

Cairngorms National Park  
Partnership Plan 2017 - 2022

# Annual Review 2018/2019

Cairngorms National Park Vision ...

**An outstanding National Park,  
enjoyed and valued by everyone,  
where people and nature  
thrive together**

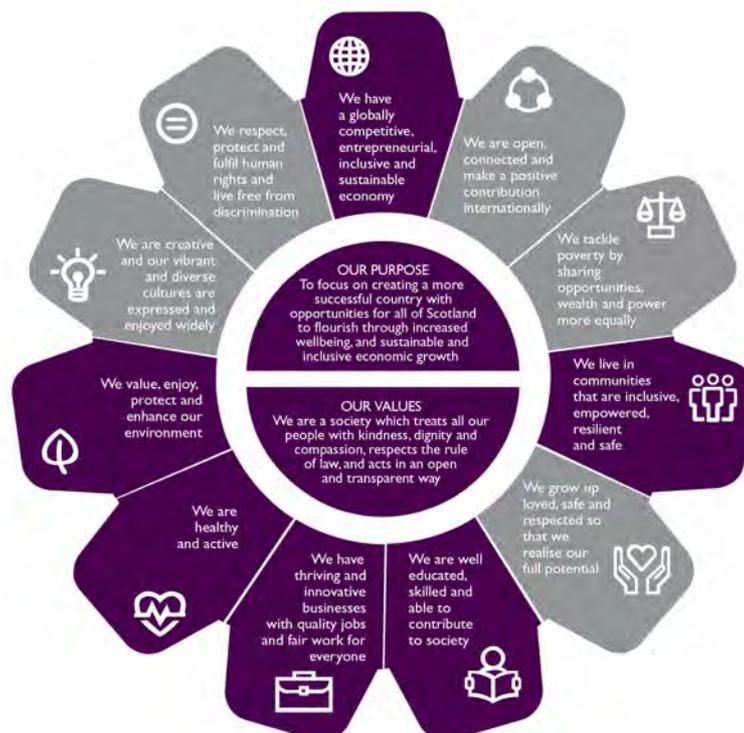
**The Cairngorms National Park contains some of Scotland's most iconic and spectacular landscape and wildlife, is home to over 18,000 residents and attracts over 1.8 million visitors a year.**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9Wh95qqnXM&t=6s>

The [Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022](#) sets out how all those with a responsibility for the Park will coordinate their work to tackle the most important issues. It ...

- sets out the vision and overarching strategy for managing the Cairngorms National Park
- guides the work of all public bodies and other partners to deliver the aims of the Park
- provides the strategic context for the [Local Development Plan](#)
- sets out the regional land use framework for the Park
- provides the strategic context for managing the Park as a [sustainable tourism destination](#)
- shows how the Park will contribute to the Scottish Government's core purpose and national outcomes





