



Cairngorms
NATIONAL PARK
Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh

MANAGEMENT PLANS

Cairngorms Nature **Action Plan 2018-2023**

Consultation

20 June - 14 September 2018



Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2018-2023 Consultation Wednesday 20 June – Friday 14 September 2018

The Cairngorms National Park Authority is asking for your views on the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2018-2023. Cairngorms Nature is a partnership for people and organisations to come together with a common desire to safeguard and enhance the outstanding nature in the Cairngorms National Park. The Action Plan describes the most important things to do over the next five years and provides a focus for the work of partners.

Where you can view the document

The Action Plan is available to view on the CNPA website at www.cairngorms.co.uk; at the CNPA offices (see addresses below); and at libraries/council offices throughout the Park.

Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
Granttown-on-Spey
PH26 3HG

Tel: 01479 873535

Albert Memorial Hall
Station Square
Ballater
AB35 5QB

Tel: 01479 870578

(please phone to make an appointment to view the document in the Ballater office)

How you can comment

- online at www.cairngorms.co.uk
- complete a form and post/email it to us:

Cairngorms National Park Authority
FREEPOST NAT 21454
Granttown-on-Spey PH26 3BR

Email: nature@cairngorms.co.uk

All comments must be received by 5pm on Friday 14 September 2018

What happens next

Consultation responses will be collated and a report of the consultation published on www.cairngorms.co.uk. The final Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2018-2023 will then be submitted to the Cairngorms National Park Authority board for approval.

Data Protection

Details provided in response to the consultation will only be used for purposes associated with the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. You may request to see personal information held by the CNPA at any time.

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction | 4 |
| 2. Strategic Context | 8 |
| 3. Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-2018 | 12 |
| 4. Aims, Priorities and Action | 14 |
| Aim: Support landscape scale conservation and collaboration to deliver ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management, balancing environmental, social and economic factors | 16 |
| Aim: Deliver focussed action to improve the conservation status of threatened or declining species | 22 |
| Aim: Engaging, inspiring and encouraging local communities and communities of interest to value and care for nature, be proud of the conservation work in the Cairngorms and want to do something to protect and enhance their natural heritage | 30 |
| 5. Delivery & Monitoring | 34 |

This document is available in large print and other formats, on request. Please contact the Cairngorms National Park Authority on 01479 873535. It is also available to view at www.cairngorms.co.uk

Published by
Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
Grantown-on-Spey
PH26 3HG

enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk
Tel: 01479 873535

www.cairngorms.co.uk

© CNPA 2018. All rights reserved

Internal photo credits:

CNPA; Peter Cairns/2020Vision/CNPA;
Mark Hamblin/2020VISION/CNPA; Jane Hope;
Jakub Iwanicki/VisitScotland; Will Boyd Wallis

Front cover photo:

Mark Hamblin/2020VISION/CNPA

I. Introduction

Very few superlatives can adequately describe the outstanding nature and landscapes of the Cairngorms National Park, its importance for the people who live and work here, the people who visit and enjoy the area and the true magnitude and significance of the wildlife and habitats supported by this unique and special place.

This is a place hugely valued by people for diverse reasons and a landscape of immense importance to wildlife, much of which depends on and is a product of the working of the land over generations. It is also a landscape where there is a shared vision to create even more diversity, even greater abundance of distinctive habitats and species and which is internationally recognised for its quality of environment – but with people at its heart.

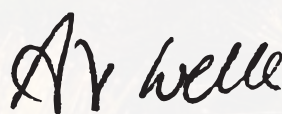
Cairngorms Nature is delivering this vision. It is a partnership that brings those with an interest in the area together to promote ecological restoration and biodiversity conservation as part of caring for and managing land, working together to agree objectives, inspiring and developing new initiatives, engaging and involving people and ultimately ensuring the area's natural capital – the landscapes, geology, soil, air, water and all living things – is protected and enhanced for future generations, providing a wide range of economic, cultural and other values.

This is the second Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, which follows previous Biodiversity Action Plans, all of which have made significant contributions. A huge amount has been achieved

in the last five years demonstrating the power of partnerships and co-operation, and the energy and dedication of those protecting, managing and looking after the Park's distinctive woodland, wetland, moorland, montane and farmland features.

Cairngorms Nature aims to nurture, inspire and enable this work, bringing people together to collectively make things happen. As a partnership the aim is to be inclusive, to consult and seek agreement, to use evidence and to tackle difficult issues by building trust and relationships through discussion and collaboration and ultimately making a difference on the ground.

Each plan is not an end-point on its own, but a means of focussing priorities for the next stage of the journey. Landscape scale conservation, priority species management and involving people have been agreed as being the key aims for the next five years. This is not a Park Authority plan but is a plan for everyone who lives, works, enjoys, studies in and cares for this wonderful area. By getting involved anyone can play a part in delivering a sustainable future, ensuring the Cairngorms National Park remains an outstanding jewel amongst Scotland's, the UK's and Europe's special places.



Andy Wells

Chair, Cairngorms Nature



| | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| SCOTTISH BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY – 6 BIG STEPS FOR NATURE | | | NATIONAL |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ecosystem restoration 2. Investment in natural capital 3. Quality greenspace for health & education benefits 4. Conserving wildlife 5. Sustainable management of land and freshwater 6. Sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems | | | |
| Water Framework Directive, Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach, Scottish Land Use Strategy, Scottish Forestry Strategy, Scotland's Climate Change Plan | | | |
| NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN – BIG CONSERVATION CHALLENGES | | | REGIONAL |
| Enhancing habitats on a landscape scale | Protecting & enhancing declining and fragile species | Building support and engagement | |
| Active Cairngorms, Catchment Management Plans, Deer Management Plans, Cairngorms Forest Strategy, Cairngorms Economic Strategy, Local Development Plan, LBAPs | | | |



Do you think the Aims and Priorities capture the main conservation issues we should be focussing on in the Cairngorms for the next five years?

