



For discussion

Title: Bringing beavers back project

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Purpose

This paper presents the latest delivery updates on the Bringing beavers back project.

Recommendations

The Performance Committee is asked to review delivery updates and consider:

- a) Progress towards the project's objectives.
- b) Any strategically significant impacts on delivery of the Cairngorm National Park Authority's Corporate Plan and National Park Partnership Plan.
- c) Any material impacts on the Cairngorm National Park Authority's strategic risk management.

Performance dashboard

1. Project vision: A healthy population of beavers in the Cairngorms National Park, bringing maximum benefits for wildlife and people. This includes supporting land managers and communities to live alongside beavers.

Performance Measure: Progress towards the project's objectives	Rating	Commentary
Raise awareness and increase understanding of beaver ecology, behaviour, positive and negative impacts and interaction with landscapes and wildlife in the National Park.	Green	<p>The Park Authority has supported the second year of releases with newspaper interviews and articles, blogs, social media posts and a TV Interview.</p> <p>The Beaver Project manager has engaged with 1100 people in the last year; delivered talks to 12 groups and undertaken 20 site visits with groups and landowners</p>



		Park Authority staff regularly patrol areas where beavers are present, promoting responsible access and providing information.
Release beaver families into the Upper Spey catchment to create a founder population to establish a thriving, sustainable population.	Green	<p>From the year one releases at least two kits from two different families were born in the wild.</p> <p>Year two releases took place at four sites between October and November 2024. 15 beavers were released, bringing the total number released to date to 35.</p>
Supporting the implementation of a mitigation scheme in the National Park, ensuring issues are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner in such a way that land managers and communities are supported to live alongside beaver.	Green	<p>The Park Authority's monitoring and mitigation plan sets out how the Park Authority will provide additional support for land managers in the National Park.</p> <p>Release sites, and sites where beaver activity is being managed, have been visited weekly throughout the year. Visits will be monthly from this point.</p> <p>The Park Authority continues to respond quickly to sightings and field signs, informing landowners of activity on their landholding and carrying out mitigation where appropriate, in most cases within 24 hours.</p> <p>The Upper Spey Beaver Management and Mitigation group holds regular meetings to provide advice and guidance on implantation of the plan. The group comprises land managers where beavers are present, representatives from</p>



		<p>Cairngorms Crofters and Farmers Community and NatureScot.</p> <p>Pre-emptive mitigation tree protection continues. Two collapsed burrows have been filled in under licences issued by NatureScot. A single dam has been removed, initially by the landowner, then by Park Authority staff.</p> <p>The Flood Embankment Survey has been completed and is being used to inform mitigation and management. The survey will be repeated in autumn 2025.</p>
Maximise opportunities for environmental and socio-economic benefits from beavers.	Green	<p>The Beaver Trail at Rothiemurchus continues to be a popular attraction. Anecdotal evidence from outdoor access providers and businesses indicates increasing interest from residents and visitors.</p> <p>Further sessions with local businesses planned for the summer.</p>
Implement a research and monitoring plan to provide an evidence base for the positive and negative impacts of beaver.	Green	<p>Weekly site monitoring continues at all release and activity sites. Eight of the nine known territories are located, and burrows or lodges have been identified in each.</p> <p>A programme of annual monitoring is underway, including eDNA sampling and drone surveys.</p> <p>The results of our monitoring and research will be delivered to the International Beaver Symposium that is being held in Inverness in September 2025.</p>



Strategic background

2. In June 2022 the Park Authority Board agreed that the Park Authority take a lead role in making an application for beaver translocation. The Park Authority's strategic objectives of relevance to the reporting presented with this paper are:
 - a) The National Park Partnership Plan action to 'Facilitate beaver translocation in the Cairngorms National Park' and the associated Corporate Plan objective to 'lead on beaver reintroduction'.
3. Strategic risks of relevance to consideration of the programme reporting presented with this paper are:
 - a) 1 Resources: public sector finances constrain capacity to allocate sufficient resources to deliver corporate plan.
 - b) 11 Reputation: Disagreement between the Park Authority and stakeholder groups within The Park.

Performance overview: delivery against strategic objectives

4. The project has successfully secured a translocation licence and delivered the first and second year of releases. Positive progress has been made against all project objectives in line with the project timescales and within budget expectations. The Park Authority continues to take lead role in releases, land manager engagement, monitoring, and implementing the management and mitigation plan. It is often referred to as the "gold-standard" for beaver reintroduction.
5. The project supports wider delivery of National Park Partnership Plan actions for species recovery, ecosystem restoration, future farming and developing a more complete understanding of the National Park's species, habitats and ecosystems.

Performance overview: risks under management

6. Staffing and resourcing: The demand on staff resource associated with surveys, releases, monitoring, mitigation and land manager engagement has been mitigated by the employment of a Beaver Project Officer. As the population increases and beavers become more commonplace, resource allocation will focus on managing impacts. The monitoring and mitigation plan is centred on the Park Authority's ability to react quickly and effectively. Current staff capacity, with the



support of rangers and partners during times of peak demand, is sufficient to achieve project objectives.

7. Current and projected capital spend for surveys, monitoring and pre-emptive mitigation is within operation plan budget allocations. Potential additional capital requirements relating to flood embankment repair is within the envelope of the Park Authority's capital budget.
8. Reputational risk: The Park Authority has established two groups to support better stakeholder relationships with the farming and crofting community. The [Cairngorms Agricultural Advisory Group](#) (CAAG) and the Upper Spey Beaver Management and Mitigation group. The Park Authority continues to deliver exemplary support to the farming and crofting community, with no other equivalent to this in Scotland. The appointment of a new Agricultural Advisor has further aided the improvement of these stakeholder relations.
9. CAAG has a remit to act as a direct line of communication between the Park Authority and the farming and crofting community, supporting collaboration and fostering a wider understanding of, and more engagement with, Park Authority activities within the agricultural sector.
10. The Management and Mitigation Group comprises of the Park Authority, NatureScot and land managers who are directly impacted by beaver activity and / or have beaver territories on their land. The group has a remit to ensure an adaptive approach to the on the ground application of support available to farmers and crofters, informed by first-hand experience.

Conclusions: performance overview and matters meriting strategic review

11. There are no matters of strategic significance which merit escalation at this time in the opinion of senior managers leading the Cairngorms National Park Authority's linkage to the areas of activity covered by this paper and associated reports.



Cairngorms
National Park Authority

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