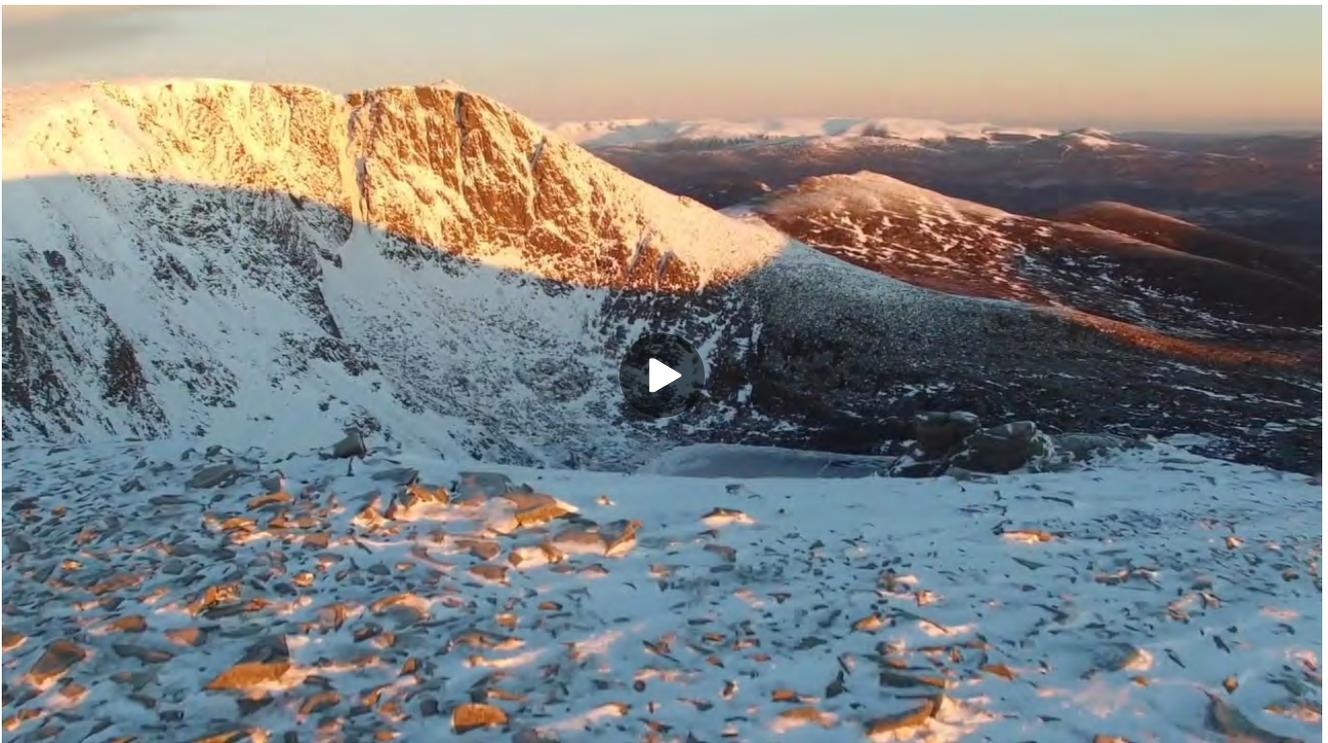
<https://youtu.be/PDp2Tu4PLQo>

## Our three long term outcomes



### Conservation

*A special place for people and nature with natural and cultural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park enhanced*



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tK5\\_IitYICU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tK5_IitYICU)

Priority 1: Supporting landscape scale collaboration

Priority2: Deer management

Priority 3: Moorland management

## Visitor Experience

*People enjoying the Park through outstanding visitor and learning experiences (visitor experience)*



<https://youtu.be/3T2xW2p46OI>

Priority 4: Visitor Infrastructure and Information

Priority 5: Active Cairngorms

Priority 6: Learning and Inclusion

## Rural development

*A sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities*



<https://youtu.be/atlfj6LzSso>

Priority 7: Housing

Priority 8: Community Capacity and Empowerment

Priority 9: Economic Development

# CONSERVATION

Target updates and projects

## TARGETS



5,000ha of woodland expansion by 2022

5,000ha of peatland restoration by 2022



Increase the proportion of designated sites in favourable condition from the 2017 baseline of 81.8%

## INDICATORS



Ha of new woodland

Ha of restored peatland

% of designated sites in favourable condition

# 2018-2019 UPDATE

- Over 4600ha of woodland expansion between 2013 and 2018.
- Progressing well in some key areas through deer management, eg on Mar Lodge Estate and the Cairngorms Connect estates (RSPB, Wildland Ltd, Forestry and Land Scotland, SNH). Discussions taking place with a number of other private estates potentially leading to some large schemes of 200ha or more.
- In the six East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership estates, a woodland expansion of 2-3000ha over the next ten years is anticipated - the majority of which will be through regeneration on Mar Lodge Estate.
- Across the National Park as a whole, there **needs to be greater uptake of the Forestry Grant Scheme** if the National Park Partnership Plan targets are to be achieved.
- Over 800ha of peatland under restoration management.
- Peatland Action awarded **£1.3 million** in 2018/19 for **ten projects**, covering **1052ha**.
- A further **nine projects** are in the pipeline, for 2019/2020, covering approximately **2500ha** with a budget of **£1.5 million**.
- The proportion of designated sites in favourable condition has increased very slightly to **82%**.



## Landscape scale conservation

*The large extent of the Cairngorms National Park and the exceptional size and quality of its habitats, means we have the opportunity to make a major contribution to national biodiversity targets on a large scale.*

### Cairngorms Connect

**A bold and ambitious 200-year vision to enhance habitats, species and ecological processes.**

A partnership of four neighbouring landowners (Wildland Limited, RSPB Scotland, Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage), Cairngorms Connect covers 60,000ha in the west of the Park and is the biggest ecological restoration project in Britain.