Do the targets capture the progress the Action Plan is looking to make, and do they have the right level of ambition?

CAIRNGORMS NATURE ACTION PLAN

| LANDSCAPE SCALE CONSERVATION | PRIORITY SPECIES | INVOLVING PEOPLE | AIMS |
|--|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Woodland expansion & enhancement Nature friendly farming Freshwater restoration Peatland restoration | Capercaillie Curlew Scottish wildcat Mountain hare Aspen Raptors Invertebrates Freshwater pearl mussel Plants, fungi & lichen Beaver | Greater collaboration and engagement in land use decision making Recognise and celebrate good conservation work Provide opportunities to get involved More people actively and responsibly enjoying nature | PRIORITIES |
| 5,000 ha new woodland (including regeneration and montane) 20 farm projects Increase in farmland waders 5,000 ha peatland restored 150 km river/ riparian restoration | Targets identified as per Species Recovery Curve (see p23) | 50 volunteer rangers Increase in biological records/ recorders 5 communities involved in landscape survey 3 communities involved in landscape scale conservation 15,000 people at nature events | TARGETS |
| Cairngorms Connect, East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership, Deer Management Groups, Catchment Management Partnerships, Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership, Volunteer Cairngorms, Ranger Services, Cairngorms Trust, Wetlands & Wader Initiatives, Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms, Rare Plants Project | | | PARTNERSHIPS & DELIVERY |

2. Strategic Context

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy – a Route Map to 2020

Scotland's Biodiversity – a Route Map to 2020, sets out six 'Big Steps for Nature' and a number of priority projects which focus on collaborative work to help deliver Scotland's commitments to meeting Aichi goals and targets and to improve the state of nature in Scotland. The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan will contribute towards five of the six Big Steps for Nature:



1. Ecosystem restoration – to reverse historical losses of habitats and ecosystems, to meet the Aichi target of restoring 15% of degraded ecosystems;
2. Investment in natural capital – to ensure the benefits that nature provides are better understood and appreciated, leading to better management of our renewable and non-renewable natural assets;
3. Quality greenspace for health and education benefits – to ensure that the majority of people derive increased benefits from contact with nature where they live and work;
4. Conserving wildlife in Scotland – to secure the future of priority habitats and species;
5. Sustainable management of land and freshwater – to ensure that environmental, social and economic elements are well balanced.

The sixth Big Step for Nature is 'Sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems'.

Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022



The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan is one of five key strategies and plans which support delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan. Conservation is one of the three, headline, long-term outcomes in the Partnership Plan. The aims of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan directly reflect the three big conservation challenges in the Partnership Plan.

- **Enhancing habitats on a landscape scale**
 - » improving the condition of existing woodland and creating a more extensive, connected forest network, resilient to changing climate, pest and disease risks, including restoring the largely missing montane woodland habitat
 - » restoring functioning river and wetland systems, improving water quality, freshwater habitats and flood management
 - » restoring degraded peatland and actively managing the carbon and water functions of the uplands
 - » enhancing the special landscape qualities of the National Park
- **Protecting and enhancing species**
 - » addressing declining and fragile populations of key species including capercaillie, freshwater pearl mussel and other Cairngorms Nature priorities
 - » eliminating the illegal killing of raptors and increasing raptor populations
 - » tackling species management conflicts by combining knowledge from all sectors to develop shared solutions to competing objectives
- **Building support and engagement**
 - » engaging people in land use choices and finding new ways to invest in and support the active land management required
 - » increasing community involvement in land management planning
 - » engaging and inspiring people through recreation, volunteering and learning opportunities that connect them with the nature of the Cairngorms

Cairngorms Nature will play a leading role in meeting the conservation challenges and will work closely with and alongside the Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group, Deer Management Groups, Catchment Management Partnerships, Cairngorms Connect and East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership to make a significant contribution to the three conservation priorities in the National Park Partnership Plan:

Priority 1 – Supporting landscape scale collaboration

“The large extent of the National Park and the exceptional size and quality of its habitats mean we have the opportunity to make a major contribution to national biodiversity targets on a large scale...The focus of action during this [National Park Partnership] Plan period will be to support collaboration that delivers woodland expansion targets, peatland restoration targets, river restoration and wetland enhancement and designated site targets [increase the proportion in favourable condition from the 2017 baseline of 81.8%].”

Priority 2 – Deer management

“Deer management is integral to delivering the public interest priorities set out in the Partnership Plan. These include priorities for woodland expansion (both productive and montane woodland), peatland restoration and designated sites, as well as employment... Through the period of this [National Park Partnership] Plan we aim to continue the current direction of travel in which deer numbers and consequent impacts are reduced, where deer welfare is improved and sport stalking in a high quality environment continues to make a valuable economic contribution in the National Park.”

Priority 3 – Moorland management

“Moorland is used for both field sports and farming and its management is key to delivering several public interest priorities including peatland restoration, flood risk prevention, species conservation and landscape enhancement...During the course of this [National Park Partnership] Plan period we seek to establish, deliver and promote a shared understanding of what good moorland management looks like in the Cairngorms National Park.”

