



## For discussion

**Title:** Cairngorms Trust and Community Led Local  
Development update

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Director of Corporate Services

### Purpose

This paper presents an update on the work of the Cairngorms Local Action Group Trust ('the Cairngorms Trust') and the collective work of the Cairngorms Trust and the Park Authority in Community Led Local Development (CLLD) activity.

### Recommendations

The Performance Committee is asked to consider:

- a) Whether the programmes of activity are making the expected contribution to the Park Authority's agreed strategic outcomes.
- b) Whether the delivery updates suggest any strategically significant impacts on the Park Authority's agreed performance objectives.
- c) Whether any material impacts on the Park Authority's strategic risk management and mitigation measures arise from assessment of programme delivery.

### Performance Dashboard

1. Assessment of the delivery of work being taken forward by the Cairngorms Trust and in development of CLLD within the Cairngorms National Park against key performance measures is presented in the following table. The overall assessment and risk rating against these measures is presented as compared to the previous rating last reported to the Committee in March 2026.



| Performance Measure                                                                                     | Prior Rating    | Current Rating  | Commentary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Finance: Deliver Cairngorms LEADER Programme, maximising use of resources made available.               | Blue (complete) | Blue (complete) | Programme concluded 31 December 2021, with final project LEADER spend at 95% of allocation and total project expenditure at 168% of allocation after accounting for match funding levered into projects.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Audit: Clean closure of LEADER Programme including monitoring and evaluation of performance indicators. | Blue (complete) | Blue (complete) | All project records finalised. No matters arising with respect to LEADER closure over last 18 months. Some potential for EU audit remains until 10 years following programme closure.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Policy: Secure future CLLD of equivalent value to LEADER Programme allocation.                          | Green           | Green           | <p>While no long term or multi-year commitment is in place, funding allocations to CLLD of £320,000, £403,000 and £400,000 over prior three years approached previous LEADER Programme values at an annual equivalent level. Funding for 2025/26 to date is £352,223 with allocations in 2026/27 expected to be broadly static.</p> <p>Budget papers published by Scottish Government (SG) in January 2026 set out indicative forecasts of 'flat cash' national funding to CLLD of £9.3 million for 2026/27 and each of the following two years to 2028/29.</p> |
| Policy: Develop and implement voluntary                                                                 | Red             | Amber           | This remains a challenging area of work both in terms of capacity to progress and                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |



| Performance Measure                                                                                                                                                               | Prior Rating | Current Rating | Commentary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| giving mechanisms through Cairngorms Trust.                                                                                                                                       |              |                | results of initiatives. A positive change has been a refocusing on offering collection of funds toward a specific campaign / purpose, as seen with the establishment of a fund to support responses to the wildfire.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Finance: Increase voluntary giving returns within Trust's future funding profile to a level which sustain costs of infrastructure and return meaningful surpluses for investment. | Red          | Red            | <p>This area remains red rated, despite recent improvements noted about in donations to specific promoted campaign funds.</p> <p>Trustees have planned two days to review operations and future business plans during autumn 2026. This aspect of operations will be considered at that time.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Policy: Operation of charitable mechanism an effective element of National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) priority delivery.                                                        | Green        | Green          | The capacity to work in partnership with an independent charity covering the Cairngorms has been a crucial element in successful delivery of Green Recovery Funding; in securing resource for CLLD made available over the last three years; and in community engagement in delivering local priorities. The use of the charity mechanism to establish the Cairngorms Youth Local Action Group (YLAG) as a delegated grant awarding body has received national prominence and has featured as an exemplar approach in SG CLLD guidance. The Trust has trialled a similar model with a black |



| Performance Measure | Prior Rating | Current Rating | Commentary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     |              |                | and ethnic minority lived experience group.<br><br>A number of the Park Authority's teams have also partnered with the Trust in offering grants supporting community led activity in developing nature networks, cultural heritage, community development and local path work. |

