



For Discussion

Title: Cairngorms Peatland ACTION Programme

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Purpose

This paper presents an update on the delivery of the Park Authority's Peatland ACTION programme in 2025/26 and describes the early-stage development of pipeline for 2026/27.

Recommendations

The Performance Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the progress against programme targets for 2025/26.
- b) Note the plans for 2026/27.

Strategic policy consideration

1. The National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) action is to restore a minimum of 6,500ha of peatland by 2027, as a contribution towards the target of a minimum of 38,000 hectares (ha) of peatland under restoration by 2045, 80% of all drains restored by 2035, and all erosion features restored by 2050.
2. Peatland Action funding is a significant component of the match funding for the Cairngorms 2030 Programme. As one of the five Peatland ACTION delivery partners, the restoration work delivered by the Park Authority plays an important part in reaching the Scottish Government's target of 250,000ha of peatland being restored by 2030.



Performance dashboard

Performance Measure for 2025/26	Rating	Commentary
Finance: maximise use of £3.98 million capital finance and £650,000 resource finance available in 2025/26 for peatland restoration	Green	Forecasted spend on grants is £3.44 million, subject to change following further tendering. Once tendering is complete, budgets will be reprofiled. The resource budget of £650,000 is on track to be fully spent.
Finance: impact on the Park Authority's budget management	Green	No wider unplanned demands currently made by programme on financial resources.
Restoration target 2025/26: 1700ha Restoration Area	Green	We have reported 219ha since April which represents 13% of target. This is standard procedure at this point in the operational cycle.
Pipeline for 2026/27:	Green	Proposals being worked up, some with the support of development grant funding this financial year, are on track for a work programme that would achieve restoration targets. Including several large, multi-year plans.
Programme risk profile	Amber	Currently 10 projects are green rated and are progressing well. Three projects are amber rated due to timelines slipping. One project is red rated and likely to drop from this year's programme.
Future funding profile	Amber	Levels of funding for Peatland ACTION in 2026/27 are not yet known but the programme remains a priority for Scottish Government (SG).



Performance Measure for 2025/26	Rating	Commentary
Future delivery profile	Green	Landowners remain engaged with Peatland ACTION, and we are confident of developing a substantial potential pipeline of projects for 2026/27.

Delivery against strategic outcomes

3. Since 2022 approximately 5,000ha of peatland has been brought under restoration, and approximately 1,700ha are planned for 2025/26. The programme therefore remains on track to deliver the NPPP action for 6,500ha under restoration by 2027 and the target of a minimum of 38,000 ha of peatland under restoration management by 2045.
4. The programme is on track to achieve the target of 1700ha in 2025/26. There is currently a high degree of confidence around delivering over 1000ha from 10 projects. However, there are risks attached to some projects which currently equate to around 700ha. A degree of risk to some projects is normal at this time of year. Multi-year plans for several large estates are in development, where there are many years work to bring all viable peatland areas under restoration. Development will bring a degree of security to future pipelines and a strong business case for investment. The number of agent-led projects is increasing, supporting capacity building in the private sector and maximising efficiency in programme delivery. Three development grants have been issued to agents with the intention of designing 794ha for delivery in 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Strategic risks under management

5. **Staffing and resourcing:** the Peatland Team complement has increased and now comprises a Programme Manager, an Operations Manager, five Peatland Officers, a Science and Monitoring Officer and a Peatland Assistant. Resourcing is considered sufficient to support programme delivery. Recruitment into an expanding private sector represents a risk to the programme, but also an



encouraging sign of confidence in the sector and a positive outcome from public sector investment in developing and supporting a relatively new industry.

6. **Contractor capacity:** There have been fewer bids per tender this year, but contractor capacity remains sufficient to tackle the planned programme. One new contractor has won a contract this year, and we continue to speak to possible new entrants.

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