Other national & regional strategies, plans and groups

Alongside the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan, the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan supports and builds on a wide range of national and regional strategies, policies and plans relating to the environment, land use, economy and community engagement, notably:

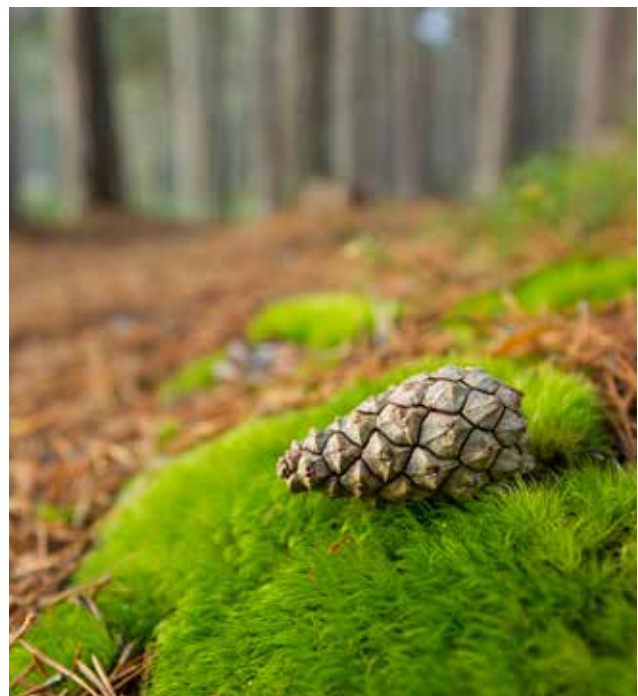
- Scottish Forestry Strategy
- Wild Deer: A National Approach
- Scotland's Climate Change Plan (draft)
- Water Framework Directive
- Scottish Land Use Strategy
- Community Empowerment Act

Regionally, the work of Cairngorms Nature ties in closely with and will contribute to:

- Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy
- Capercaillie Framework
- Active Cairngorms
- national standards for community engagement
- community action plans
- Cairngorms Economic Strategy
- Local Development Plan
- catchment management plans
- deer management plans
- river basin management plans
- local biodiversity action plans
- local species and habitats project plans (eg Strathspey Wetlands and Wader Initiative)

Deer and moorland management play a crucial role in delivering work in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, particularly aspirations for woodland expansion and peatland restoration. In progressing activity in these areas, the Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group will work closely with the Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group (CUAG) and Deer Management Groups.

CUAG's main functions are to promote better communication and understanding between all organisations with an interest in upland management in the Cairngorms National Park; advise the Cairngorms National Park Authority on upland management and, in particular, integration of the different land management sectors within the Park; share examples of good practice and strengthen the skills base in the sector; and share latest research, relevant to upland management in the Cairngorms.



3. Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-2018

The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNAP) 2013-2018 was the first Action Plan for the new partnership, building on the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. It detailed the outstanding natural heritage in the National Park, identified the commonly agreed key issues and listed priority areas of work, providing a focus for the work of partners. The four aims of the CNAP 2013-2018 were:

- Improving the quality and connectivity of woodlands and wetlands;
- Implementing priority actions for other habitats;
- Conserving and enhancing key species that require focussed action; and
- Involving people.

Significant progress has been made in encouraging woodland creation in the Park, including approximately 3,000 ha of new woodland created and a 12.5% additional premium rate for woodland creation in target areas. However, the target of 5,000 ha was not met. Contributing factors are thought to be the moratorium on Scots Pine planting due to disease risk and the transition between planting schemes.

Following relatively recent reductions in grazing pressure, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of hectares of new, natural regeneration across the National Park in places like Abermethy, Glenfeshie and Mar Lodge Estate. Our understanding of the amount of natural regeneration is an incomplete, but extremely important, part of the picture and we will work to better understand and quantify this over the next five years. Woodland expansion remains a priority for Scottish Government and remains a priority in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.

Actions to improve the biodiversity of freshwater and wetland habitats focussed largely on river re-naturalisation and floodplain restoration. Outcomes in the Water Framework Directive and the Flood Risk Act drove activity in removing man-made barriers, riparian planting, re-meandering and Natural Flood Management knowledge gathering. Wetlands and Waders Initiative across the Park very successfully worked with farmers and crofters to create the right habitat for farmland waders, increasing some populations for the first time in over a decade. This positive work is continued and built on under the landscape scale priority of 'Nature Friendly farming'.

Work on 'other habitats' focussed on peatland restoration, montane woodland creation and moorland management. The Peatland Action project has been a great success, engaging with lots of estates and work on peatland restoration continues. Cairngorms Connect and Mar Lodge Estate have set the agenda for montane woodland aspirations. The last five years have been largely focussed on learning more about the current resources, opportunities and challenges, and setting the way forward for action in the next five years. Showcasing best practice moorland management is a priority for the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership, including sensitive muirburn, improving raptor populations and habitat and species monitoring.

Focussed action has taken place for 17 of 23 priority species. Action for many of the species progressed significantly with the start of the Cairngorms Wild Plants project and the Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms project, both LEADER funded initiatives that employ an officer to engage with landowners and recruit and train citizen science volunteers.

Action for species not included in the projects' remit proved challenging to fund, often requiring specialist skills and experience to survey. Without baseline data and comprehensive monitoring it was impossible to make an assessment of populations, so, going forward, Cairngorms Nature is trialling the use of the Species Recovery Curve to establish progress and achievements.

The Involving People section of the Action Plan focussed on raising awareness of conservation work in the National Park and helping communities engage with and have a say in the management of local natural heritage. The Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend, social media, Young Presenters and Farm Awards have all been a massive success, significantly raising the profile of Cairngorms Nature and the opportunities to get involved.