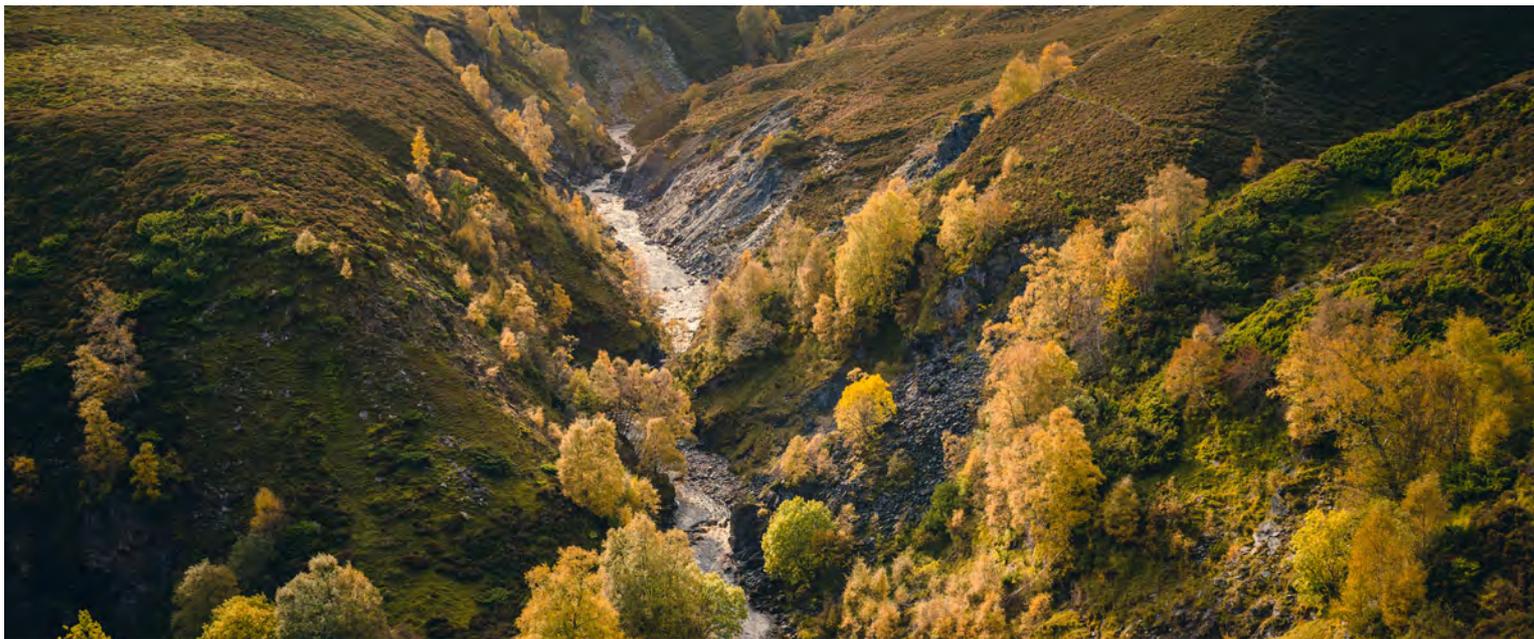


<https://vimeo.com/285111177>

In 2018/19 it received funding from the Endangered Landscapes Programme which has allowed it to appoint new staff to the project and take forward a wide range of work, including:

- enhancing and extending native woodland
- restoring blanket bogs
- floodplains and watercourses restoration
- managing deer populations
- building understanding and awareness





