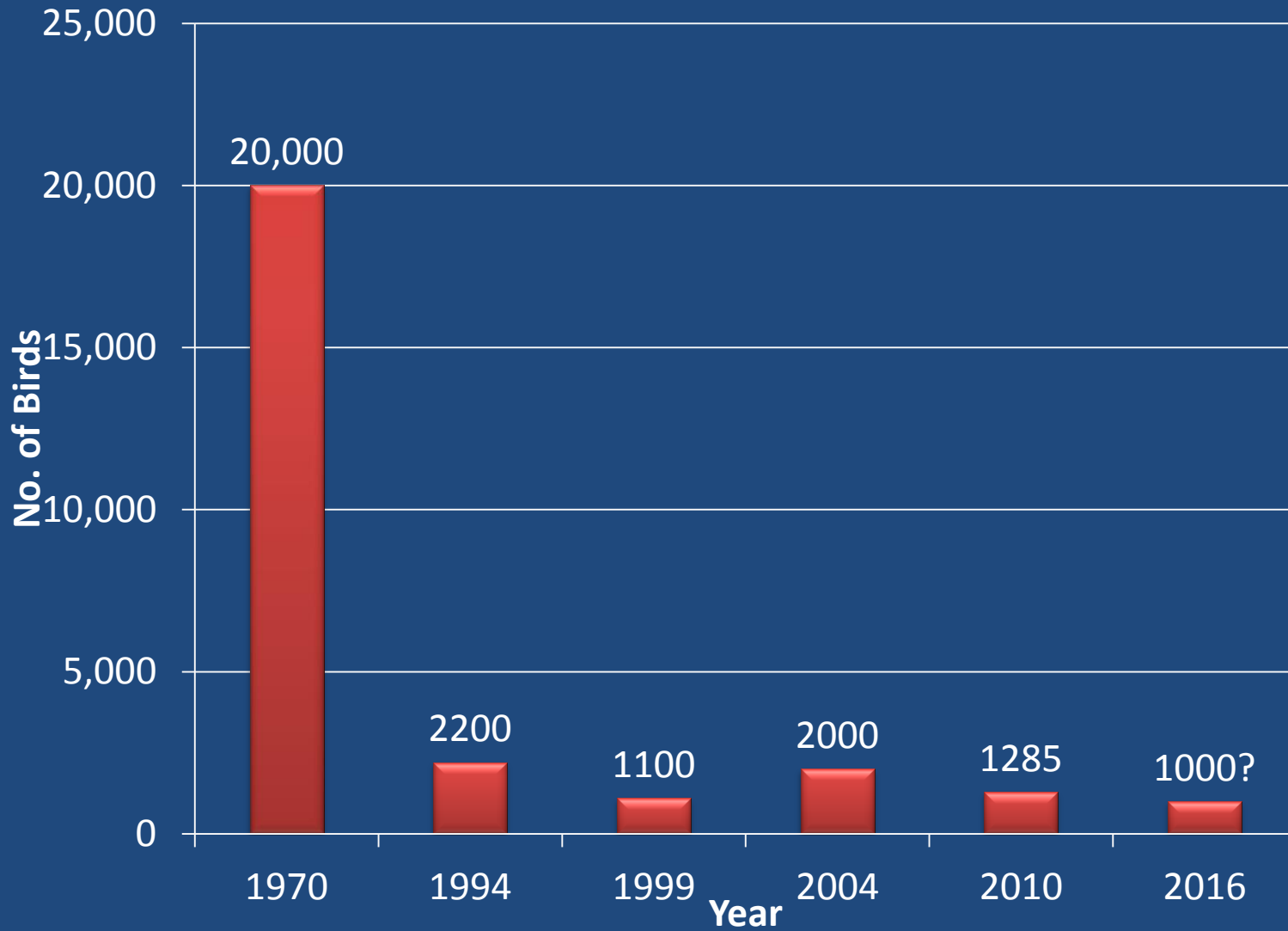


# Capercaillie in the Cairngorms National Park – integrating habitat, recreation and development management



Justin Prigmore

# Capercaillie population in Scotland



- Decline is thought to be caused by:

- loss of habitat
- fence collisions
- bad weather
- predation
- disturbance



- Disturbance by dogs is a significant problem
  - birds can be killed, or chicks separated
  - habitat is avoided by c. 125m from busy tracks



- Human population projected to rise by c. 25% by 2035
- Lack of affordable homes
- Households to increase by c. 35% by 2035
- Total land supply is for >2000 houses in next 20yrs





- 1.5 million+ annual visitors to CNP
- Growth in Outdoor Pursuits
- A9 Dualling
- We cannot approve plans without concluding no adverse impact on Natura sites





# The Management Challenges

How do we ensure...