Delivery of the actions for community engagement and empowerment across the Park have not been progressed as widely as anticipated, but there have been some key successes in certain locations such as the high levels of community involvement in decision making in the Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership Project. This work remains a priority and is continued in the Action Plan 2018-2023, focussing on landscape and landscape change as an accessible, more relevant subject with which to engage communities.



4. Aims, Priorities and Action

The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2018-2023 has three aims:



Landscape scale conservation



Focussed action for priority species



Involving people

The aims are split into a number of priorities, reflecting 'Agendas for Action' in the National Park Partnership Plan, 'Priority Projects' in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, continuing work from the first Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (2013-2018) and consultation with partners on current issues. The aims and priorities in this Action Plan are the next step towards the 50 year visions for 2063, as set out in the first Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (2013-2018).



Do you agree with the following objectives for ecosystem restoration, sustainable land management and involving people? If not, how do you think they could be improved – please clearly note which objective your comment relates to:

- bigger, more natural woodlands, expanding up to a natural treeline, providing connections across catchments and around the central core of the mountains
- more natural, dynamic rivers connected to functioning wetlands and floodplains
- restored peatlands stopping the loss of carbon, improving water quality and helping alleviate flooding
- more sustainably managed moorlands with more structural and species diversity and pockets and strips of trees and shrubs on moorland edges, steep slopes, in gullies and around woodland remnants
- more habitat suitable for breeding waders as part of agricultural systems
- wildlife-rich grassland and woodland on productive, profitable farms
- clearly demonstrating the benefits that conservation brings for people, economically and socially, as well as for wildlife
- more engagement with nature: more people involved in decision making, getting out and enjoying it and helping to look after it

AIM:

Support landscape scale conservation and collaboration to deliver ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management, balancing environmental, social and economic factors



The Cairngorms National Park is an outstanding place for natural heritage. Nowhere else in Britain can you find such a collection of different habitats of such high quality and exceptional size and scale. It contains some of the UK's best examples of natural and semi-natural habitats, including a quarter of Scotland's native woodlands, extensive arctic-like plateaux, the headwaters of four of Scotland's major rivers, functioning floodplains and the some of the last few remaining fragments of mountain woodland. The foundations for ecosystem restoration, for habitats to reach their full ecological potential on a grand scale, are impressive.

The main objectives are:

- bigger, more natural woodlands, expanding up to a natural treeline, providing connections across catchments and around the central core of the mountains;
- more natural, dynamic rivers connected to functioning wetlands and floodplains; and
- restored peatlands stopping the loss of carbon, improving water quality and helping alleviate flooding.

2063 VISION

Patches of forest and woodland, some miles across, some as small as football fields, link together through farmland and open ground. They are expanding up hillsides and into quiet areas, providing refuge for species to flourish, like the once critically endangered but now flourishing capercaillie. They are made up almost entirely of native trees: a patchwork of different woodlands, including productive plantations, all with rich understories, trees of all ages, clearings, bogs and deadwood scattered throughout. The UK's largest natural forests are considered an exemplar of woodlands managed for multiple benefits.

Most of the blanket bog is in favourable condition, retains water and acts as a carbon sink. Rivers naturally meander and waters rise and fall seasonally across land grazed by livestock. Large, interconnected wetlands help prevent damaging flood events in the Park and further downstream. Natural processes in river catchments do not affect the productivity of land. The high water quality status has been maintained or increased.

The Cairngorms National Park is also a cultural landscape. The work of generations of land managers has produced the landscapes and habitats we see today. It is an IUCN Category 5 protected landscape, which recognises and seeks to safeguard the integrity of the interaction of people and nature over time, and the aims of the Park cater for the needs of people as well as wildlife. Managing for biodiversity and the sustainable use of the area's natural resource is part of many land managers' everyday business. Significant areas of the National Park are managed primarily for forestry, sporting and agriculture and the productive woodlands, moorlands, farms and crofts are home to many of the Park's rare and endangered species. Cairngorms Nature seeks to build on this, supporting land managers working for wildlife.

The main objectives are:

- more sustainably managed moorlands with more structural and species diversity and pockets and strips of trees and shrubs on moorland edges, steep slopes, in gullies and around woodland remnants;
- more habitat suitable for breeding waders as part of agricultural systems; and
- wildlife-rich grassland and woodland on productive, profitable farms.



2063 VISION

Moorlands have structural diversity and link habitats together sympathetically. A natural transition from woodland to montane scrub to upland heath is developing throughout the National Park. The contributions it makes to ecosystem services are widely recognised. Raptor persecution ended decades ago and a full complement of native raptors lives and breeds across the National Park. Productive grouse moors and high-quality stalking remains a mainstay of life, contributing environmentally, economically and socially.



2063 VISION

A patchwork of productive land uses is good for wildlife. It supports thriving communities and reflects centuries of tradition. Delivering biodiversity benefit is an integral part of high-quality food production and does not impact on profitability. High-quality grasslands support a healthy range of nationally and locally important species. Farmland wader populations have recovered and increased throughout the National Park, and the area is nationally recognised as a model of farmland management for conservation on productive land.