## Woodland

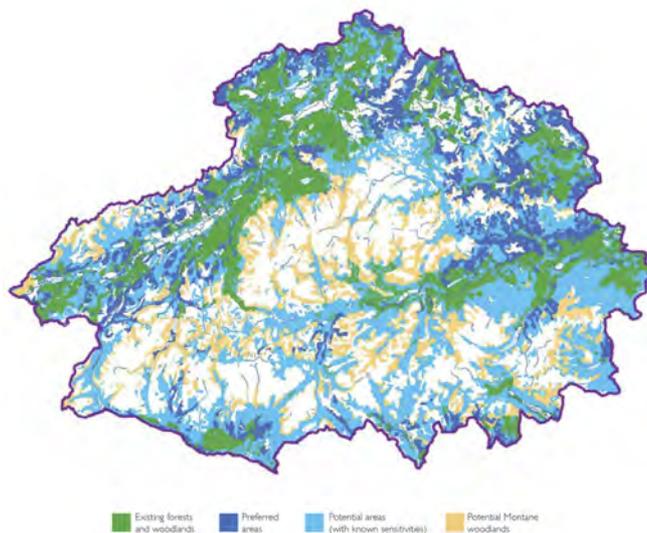
**Woodland covers less than 15% of the Cairngorms National Park, and there is enormous potential to expand woodlands within the remaining 85%.**



The [Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy](#), launched in March 2019, signals a new era of opportunity for native woodland creation in the National Park. New and well managed woodlands are not just good for wildlife and landscapes, but good for a vast array of local jobs connected to the resource.



We now have clear guidance and target areas where additional grant funding is available to encourage more woodland creation that fits with agriculture, moorland management, peatland restoration and conservation of other non-wooded habitats and species.



## Riparian woodland

There are a number of successful riparian woodland creation and river bank stabilisation projects taking place throughout the Park.



The [Dee Don Riparian Habitat Project](#), guided by the [Dee Catchment Partnership](#), has created riparian woodland and incorporated large [woody debris](#) in tributaries of the River Dee, providing vital habitat improvements for salmon, freshwater pearl mussel and many other species.



The [Spey Catchment Initiative](#) has achieved similar successes, particularly in farmland on the Spey, reducing bank erosion and improving water quality.

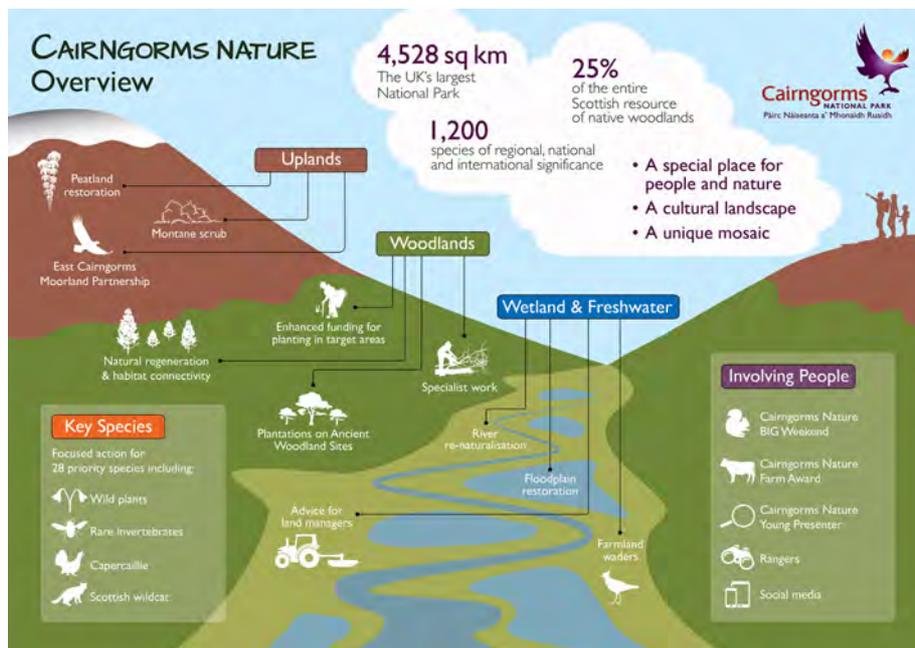


<https://youtu.be/WNgPOk2jK60?list=PL3eoaBdiC8XRttN9VyVND5FyHjI9tCGod>



## Cairngorms Nature

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019-2024



An online [Final Report](#) of the first Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (2013-2018) was well received by partners and stakeholders at the Cairngorms Nature seminar in June 2018, and the second Action Plan, for 2019-2024, was launched in Boat of

Garten on 1 March 2019. The Strategy Group continues to meet quarterly to monitor and oversee delivery of this Plan.