- The capercaillie population can thrive and expand?
- Recreation opportunities can be maintained and improved?
- Development can go ahead in the right places to meet the needs of local people?





The Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework - a spatial framework to safeguard and expand caper population by considering these issues together

The Framework, through collaboration and partnership work has:

- Gathered together all data on current known state of caper population and highlights most important areas
- Mapped suitable current and potential habitat.
- Identified most effective places to target expansion and re-structure.
- Identified human usage & development pressure hotspots
- Drew together info on current predation control measures



# Capercaillie Framework

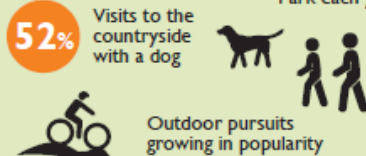
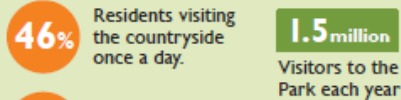
Targeting future management  
at a landscape scale



## Causes of decline...

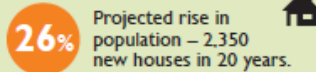
### ...disturbance by people and dogs

Disturbance reduces and fragments their habitat and birds can be killed or injured by dogs.



### Recreation Management

- Promote responsible access and dog walking
- Reduce disturbance through path management



### Development Management

- Develop mitigation around new developments to prevent disturbance and impacts on habitat
- Co-ordinate mitigation at landscape scale

### ...lack of suitable habitat

Capercaillie avoid woodland 125m either side of well used tracks.