AIM: Landscape scale conservation

| Priority | Action | Lead Partner |
|---|--|----------------|
| Woodland expansion and enhancement | Engage with, encourage and support land managers in creating new woodland planting and regeneration in priority and strategic areas | FCS & CNPA |
| | Investigate, develop and deliver models for funding woodland expansion and enhancement to work in addition to, or alongside, Forest Grant Schemes eg Forest Carbon | CNPA |
| | Enhance woodland habitat quality to benefit capercaillie populations | RSPB |
| | Enhance woodland habitat quality of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites and degraded native woodland sites | WTS & TfL |
| | Engage volunteers in habitat assessments of woodlands to inform management advice and ensure plants are taken into account in woodland management | Plantlife |
| | Modify grazing and muirburn on moorland to allow natural regeneration of trees and shrubs, especially in gullies, on steep slopes and around existing remnants | ECMP & DMGs |
| | Reduce and/or maintain grazing densities that create conditions suitable for the natural regeneration of a montane woodland/natural treeline | CC, MLE & DMGs |
| | Plant high altitude, mountain woodland species, from a suitable stock and in suitable locations, to act as a seed source in the core of the Park | CC & MLE |
| | Working with CNPA and FCS, and using specific examples such as Glen Tilt and Glenavon, develop models of how woodland can be accommodated with open ground qualifying features | SNH |
| Nature friendly farming | Through wetlands and waders initiatives, support land managers, agents, farmers and crofters with equipment, funding and management advice to create habitat for farmland waders | RSPB |
| | Promote Park-wide co-ordination of activity for the conservation of farmland waders | RSPB & CNPA |



AIM: Landscape scale conservation

| Priority | Action | Lead Partner |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Nature friendly farming | Identify priority areas and work with land managers to sympathetically manage species-rich grasslands | Plantlife |
| | Work with farmers, crofters and agents to encourage integrated woodland development on farms for ecological and economic benefit | CNPA & NFUS |
| Freshwater and wetland restoration | Conduct spatial targeting exercise to identify priority and strategic areas for a freshwater and wetland habitat network and natural flood management which will deliver maximum ecosystem service benefit | CNPA |
| | Re-connect rivers to floodplains to restore habitat connectivity and natural flooding cycles, for biodiversity and Natural Flood Management gain | CMPs |
| | Re-naturalise rivers, removing artificial barriers, carrying out river bank protection/ restoration and re-connecting and re-watering back channels | |
| | Plant riparian woodland to enhance aquatic ecosystems, strengthen woodland habitat networks, and help manage flooding | |
| Peatland restoration | Work with a range of land managers across the National Park at sites where peatland restoration will deliver increased sub-catchment scale ecosystem benefits and where large herbivore densities and burning activity will maintain restoration efforts | Peatland Action |
| | Develop and showcase at least two examples of restoration in the National Park funded via the Peatland Code | |
| Targets | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,000 ha new woodland (including regeneration and montane) • Increase in farmland wader populations • 20 farms in woodland & grassland projects • 5,000 ha peatland restoration • 150 km river and riparian restoration | | |

AIM:

Deliver focussed action to improve the conservation status of threatened or declining species



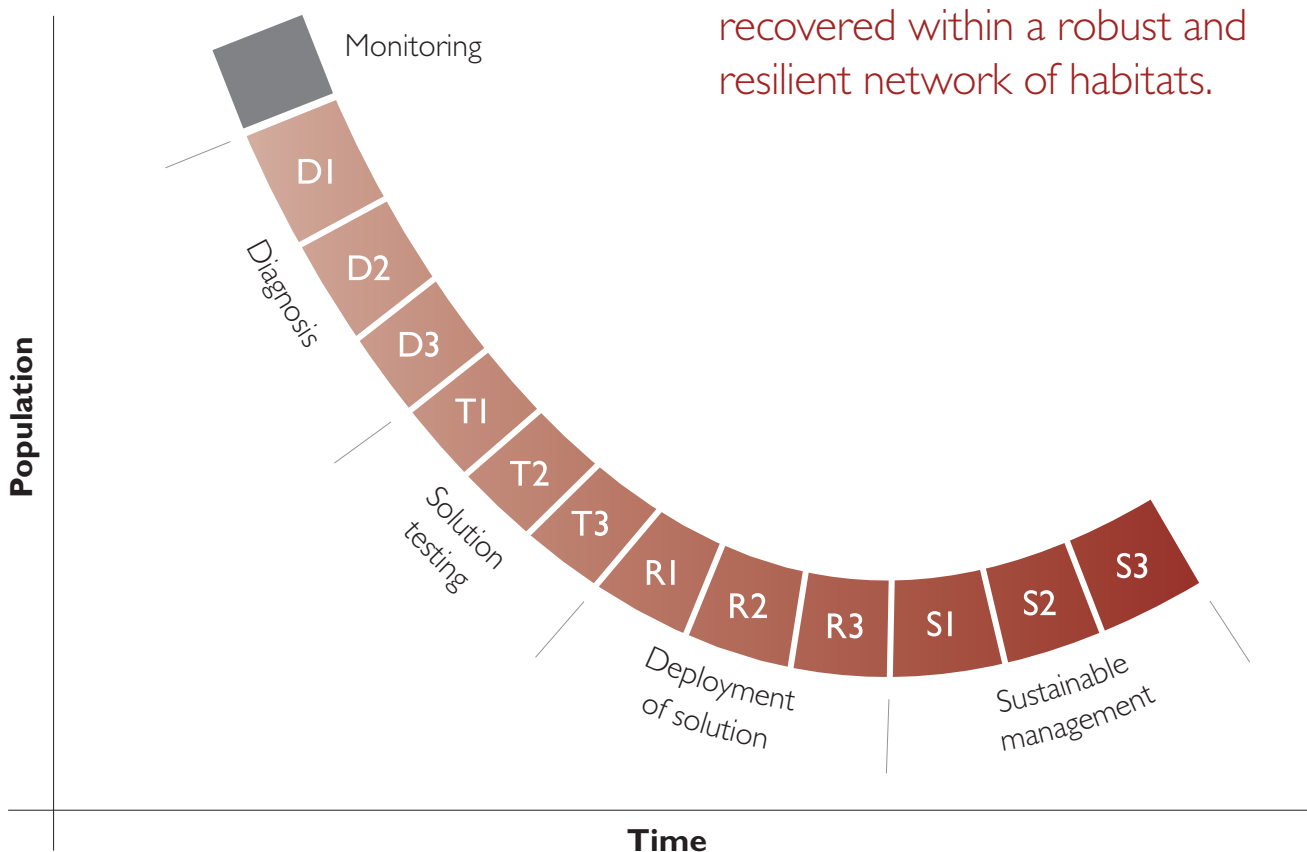
The Cairngorms National Park is home to almost 1,200 species considered to be nationally or internationally important. By virtue of their size, rarity and/or appeal, some of these species have a much higher public profile than others, including prominent conservation 'flagship' species like the osprey and red squirrel. Yet the bulk of the nationally important species are made up of plants, fungi, lichens, bryophytes and insects. These nationally important species are mainly associated with woodlands (39% of species), rock (20%) and montane habitats (15%), and most will benefit significantly from the landscape scale conservation priorities. However, there are some priority species with very specific and sometimes urgent management needs that demand focussed conservation action.