## Cairngorms Capercaillie Project

### Cairngorms Capercaillie Project

The £550,000 Heritage Lottery Fund and LEADER supported development phase is ongoing with work focused on identifying where residents and visitors can play a part in capercaillie conservation. A pilot programme of community engagement work in Carr-Bridge, is putting people at the heart of conservation decision making. Learning and evidence from the development phase will support a second round application for a £3.5million delivery phase in March 2020.



## East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership



A unique collaboration between six estates on the east side of the Park - Mar Lodge, Mar, Invercauld, Balmoral, Glenavon and Glenlivet - which aims to demonstrate that it's possible to combine delivery of public and private interest outcomes and achieve the successful integration of grouse moors and sporting management with other land uses. Projects are being developed around wader monitoring, muirburn

plans, woodland expansion, raptor conservation, mountain hare management and peatland restoration. Plans are in place to develop an interpretation facility around the project in Ballater.

## Deer Management Groups

### Deer Management

The Association of Deer Management Groups (DMGs) initiated a 'Health Check' review of Deer Management Plan implementation (public interest priorities) carried out, prior to Scottish Natural Heritage's review of all DMGs, which is ongoing. Reporting is expected in September 2019.

## Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group (CUAG)

The group met for the first time in March 2019 and this initial meeting discussed the remit and ground rules. Well attended, it has already stimulated useful suggestions for the Cairngorms National Park Authority to play a lead role in developing policies of national interest, eg use CUAG to help develop best practice guidance for all terrain vehicle use in the uplands.

## Raptor persecution

An innovative initiative to tackle wildlife crime and rural issues in the Park was launched in March 2018 with the appointment of [five special constables](#).



Work on developing a wildlife crime raptor tracker with [British Trust for Ornithology](#), and discussion with Werritty '[Grouse Management Review](#)', is ongoing. And it's intended that visitor interpretation, which is currently being developed in Ballater, will include elements of raptor conservation/interest - but this will rely on raptors maintaining territories across their natural range.

## Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend

### Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend

Now in its seventh year, the BIG weekend is all about getting people out into nature, standing in streams and walking through woodlands, and in May 2019 well over 3,000 people spent time in our amazing landscapes and nature.

6 private estates, 2 farms, 10 ranger services, 17 private businesses and 18 organisations and projects were involved in providing a wide and varied programme of over 100 events.

- 100 trees were planted, enhancing biodiversity in the woodlands around Carr-Bridge
- a community bird hide was built in Braemar
- over 200 school children attended the rural skills day in Glenmore
- 4 community litter picks took place, creating safer spaces for nature
- 8 volunteering events were held, helping people to get involved
- 200 pieces of artwork were created by local school children from across the Park



## VISITOR EXPERIENCE

# Target updates and projects

## Visitor experience targets

### TARGETS



 Increase the economic impact of visitors to eastern and southern Cairngorms National Park from 21% to 25% of the total visitor economy

 Increase the percentage of visitors using active travel during their stay to 19% by 2022

 Support 30 volunteer rangers and 500 days of annual volunteering by 2022

### INDICATORS



 Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) data

 Visitor Survey - 2015 baseline was 16%

 Number of volunteer rangers and annual volunteering days

## 2018-2019 UPDATE

- Latest STEAM data for 2017 indicates progress toward the target with the economic impact of visitors in eastern and southern Cairngorms now representing 22.8% of the total.

- No data to report - the five yearly visitor survey started in May 2019. Full data will be available summer 2020.

- We are currently training the latest recruitment of 12 volunteer rangers, which will bring the total to 26 volunteer rangers. There have been 415 days of volunteering to date.



## Visitor facilities in the east of the Park

*The Cairngorms National Park is an international visitor destination with outstanding natural and cultural attractions, and a wide range of opportunities for recreation enjoyed by people travelling to the Park and those that live here.*

The importance of visitors to the eastern Cairngorms was highlighted following the Dee flood of December 2015. The economy in eastern and southern Cairngorms then became a key target in the National Park Partnership Plan - to increase the economic value of the visitor economy from 21% to 25% of the total for the National Park. And 2018/19 has seen the delivery of a number of important projects that are starting to significantly improve the visitor experience.

The innovative [Cateran Ecomuseum](#) - a museum without walls - has received funding to reveal the hidden heritage of this captivating part of **Perthshire and Angus**, which includes the southern area of Glenshee in the National Park.