### ...a wet and cold spring



### ...predation

### ...collisions with unmarked fences

#### Habitat Management

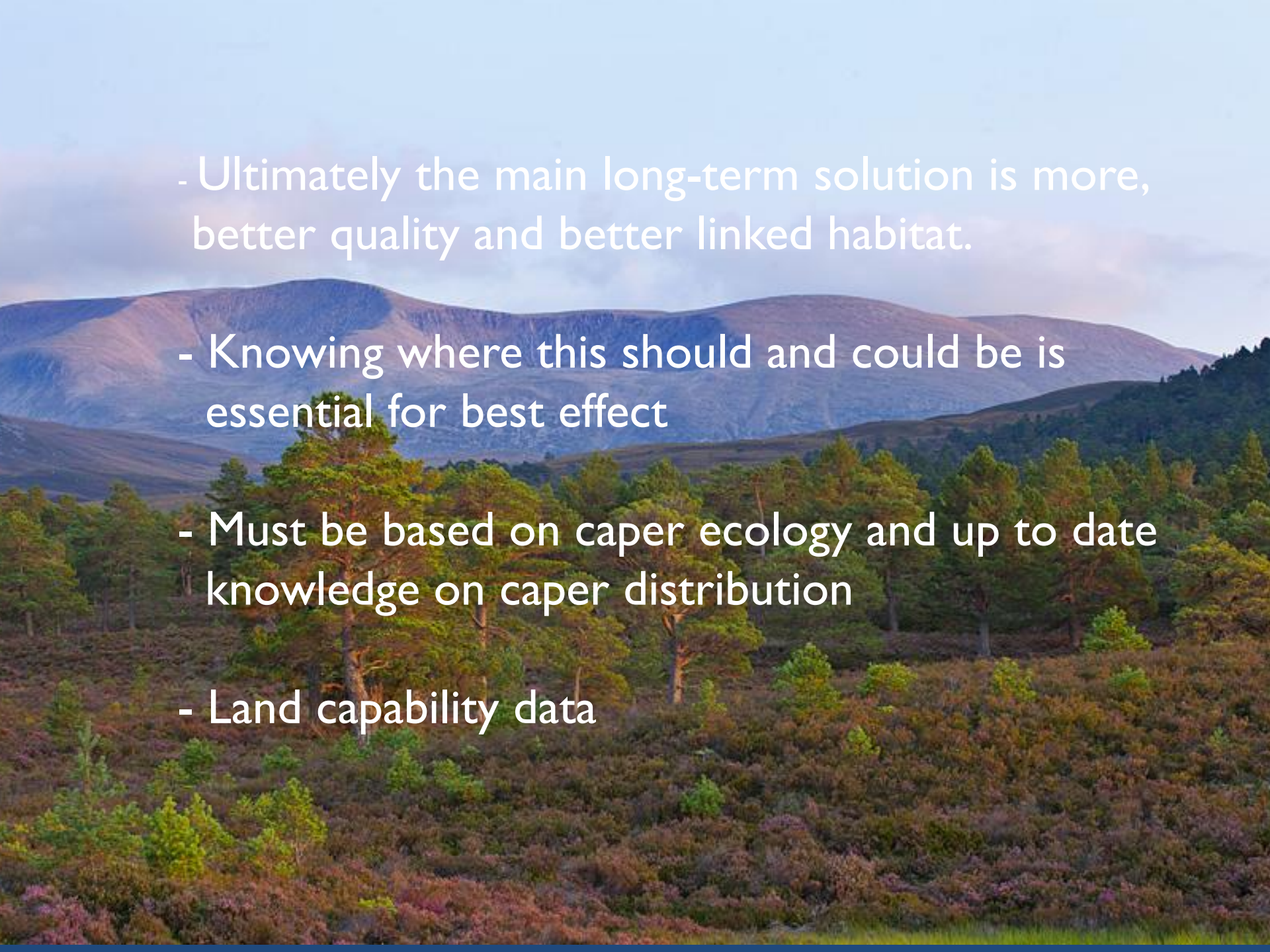
- Create new and improved native woodland expanding and linking suitable habitat
- Fence marking of high risk fences