Ultimately, species recovery must be integrated with landscape scale conservation. In order to reach that point we must understand the species' needs and the issues we have to address (diagnosis), have a proven set of management practices in place (solution testing and deployment) and then integrate the management needs into day-to-day business (sustainable management).

This journey is illustrated in the Species Recovery Curve (taken from the RSPB's Strategy for Species Conservation 2012) – see below. The species' status in the table reflects the current position and ambition in the Cairngorms National Park, which may not be the same as the national picture.

The main objective is:

- getting species back on a sustainable footing, where they are no longer reliant on targeted action, but have been recovered within a robust and resilient network of habitats.




| 13 Stages of the species recovery journey | | |
|--|-------------|--|
| Stage | Code | Description |
| Monitoring | M | Purely monitoring, no action taken |
| Diagnosis (research) | D1 | No research undertaken/ cause of decline unknown |
| | D2 | Research underway, but limited understanding of cause of decline |
| | D3 | Research is providing strong indications of cause of decline |
| Solution testing (research delivery) | T1 | Diagnosis provides sufficient results to trial solutions but work only initiated recently |
| | T2 | Trial management underway but not yet clear evidence that it can deliver objectives |
| | T3 | Trial management is providing strong indication that it will deliver objectives |
| Deployment of solution | R1 | Work initiated to roll out solutions across the species' range |
| | R2 | Solutions adopted across the species' range but too early to demonstrate success against population/ range targets |
| | R3 | Solutions enable achievement against population/ range targets but only with continued conservation intervention |
| Sustainable management | S1 | Indication that population/ range targets being achieved with minimal conservation intervention |
| | S2 | Good evidence available that population/ range targets being achieved and can be sustained with little or no conservation intervention (ie population maintained within regular land management practices) |
| | S3 | Population/ range targets achieved and the species' conservation status secured |



Does the Action Plan focus effort on the right species? If not, without adding to the number of species overall, what changes would you suggest?

SPECIES



| AIM: Priority species | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
|  | | | | |
| Priority | Action | Species Recovery Curve | | Lead Partner |
| | | Current | Target | |
| Scottish wildcat | Promote TNVR and work with land managers to reduce hybridisation, disease, misidentification and accidental control | R1 | R3 | Scottish Wildcat Action |
| | Trial release of captive-bred wildcats | | | |
| Mountain hare | Counting, reporting and collating of population data across ownership boundaries within the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership area | D3 | S1 | ECMP |
| | Develop collaborative population management plans to sustainably manage at a landscape scale | | | |
| Capercaillie | Co-ordinate habitat, recreation and development management through delivery of the Capercaillie Framework | T1 – T3 | R3 | CNPA & RSPB |
| | Work with partners to deliver HLF funded project to build support for capercaillie conservation, develop sustainable recreation plans to benefit communities and capercaillie, and support long term survival | | | CNPA |
| Curlew | Carry out an assessment of breeding productivity in the uplands through nest monitoring in the ECMP area | D2 | T1 | BTO |
| | Produce sensitivity maps identifying key sites for breeding curlew across the Park | | | BTO & RSPB |



| AIM: Priority species <i>(continued)</i> | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------|---------|----------------------------|
| Priority | Action | Species Recovery Curve | | Lead Partner |
| | | Current | Target | |
| Kentish glory | Support the Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms (RIC) project to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey new and historic sites • map available habitat • conduct captive breeding and translocation programmes • recruit, train and support citizen science volunteers • liaise with land managers | T1 | R1 | RIC project steering group |
| Dark bordered beauty | | T1 | R1 | |
| Pine hoverfly | | R1 | R2 | |
| Northern silver stiletto fly | | D2 | R1 | |
| Scabious mining bee | | D2 | T3 | |
| Shining guest ant | | D2 | R2 | |
| Northern February red stonefly | Complete Park-wide survey and raise awareness of species' needs with land managers and planning authorities | D2 | D3 | Buglife |
| Northern damselfly | Recruit, train and support citizen science volunteers to survey new and historic sites | D2 | T1 – T3 | BDS |
| | Provide advice to land managers on habitat management and creation | | | |
| Wood ants | Promote as ambassador for woodland management/expansion | T1 – T3 | R2 | Wood ants group |
| Pinewood mason bee | Develop strategy for incorporating species' needs into forestry management | D2 | T2 | FCS |



