

UK National Parks Conference 2026

Wednesday 16 to Friday 18 September 2026

Macdonald Aviemore Resort, Aviemore

Our theme: nature and people thriving together

This year's theme is inspired by the Gaelic word Dùthchas, which encompasses ideas of kinship, heritage and connections between nature, people and place. The word has inspired the five-year Cairngorms 2030 programme – supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund – which is putting the power to tackle the nature and climate crisis in the hands of the people who live, visit and work in the Cairngorms National Park.

Our venue: Macdonald Aviemore Resort

Located in the heart of the National Park, Macdonald Aviemore Resort is located just a five-minute walk from Aviemore train station on the Highland Main Line. It is also a stone's throw from the A9, with Inverness to the north and Perth to the south.

Address: Macdonald Highland Resort, Aviemore, Highland, PH22 1PN

Website: macdonaldhotels.co.uk/aviemore

Our sponsors

We are grateful for the support of SSEN Transmission and Tarmac for helping make this event happen.



Further information

If you would like to book a place, or have any questions about the event, please contact us on enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk or call +44 (0) 1479 873 535.



About the UK National Parks Conference

The 2026 conference will focus on:

- How national parks and protected areas can deliver for nature and people in a rapidly changing world.
- The opportunities and risks linked to natural capital markets and large-scale land-use change.
- Ambitious restoration targets, including woodland expansion, peatland restoration and rewilding initiatives.
- Collaborative work across the UK's national parks, supported by shared carbon and nature audits through Small World Consulting.

Programme

Wednesday 16 September

10:00	Registration open
12:00	Exhibition stands open
13:00	Lunch on arrival plus networking Meet partners, sponsors and other stakeholders (Peregrine Suite)
14:00	Opening and welcome Sandy Bremner, Convener, Cairngorms National Park Authority
14:10	Ministerial speech Gillian Martin MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs, Scottish Government
14:30	First keynote address Prof David Reay, Co-Chair, Just Transition Commission (2023-26)
14:55	Second keynote address Craig Bennett, CEO, The Wildlife Trusts
15:20	Break
15:45	Panel discussion and Q&A Deborah Long (Scottish Environment LINK), Fiona Milden (Oxygen Conservation), Jonnie Hall (NFU Scotland) and Sarah-Jane Laing (Scottish Land and Estates)



- 16:45 **Sponsor address**
Richard Baldwin, Head of Consents and Environment, SSEN Transmission
- 17:00 **Closing remarks**
- 17:15 **Opportunity to browse exhibition stands**
- 18:00 **Exhibition stands close**
- 18:20 **Journey on the Strathspey Railway** (as featured on BBC's *The Traitors*)

Thursday 17 September

- 08:30 **Field trips (see separate 'workshop and field trip info sheet')**
Choice of themed field trips across the National Park, with a focus on our theme of 'people and nature thriving together'. Staggered gathering times for field trips. Check your delegate badge for the start time of your trip. Gather in the Peregrine Suite at your allotted start time.
- 17:00 **Arrive back in Aviemore**
Free time to relax and explore the town
- 18:00 **Whisky tasting (optional)**
Brought to you by The Cairn Distillery
- 18:30 **Drinks reception**
At Macdonald Aviemore Resort (foyer)
- 19:00 **Formal dinner**
Peregrine Suite
- 20:30 **Ceilidh**

Friday 18 September

- 09:15 **Welcome**
Photos and reflections from the previous day's field trips
- 09:30 **Workshops (see separate 'workshop and field trip info sheet')**
1. Wildfire management
2. Water management
3. National Parks Partnership
4. Widening participation
- 11:00 **Coffee break**
- 11:15 **Team Nature**
Nature recovery in our national parks



Cairngorms
National Park
Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidh Ruaidh



- 12:00 **Wrap up and feedback**
Discussion on the opportunities and challenges ahead
- 12:30 **Close of conference**
Handover from Cairngorms to Pembrokeshire Coast, hosts of the 2028 event
- 12:45 **Optional buffet lunch**
In Macdonald Aviemore Resort food court