### Awareness, Understanding and Community Engagement

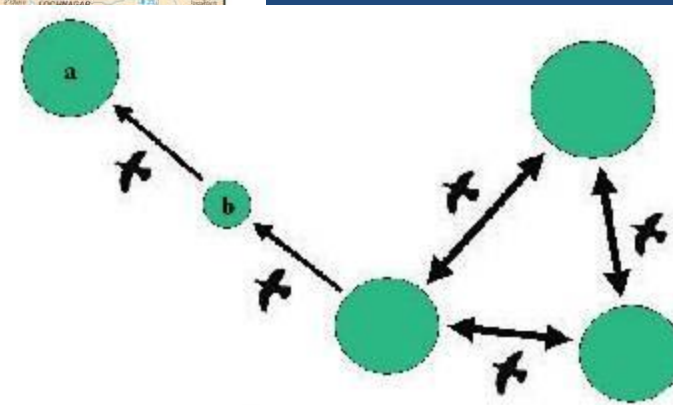
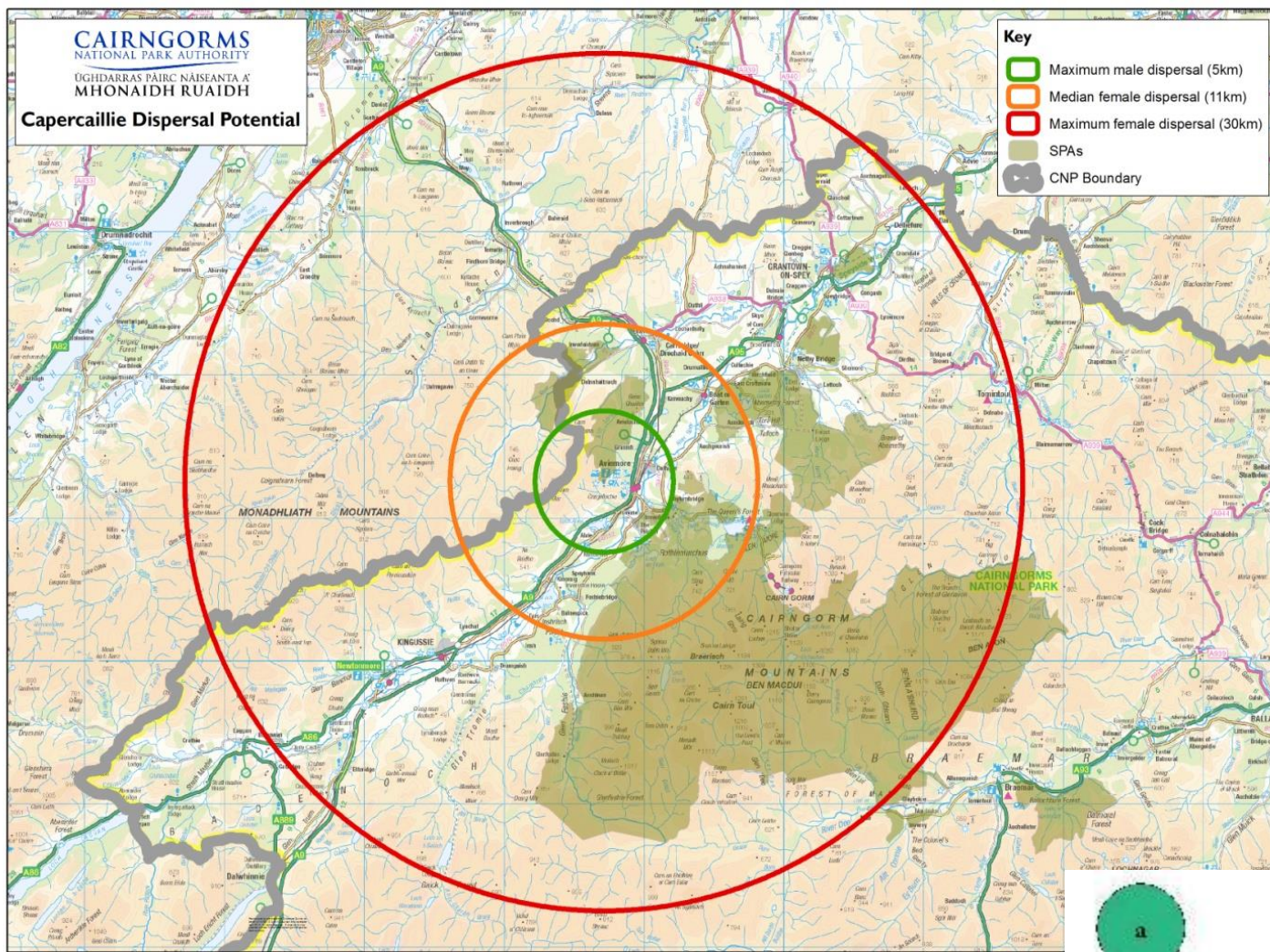
- Highlight importance of the area for capercaillie economically; ecologically; culturally and socially – take pride in the species
- Work with communities to conserve capercaillie



- 
- A landscape photograph showing a dense forest of tall, thin trees in the foreground, with a valley floor covered in low-lying vegetation. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the image in white.
- Ultimately the main long-term solution is more, better quality and better linked habitat.
  - Knowing where this should and could be is essential for best effect
  - Must be based on caper ecology and up to date knowledge on caper distribution
  - Land capability data