AIM: Priority species *(continued)*

| Priority | Action | Species Recovery Curve | | Lead Partner |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| | | Current | Target | |
| Aspen hoverfly | Work with land managers to deliver sustainable management suitable for population expansion | T2 | R3 | Aspen hoverfly steering group |
| | Promote as ambassador for aspen woodland eg include in discussions on beavers | | | |
| Freshwater pearl mussel | Improve riparian management to reduce sediment and nutrient input in key areas | R1 | R2 | CMPs |
| | Survey all un-surveyed suitable habitat within Cairngorms National Park | | | CNPA & SNH |
| | Support an encystment reintroduction/translocation project in the Spey Catchment | | | SCI |
| Aspen | Work with land managers to manage and improve the conditions of key sites identified in the Aspen Strategy for Badenoch and Strathspey | R1 | R3 | Aspen steering group |
| | Work with land managers, partners and volunteers to improve connectivity and create new aspen stands across the National Park | | | |
| | Develop an Aspen Management Plan for Deeside | | | CNPA |
| Twinflower | Support the Cairngorms Wild Plants project to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide advice and support to land managers at existing sites establish new translocation sites across the Park recruit, train and support Plantlife Flora Guardians to monitor existing populations develop citizen science survey projects | T2 | T3 | Plantlife |
| One-flowered wintergreen | | T1 | T3 | |
| Marsh saxifrage | | M | M | |
| Waxcaps | | D3 | T2 | |



AIM: Priority species (continued)

| Priority | Action | Species Recovery Curve | | Lead Partner |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------|---------|--------------|
| | | Current | Target | |
| Alpine blue sow thistle | Monitoring existing populations (including in collaboration with Plantlife Flora Guardians) Conduct research to understand causes of decline, and recovery solutions Carry out translocations contributing to ecosystems restoration, and land manager support for rare species recovery and protection | T2 | R1 – R2 | RBGE |
| Oblong woodsia | | D2 | T3 | |
| Small cow wheat | | D3 | T3 | |
| Woolly willow | | R3 | S1 | |
| Alectoria ochroleuca | | D2 | T3 | |
| Hertelidea botryosa | | D2 | T3 | |

| Priority | Objectives | Lead Partner |
|----------------|---|------------------------------|
| Beaver | Plan proactively for the potential and management implications of beaver populations in the Park | CNPA & Scottish Beaver group |
| Raptors | Identify unoccupied golden eagle territories and work with land managers to carry out positive management that will encourage re-colonisation | CNPA, RSPB & SNH |
| | Carry out collaborative mapping and monitoring of raptor sites and populations, sharing data to establish baselines which will inform management and measure progress | ECMP, Estates & RSGs |
| | Develop and deliver wildlife tourism opportunities that benefit local businesses and promote the National Park as an example of raptor conservation success | CNPA & SLE |
| | Build relationships and gather intelligence to eliminate the illegal killing of raptors through increased wildlife crime enforcement | Police Scotland |

AIM:

Engaging, inspiring and encouraging local communities and communities of interest to value and care for nature, be proud of the conservation work in the Cairngorms and want to do something to protect and enhance their natural heritage



The Cairngorms National Park is home to around 18,500 people, representing a wide range of interests. Residents spend a lot of time in, and care deeply about, the landscapes and wildlife around them. Every Community Action Plan in the Park identifies the natural heritage as being fundamentally important to communities – to health and well-being, the local economy and a sense of place, identity and pride.

Each year 1.8 million visitors come to the National Park, an increase of 25% since 2013. Many come for its wildlife and scenery. Low-level walking is the most popular activity and the Park attracts many mountain bikers, bird and wildlife watchers. It is important that these activities do not have a negative impact on our wildlife, but at the same time, if we can engage with just some of those 1.8 million visitors, there is a massive opportunity to reach out to and welcome a new audience of wildlife enthusiasts.

The National Park is unarguably one of the UK's most important natural assets. Amazing, ground-breaking conservation is going on for outstanding, rare and endangered habitats and species. That is something to be proud of. Our incredible landscapes and wildlife bring many benefits to people and businesses and, for the most part, people value them highly and want to play a part in their success.

The main objectives are:

- clearly demonstrating the benefits that conservation brings for people, economically and socially, as well as for wildlife; and
- more engagement with nature: more people involved in decision making, getting out and enjoying it and helping to look after it.

The conservation work set out in this Action Plan will ultimately bring about landscape change. It is important that the communities in the Park are part of that programme of change, having an informed view and opportunity to comment on what it will mean. We need to make the connection between people's everyday lives and the nature and wildlife they value, or even depend on. We need to make this information accessible and engaging, delivered in the most credible and persuasive manner possible.

There is a right of responsible access to the majority of land and water in the Cairngorms National Park and we want more people to get out and enjoy the countryside – that way they are much more likely to want to protect it. Behaving responsibly includes caring for the environment and Cairngorms Nature will work closely with the Local Outdoor Access Forum, ranger services and tourism operators on issues such as keeping dogs on leads in sensitive areas for ground nesting birds, minimising wildfire risk and walking in the uplands.

Conservation in the Park will only be really sustainable in the long-term by putting people at its heart, either through decision-making, through volunteering or simply by caring enough to write a letter of support or walk the dog on a lead.

