area.
4. To ensure the Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund delivers on our core objectives – and to appropriately mitigate against potential risks – we have pulled together the below risk register for the project. Members are asked to review the below table, identify any gaps and approve our overall approach to this piece of work.



Risk register for the Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund

5. The following risk register has been developed by Park Authority officers, in collaboration with our appointed consultants the Involve Foundation. It is designed to capture the main risks facing the Park Authority from a recruitment, delivery and reputation standpoint, plus relevant mitigation measures. This will be reviewed on a regular basis as the project progresses. Unless otherwise stated, the risk owner is the Head of Communications and Engagement.

#	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	Comments
1.	Insufficient interest in the project leads to a smaller / less representative group than anticipated.	Low	High	• Targeted recruitment efforts lasting several months, identifying specific partners and individuals within each of our six target audiences across the whole National Park geography. • Sense-checking applications on at least a fortnightly basis to quickly identify gaps and target future comms / engagement effort. • Working with subject area experts (Involve Foundation) who have significant experience in delivering similar projects at scale. • Advisory group established made up of c. eight representatives from organisations	• Significant learning (and contacts) gained from previous large-scale engagement activity, eg fire byelaws, Partnership Plan, LDP.



				whose work directly overlaps with the fund (eg community councils, interest groups, chamber of commerce etc).	
2.	Difficulty recruiting 'less heard' voices, leading to a lack of balance on the co-design panel.	Low	High	• All participants to be remunerated for their time at roughly 1.5 x Real Living Wage, recognising the significant time commitment people will need to make. • Travel expenses and childcare / caring costs also reimbursed to encourage those who otherwise would not be able to attend. • Specific strand of our comms and engagement activity will target under-represented communities and those who are typically 'time poor' (eg by going to the spaces they regularly frequent, rather than expecting them to come to us).	• As part of Cairngorms 2030 we have developed a network of contacts in organisations across the National Park – these networks will be essential in helping spread the word about both the fund and the co-design opportunity.
3.	Final co-design panel does not represent the varied geography and interests of the National Park.	Low	High	• Specific, published criteria – including participant profiles – explaining how the 18 panellists will be selected and what we are looking for. • Soft 'targets' for each target audience (community groups, land managers,	• Census data for the National Park will give us an initial steer for geography, with a small number (roughly 10%) of participants



				businesses, young people etc) and overall geographical spread. • Sizeable recruitment effort to try and secure hundreds of applications, giving us the largest possible pool of candidates to select from. • Element of random / blind selection in the process to limit subjective decision-making.	coming from outside the National Park but with significant connection to it.
4.	Difficulty in balancing multiple different priorities identified by co-design participants.	Medium	Medium	• Sizeable funds available (£1 million), with plenty of opportunities for a wide variety of projects to be funded. • Training and development provided by Involve Foundation for all participants in how co-design works. • Clear facilitation of all sessions from industry experts (Involve Foundation). • Participants encouraged to share ideas and perspectives in a 'safe space', where all viewpoints are welcome. They will also hear from third-party experts as required to help shape their decisions.	• This is a risk inherent in any co-design process, which is why we have appointed expert consultants to help guide us (and the panel) through this process. • The panel are principally tasked with designing what the fund looks like at first, rather than what specific projects it will



				• Transparent code of conduct agreed from the outset for all participants.	fund. This should help reduce direct conflicts between different participants / priorities.
5.	Potential conflict of interest for co-design panellists who may wish to apply for funding themselves.	Low	Medium	• Potential conflicts of interest captured at an early stage and reported transparently. • Clear process developed by the panel – published in full on the Park Authority's website – which sets out how conflicts of interest will be handled within the process they design (eg panellists absent themselves from discussions about projects they are involved in). • Learning from similar projects – through Involve, Park Authority-led funds and via partners such as the Cairngorms Trust – applied and fed back to co-design panellists.	• As the Cairngorms National Park has a largely remote, rural geography, we believe it would be unrealistic (and likely unhelpful) to bar co-design panellists from potentially applying for funding in future. What we will do instead is establish clear and transparent parameters for this to take place.