Capercaillie Dispersal Potential

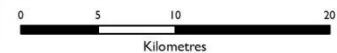




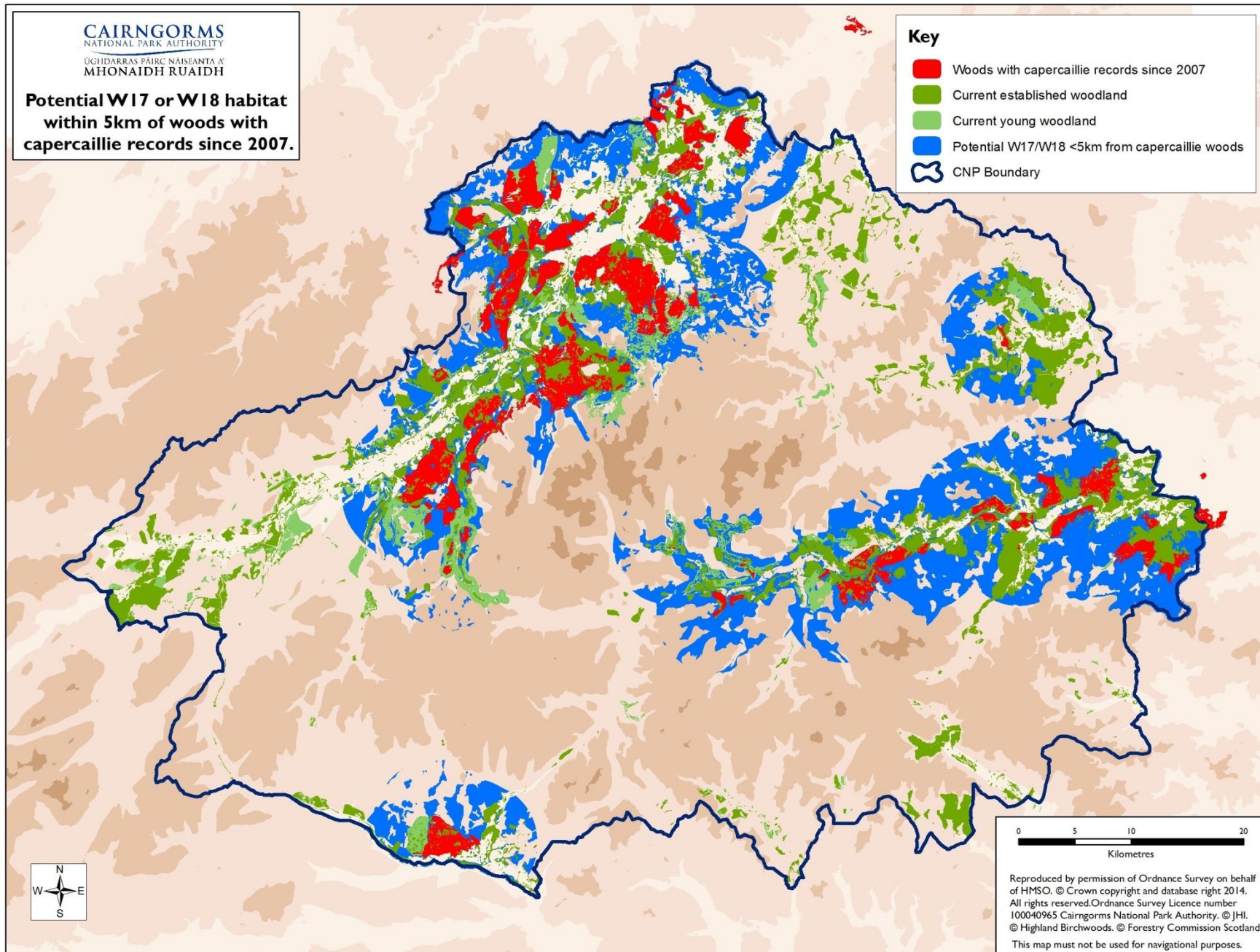
**Potential W17 or W18 habitat  
within 5km of woods with  
capercaillie records since 2007.**