AIM: Involving people



| Priority | Action | Lead Partner |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Greater collaboration and engagement in discussions and decisions about land use | Consultation with the 5 major settlements in the Park (as per LDP) and interest groups to better understand and quantify what people think and value about landscapes in the Park, to feed into land use consultations and decision-making | CNPA |
| | Raise awareness and understanding of landscape and landscape change through social media, events and projects (eg photo posts) | CNPA |
| | Implement 'guidance on engaging communities in decisions relating to land' to support three community representations in landscape scale conservation partnerships and projects | Community Development & SLC |
| Recognise & celebrate good conservation work | Raise awareness of conservation in the Park, showcasing projects, places and people, through websites, social media, events and awards | CNPA |
| | Develop and deliver a communication strategy to highlight the social, economic and environmental benefits of land management and conservation to National Park residents | CNPA |
| Increase engagement and provide opportunities to get involved | Encourage, develop and support biological recorders and recording schemes, highlighting and encouraging citizen science-led information gathering about the Park's wildlife | CNPA |
| | Support and develop Volunteer Cairngorms: a programme of environmental volunteering including the Volunteer Ranger Scheme, supporting local wildlife groups and co-ordinating opportunities | Volunteer Cairngorms |



AIM: Involving people *(continued)*

| Priority | Action | Lead Partner |
|--|--|-------------------|
| Get more people actively and responsibly enjoying nature | Develop and deliver events and activities to encourage people to enjoy wildlife and landscapes, eg Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend, ranger events, Wee Walks Week and health walks | CNPA & Rangers |
| | Review, develop and deliver the 'Tread Lightly' responsible access campaign to make it more accessible and relevant to target audiences | Active Cairngorms |
| Targets | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 50 volunteer rangers working in Cairngorms National Park • 5 communities involved in landscape attitudes survey • 15,000 people attended outdoor, nature-related events • Increase in biological records and recorders • 3 communities involved in land use decision-making | | |

2063 VISION

People who live in the National Park are proud of the nature around them and are more widely involved in its management. Land based and tourism businesses thrive by looking after the environments they rely on; and contribute to conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Visitors respect the landscapes and wildlife they come to see and want to contribute to protecting them. The land management community is thriving. It receives strong public support for the services it provides.

5. Delivery & Monitoring

Partnerships are fundamentally important to the sustainability of Cairngorms Nature and delivery of the Action Plan. Cairngorms Nature has successfully created an environment for partnerships to evolve and fostered a strong sense of collective effort. The Park Authority leads the development and oversees the delivery and monitoring of the Action Plan, but it is the high levels of involvement and collaboration between public agencies, NGOs and private businesses that will drive delivery.

Cairngorms Nature will champion a spatial approach to collaboration, developing and working with partnerships, management groups and forums at a landscape scale to identify barriers and bring resources together to discuss and tackle common issues.

It is important that robust scientific evidence is the foundation for conservation action in the National Park. Cairngorms Nature will work with the many people and organisations involved in observing, monitoring and recording nature to bring the data collected by these organisations together, and to make them accessible and applicable, informing land management decisions.

| Priority | Action | Lead Partner |
|---|--|--------------|
| Ensure good information and data are available to guide long-term conservation | Work with stakeholders to identify needs and service requirements and create a 'Local Atlas' for the collation, analysis and use of biological data in the National Park | NBN Trust |
| | Investigate and trial Natural Capital Accounting for the National Park | CNPA |
| | Monitor delivery and progress bi-annually | CNSG |
| Ensure resources and partnerships are in place to support delivery | Build and retain constructive relationships with local and national partners and stakeholders | CNSG |
| | Undertake periodic reviews of funding availability and applicability and, if necessary, investigate options for new funding sources | |

The Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group co-ordinates, allocates resource and maintains an overview of the processes in place to deliver actions and meet targets in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, by:

- taking responsibility for areas of work, encouraging and supporting delivery partners
- leading the way in demonstrating the 'added value' that working collaboratively can bring
- monitoring progress and providing strategic advice to CNPA staff and delivery partners
- advocating and being an ambassador for the work of Cairngorms Nature within organisations and in meetings with others
- providing leadership, inspiration and support to organisations, individuals and communities

Membership of the strategy group is open to agencies and organisations with a direct involvement in the delivery of biodiversity gain in the Cairngorms National Park with the agreement of existing members. The current membership, to be reviewed after formal adoption of the Action Plan 2018-2023, is:

- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Crown Estate Scotland
- River Dee Trust
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Marr Area Partnership
- National Farmers Union Scotland
- National Trust for Scotland
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Scottish Land and Estates
- Scottish Gamekeepers Association
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Wildland Ltd

Glossary

| | | | |
|------|--|------|---|
| BDS | British Dragonfly Society | MLE | Mar Lodge Estate |
| BTO | British Trust for Ornithology | NBN | National Biodiversity Network |
| CC | Cairngorms Connect | NFUS | National Farmers Union, Scotland |
| CMP | Catchment Management Partnership | RBGE | Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh |
| CNPA | Cairngorms National Park Authority | RIC | Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms |
| CNSG | Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group | RSG | Raptor Study Group |
| CUAG | Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group | RSPB | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |
| DMG | Deer Management Group | SCI | Spey Catchment Initiative |
| ECMP | East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership | SNH | Scottish Natural Heritage |
| FCS | Forestry Commission Scotland | SLC | Scottish Land Commission |
| IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature | SLE | Scottish Land and Estates |
| LBAP | Local Biodiversity Action Plan | TfL | Trees for Life |
| LDP | Local Development Plan | TNVR | Trap Neuter Vaccinate Release |
| | | WTS | Woodland Trust Scotland |



Published by
Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
Grantown-on-Spey
PH26 3HG

Email: enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk
Tel: 01479 873535

www.cairngorms.co.uk

© CNPA 2018. All rights reserved