## Strategic context

2. The NPPP for 2022 to 2027 includes the following objective:
  - a) **B7 Community-led Planning and Development:** Communities have up-to-date community action plans and are supported by a CLLD funding programme, delivering the NPPP.
3. This objective has an associated action of develop and administer a new community-led development funding stream.
4. The Park Authority's Corporate Plan agreed by the board in March 2023 includes the following relevant strategic objectives associated with this aspect of the NPPP:
  - a) **Direct activity by the Park Authority:** Act as accountable body or other supporting role as required to underpin delivery of CLLD in Cairngorms.
  - b) **Indirect activity supported or resourced by the Park Authority:** Influence strategic development of national focus on and design of CLLD to secure an adequate level of resourcing which continues to focus on Cairngorms National Park as an administrative boundary.
5. Delivery of these NPPP and Corporate Plan actions to date is covered by this paper.



## Strategic risk management

6. Strategic risks of relevance to consideration of performance of the programmes of work considered by this paper are:
  - a) Public sector finances constrain capacity to allocate sufficient resources to deliver the corporate plan. A mitigation of this risk is to continue to support bodies such as the Cairngorms Trust to secure inward investment.
  - b) Risk of Cairngorms 2030 (C2030) match funding not being secured. Anticipated CLLD funding to be secured by the Cairngorms Trust totalling £1.25 million is incorporated as match funding.
7. These strategic risks are declining at this time and are now moving toward 'managed' status given the funding position secured over prior years and expected for 2026/27 budget with level of CLLD financing which matches our target levels.
8. There are no matters of strategic significance which are assessed to merit escalation at this time in the opinion of senior managers leading the Park Authority's linkage to the areas of activity covered by this paper and associated reports.

## Delivery Update

9. The Cairngorms Trust, working with the Park Authority as its Accountable Body, has successfully secured funding of around £400,000 annually in support of CLLD activities. Annual CLLD resources have reached levels of funding which approach the equivalent annual values available in previous multi-year LEADER programmes of between £2 million and £3 million over a five-to-six-year period.
10. The Cairngorms Trust and the Park Authority continue to play a leadership role in driving activity on creation of a national network covering all 20 current Local Action Groups (LAGs) to promote, evidence and advocate for the role of CLLD funding in national policy. Scotland's National CLLD Network was established at the end of March 2026 and has become active in addressing these objectives over the current financial year while also finalising consideration of its governance model. This work focuses on addressing and delivering the corporate plan objective of "influence strategic development of national focus on and design of CLLD to



secure an adequate level of resourcing which continues to focus on Cairngorms National Park as an administrative boundary”.

11. The lack of confirmed, or at least indicative, multi-year funding allocations to LAGs remains a key limitation in our support of CLLD activities. Community groups are not able to plan and develop their project proposals over the long term without facing the risks of finances not being available in future years. This acts to prevent support to significant ‘step-change’ projects in local communities.
12. The operation of the Trust and support by the Park Authority in delivering CLLD as a mode of policy delivery through LAGs has been broadly endorsed by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) in a significant piece of research undertaken over the last year. [Scottish Rural Communities Policy Review: Scottish Rural Network, Scottish Rural Action and Community Led Local Development review report - gov.scot](#) The Deputy CEO, who is also Vice Chair of the Cairngorms Trust, has been involved in initial strategic discussions in follow up to this report. A fuller response to the report is expected from SG toward the end of this year.

## **Management and Governance**

13. The Trust's draft annual report and accounts as considered by the Trust's Annual General Meeting on 20 August 2026 are presented with this update paper. The Annual report presents a good summary of the work of the Trust over the last year.
14. The C2030 Programme will see the inception of the Cairngorms Community Fund Project delivering grant funds on the basis of codesigned grant criteria from Autumn 2026. The interaction of these grant funds with the work by the Park Authority and the Trust on wider community led local development will be closely monitored and managed.

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