Cateran Trail, Spittal of Glenshee

In **Braemar**, the rebuilt [Fife Arms](#) was opened. This Victorian coaching inn has been imaginatively restored and described by the Financial Times as 'Scotland's Hottest Hotel'.

Also in the village, the [Braemar Highland Games Centre](#) was opened sharing the 200 year history of the Braemar Royal Highland Society - the organisation behind the world famous Braemar Gathering.

In **Ballater**, following a devastating fire in 2015, the rebuilt [Visitor Information Centre](#) in the Ballater Old Royal Station was opened, along with [The Carriage Café](#)





The Heritage Lottery Fund supported [Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership Project](#) deliver a number of visitor facing projects including a new visitor centre and a bird hide in Tomintoul.



The area has also been awarded [Dark Sky](#) status. As one of the world's darkest, it has received gold tier status by the [International Dark Sky Association](#) which is responsible for designations.

# SnowRoads.

The five communities in the eastern Cairngorms, along with all these projects, are linked by the 90 mile [SnowRoads Scenic Route](#).



<https://youtu.be/1K0I-SwYrDk>

Following funding from Scottish Enterprise Destination Development, Cairngorms Business Partnership launched a website and app sharing the stories of this area and encouraging visitors to slow down and enjoy the experiences along the route. This work received an Aberdeen City and Shire 2018 Tourism Award for Innovation in Tourism.

Already we are beginning to see the positive impact of all this work on the visitor economy, with the latest estimates showing the value in eastern and southern Cairngorms now representing 22.8% of the total.



## Speyside Way extension

Speyside Way

Funding and planning consent is in place to complete construction in Autumn 2019. Work is underway with The Highland Council and Moray Council to update information and interpretation on the new route.

# Deeside Way

## Deeside Way

Planning consent has been approved from Braemar to Invercauld Bridge, and funding is being investigated.



## Tourism Action Plan

The Cairngorms Tourism Partnership meet twice a year, and the Action Plan programme is on target - with the exception of delays in VisitScotland's Quality Destination Programme.

## Voluntary Giving

The Cairngorms Trust

The CNPA board agreed this work in June 2018 and The Cairngorms Trust launched the initiative in May 2019.

## Active Aviemore

Active Aviemore



<https://youtu.be/PIQZQ24cVXQ>

The partnership of The Highland Council, Hitrans, Sustrans, NHS Highland, Aviemore Community Council and the CNPA has completed the Stage 1 Project Development study into improving multi-use transport in Aviemore. Funding has been agreed for the production of detailed designs by 2020, including designs for the area leading to the new hospital, with £200,00 funding secured for build with match funding anticipated once the design is agreed.

## Active Cairngorms



<https://youtu.be/JOwmjg64VVo>

The Tread Lightly campaign was relaunched in Spring 2019 with a greater focus on key issues. The third Wee Walks Week will be taking place in September 2019 and there are now 16 Health Walk Groups around the National Park.

## Volunteering



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0DtF5RpdhQ>

As part of our ongoing project supported by Cairngorms LEADER, 14 Volunteer Rangers have been trained with 12 more completing training in June 2019. Work is underway on sustaining volunteer work developed by [the Mountains and People Project](#).

# John Muir Award and Junior Rangers

## John Muir Award

By October 2018, some 3357 people completed a John Muir Award in and around the Cairngorms National Park. 66 young people trained as Junior Rangers in 2018 and the Junior Ranger programmes will start again in June 2019.



## Local Information Centres



There is now a network of [Local Information Centres](#) throughout the Park. The CNPA entered into partnerships with information centres in areas where there was no longer VisitScotland visitor information, and in areas where there has never been any provision, they worked with community councils to determine the best location for new centres.

Granttown-on-Spey - Nethy Bridge - Dulnain Bridge - Kingussie - Laggan - Blair Atholl - Glenshee - Braemar - Crathie - Tomintoul

## Cairngorms and Glenmore



Forestry and Land Scotland are developing a new visitor plan for Glenmore. A multi use path has been approved and, subject to planning consent, will be built by October 2019.

## Learning and Inclusion



Travel grants have proved very popular with 53 groups receiving a grant in 2018-19. Discussions are taking place with [Backbone](#) re involving Black and Minority Ethnic groups in volunteering. A literacy and Gaelic place names resource for schools is being developed and will be published in autumn 2019.