6.	Confusion between this fund and a range of other community funds (including those run by the Park Authority / Cairngorms Trust).	Medium	Medium	• New dedicated funding opportunities section within the National Park website, bringing all funds together in one place. • Single, streamlined process for all Park Authority and Cairngorms Trust-led funds, with the same grants team helping fulfil all of them. • We will work closely with the co-design panel to ensure the fund wording (and accompanying comms / engagement activity) is written in plain English and that what is in / out of scope is as clear as possible to potential applicants. • Park Authority / Cairngorms Trust's established network of contacts will be advantageous here in terms of coordinating timings etc with other funds.	• How the fund sits alongside others in the landscape – and whether we will accept these as match funding for Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund projects – will be a key consideration for the co-design panel to discuss and agree a position on. • We will also review timeframes / criteria for overlapping funds led by the Park Authority / Cairngorms Trust, eg Climate Adaptation Fund, Community Led Local Vision Fund.
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7.	Potential for panel to be criticised for the decisions they make / if funded projects do not go according to plan.	Medium	High	• At the initial stage, the co-design group will be responsible for what the fund looks like / what it would potentially fund; they will not be making decisions on exactly which projects are funded. • This latter decision is something that will be discussed with the co-design panel as part of their deliberations, including the pros and cons of various decision-making methods. • Park Authority to act as the accountable body for the fund, providing level of legal / governance assurance to process.	• We will be clear in all communications around the fund exactly where the panel's decision-making remit begins and ends. We will also field any questions about the funding process on behalf of (but in discussion with) the panellists.
8.	Innovative nature and impact of fund is lost when the Cairngorms 2030 programme ends.	Low	Medium	• Park Authority and partners including the Cairngorms Trust are committed to taking the learnings from this process and applying them to future funds, beyond the scope of the Cairngorms 2030 programme. • Key outcome of Cairngorms 2030 – and The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) – is to share our learnings with local and national partners / equivalent projects. These will be captured and published in full	• We will make clear to panel participants from the outset that we are keen to capture the overarching 'story' of the process as it develops, from the earliest training sessions to shaping



				on our website at the end of the programme. • Alongside this, we are committed to capturing the story of the fund (plus those who helped shape it and benefitted from it) as it progresses via our comms and evaluation activity. • Depending on panel availability, interest and future funding, we are open to exploring additional opportunities for the co-design panel to be involved in decision-making, eg helping feed into the development of the next National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP).	the fund, all the way through to projects being awarded funding and work happening on the ground.
9.	Less than two years to decide on a funding approach and distribute £1 million to community projects.	Low	Medium	• The Park Authority / Cairngorms Trust have significant experience in distributing large sums (eg £450,000 per annum through Cairngorms Community Led Vision (CCLV) / LEADER) to community projects within the National Park. • Establishing a clear and transparent framework for funding decisions (what is in	• This topic will form part of discussions with the co-design panel around how to balance ambition (funding projects that deliver real impact) with pragmatism



				/ out of scope, how large or small funding awards can be, how funds will be distributed, how many rounds we have etc) will be the first priority for the co-design panel. • Recruitment process for the co-design panel will be a good opportunity to raise awareness amongst potential applicants about the fund and timings involved. • Multi-year funding approach gives greater clarity to potential applicants and helps us plan over a longer-term funding cycle (vs typical year-to-year funding).	(funding projects that can deliver those impacts in good time). • The time constraints here are not particularly significant compared with equivalent funds, particularly those that are only available for a single year.
10.	The Park Authority itself suffers reputational damage as a consequence of unpopular / unsuccessful funding decisions.	Medium	Medium	• Decision-making mechanisms are yet to be resolved by the co-design group, but this risk will be factored into their discussions at the earliest opportunity. • Park Authority to act as the accountable body for the fund, providing opportunities for high level scrutiny and assurance of potential funding decisions.	• The Park Authority has long-term experience of devolving funding decision-making through eg the Cairngorms Trust.



Oliver Davies

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Oliverdavies@cairngorms.co.uk