



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 (NPPP).
- c) Any material impacts on the 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 an advert about the project in all Pearl and Dean cinemas in the UK for three months until the end of November.</p> <p>The Beaver Project manager and officer have engaged with 860 people in the last year (1919 since March 2023); delivered talks to 13 groups and undertaken 16 site</p>



		<p>visits or guided walks with groups and landowners, one drop-in session in Boat of Garten and one Training event for Countryside Rangers.</p> <p>The Park Authority hosted two of the three site visits on Day two of the International Beaver Symposium. 150 delegates from 26 countries visited Loch Morlich and Lochan Mor (Lily Loch, Rothiemurchus).</p> <p>Park Authority staff regularly patrol areas where beavers are present, promoting responsible access and providing information. Monthly beaver updates are produced and made available on the Park Authority website.</p>
Release beaver families into the Upper Spey catchment to create a founder population to establish a thriving, sustainable population.	Green	<p>In 2025, 18 kits from eight different pairs were born in the wild. 52 beavers are present in the upper Spey catchment; one beaver is living near Spey Bay.</p> <p>Year three releases will place at two sites in December 2025. A pair and a family are planned to be released.</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, are now visited monthly. The dam on Wildland and the beaver activity at Laggan Bridge are monitored weekly at the moment.</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 Cairngorms Crofters and Farmers Community and NatureScot. There have been three meetings this year, with the next scheduled on the 03 December.</p> <p>Tree protection has been installed around Loch Alvie on 11 more trees in response to concerns raised by lichen experts. No dams have been removed or burrows filled in since the last update.</p> <p>The Flood Embankment Survey was repeated but only resurveying the flood embankments in poor condition (3km) within 10 meters of the river and eroding riverbanks (14km). This was completed in October 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. An update on the beavers was sent round the Outdoor Activity Providers in Strathspey. The Cairngorms Business Partnership</p>



		<p>(CBP) conference was also attended in November.</p> <p>Informal meetings to discuss beavers are planned with staff of Heatherlea and Speyside Wildlife in December.</p>
Implement a research and monitoring plan to provide an evidence base for the positive and negative impacts of beaver.	Green	<p>Monthly site monitoring continues at all release and activity sites. We have identified burrows or lodges in eight of the nine known beaver territories.</p> <p>A programme of annual monitoring is underway, including eDNA sampling on five sites and drone surveys on three sites.</p> <p>The results of our monitoring and research were delivered at the International Beaver Symposium that was held in Inverness during 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 NPPP 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 National 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, with a third year planned. 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. Elements of our approach have been used by Trees for Life in their consultation events around beavers in the Loch Ness catchment.
5. The project supports wider delivery of NPPP 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, who started in April 2025. 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 comprise 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.

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