**Key**

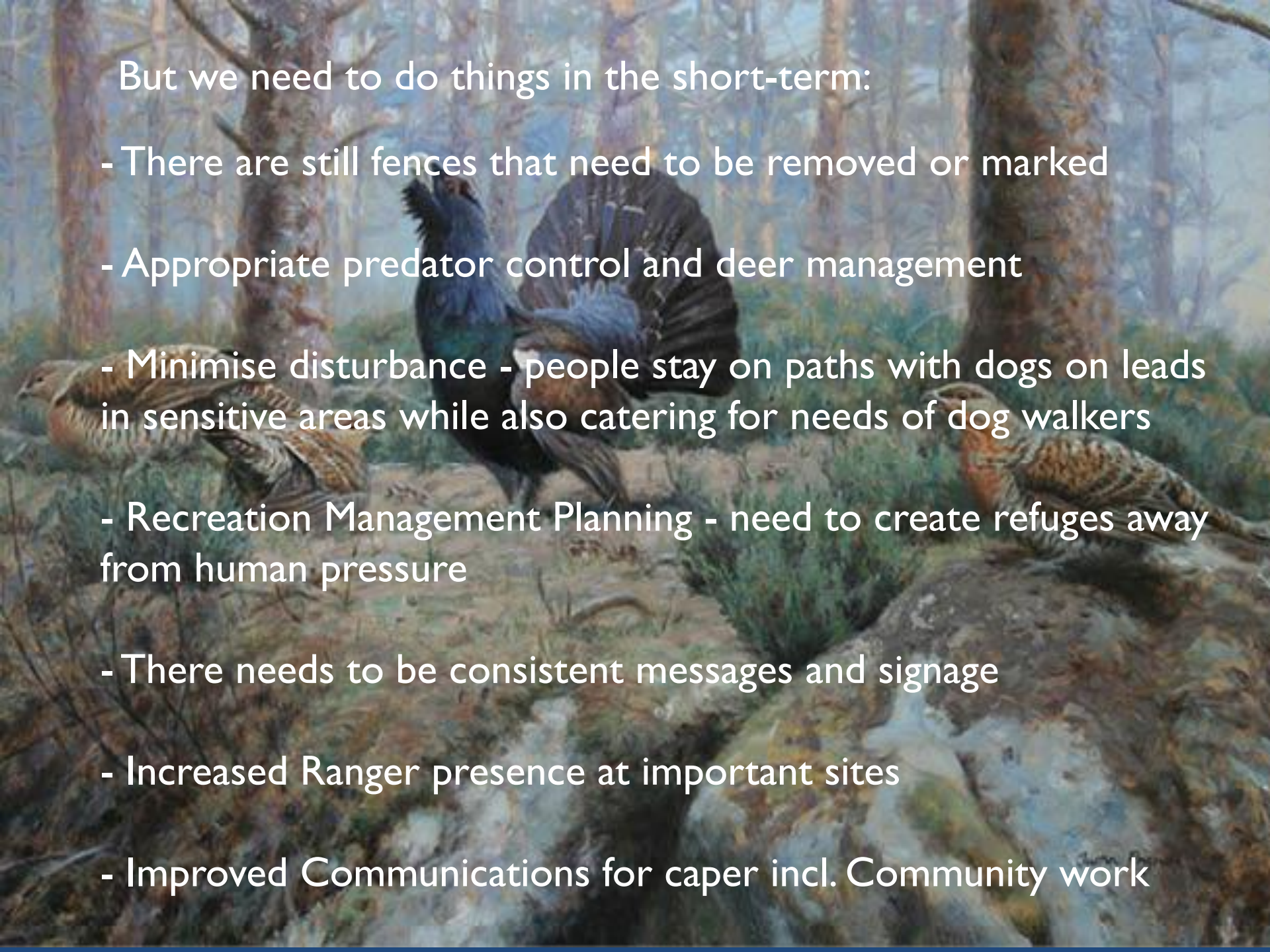
- Woods with capercaillie records since 2007
- Current established woodland
- Current young woodland
- Potential W17/W18 <5km from capercaillie woods
- CNP Boundary



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But we need to do things in the short-term:

- There are still fences that need to be removed or marked
- Appropriate predator control and deer management
- Minimise disturbance - people stay on paths with dogs on leads in sensitive areas while also catering for needs of dog walkers
- Recreation Management Planning - need to create refuges away from human pressure
- There needs to be consistent messages and signage
- Increased Ranger presence at important sites
- Improved Communications for caper incl. Community work



## Key habitat/species research questions:

If we build it, will they come?

- Does a new woodland become viable habitat – are there other essential components that need to be added?
- Impacts of climate change - how will this effect the habitat available to capercaillie?
- Predator interactions and effects on caper?
- Natural re-colonisation versus re-stocking ?







Key further research questions:

- Understanding people's patterns of use – how can we ensure refuges are effectively created?
- There are potential conflicts with some recreation activities e.g. mtn biking – what are the impacts?
- Mitigation of development impacts – how do we ensure these are effective and work at a landscape scale?
- Engagement - what are the most effective ways of inspiring people and creating pride in the species?