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Targets update and projects**

## TARGETS



To deliver 200 new affordable houses during the Plan period



To increase the number of community enterprises reinvesting surplus profit into community projects



To maintain or improve business perceptions of the National Park's influence on customer attraction and operations/profitability



To achieve more than 30% uptake of high speed broadband in the Cairngorms Community Broadband project

## INDICATORS



Number of affordable housing completions 2017-2022



Number of community enterprises reinvesting surplus profit into community projects – baseline of 4 in 2017



Influence of the Cairngorms National Park as reported through Cairngorms Business Barometer



% of eligible properties subscribing to high speed broadband services under Cairngorms Community Broadband project

# 2018-2019 UPDATE

The Cairngorms National Park Authority has granted consent (including consent by appeal) for 108 affordable homes since 31 March 2018.

This has increased to 7.

Overall level of business satisfaction for all organisations was an average of 5 out of 7. The Cairngorms National Park Authority scored 5 out of 7 and remains the highest scoring public body alongside VisitScotland. Source: Q4, 2018, Cairngorms Business Partnership Business Barometer

The Cairngorms Community Broadband Project has been put on hold while the Scottish Government's 'Reaching 100' (R100) scheme operates across Scotland to extend high speed broadband to all properties. Meanwhile, the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) has upgraded digital telecoms infrastructure to allow 87% of properties to access commercial superfast broadband services. Mobile internet services through 4G networks now cover a wider range of properties.

through 4G networks now cover a wider range of properties.



## Affordable housing

*The development of affordable housing in the National Park, was an important focus in 2018/19. The success of these projects rely on the careful coordination of a mix of funding*

*from the relevant housing authorities, careful project planning and procurement, and a willingness to overcome constraints and barriers to delivery from all parties involved.*

In addition to consents for **108 affordable units** being issued by the CNPA planning committee in 2018/19, work started on a number of key sites and progress on consents issued the previous year. This was driven by The Highland Council's allocation of Scottish Government funding to target delivery of [238 affordable homes](#) within Badenoch and Strathspey between 2017 and 2022.

At Beachen Court, Grantown-on-Spey, **16 new council houses** were completed for The Highland Council. And **six mid-market rent properties** were completed for the Highland Housing Alliance.

### Highland Housing Alliance

At Spey House in Aviemore, a redundant office block gained planning permission for conversion and construction of **26 affordable units** for Albyn Housing Society. Albyn Housing Society also began construction of **six units** at Inverdrue, on the road to Glenmore just outside Aviemore.



Albyn Housing Society

Meanwhile, the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust have been supporting a group of local people with an **affordable self-build project** on the former Rothiemurchus Sawmill site.

*This cooperative is an excellent example of what can be done in the right place with the right partnership support.”*

*Eleanor Mackintosh, CNPA planning committee convener*

Highland Small Communities Housing Trust

In other parts of the National Park, Grampian Housing Association gained planning permission for **26 affordable units** through conversion of the [old school in Ballater](#).



And, at the start of 2019, Atholl Estates gained planning permission for the development of **eight affordable units** in Blair Atholl.

Find out more about housing in the Cairngorms National Park



## Local Development Plan 2020

Local Development Plan 2020

Consultation on the proposed Local Development Plan 2020 was completed in April 2019 and responses are now being compiled into the 'Schedule 4' documents for examination. Work is on target with the Development Plan Scheme and will be formally reported to the CNPA board in August 2019, prior to submission to the DPEA (Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals Division).



[https://youtu.be/gEA\\_903Prdw](https://youtu.be/gEA_903Prdw)

## Community-led Housing

Five communities are now actively looking to develop community-led housing projects:



- **Boat of Garten** - steering group established and exploring potential housing sites.
- **Dulnain Bridge** - Development Trust established and working group have undertaken own housing survey and analysis. Site for collaboration identified

with landowner and Rural Housing Fund application for feasibility study in progress.

- **Braemar** - feasibility study for a housing project nearing completion.
- **Ballater** - working group established and looking to update Housing Needs Demands survey, whilst investigating potential sites and options available.
- **Tominotul** - Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust have secured feasibility funding to review potential to develop Old School site.

## Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership (TGLP)

Tomintoul and Glenlivet



The hugely ambitious TGLP is progressing well. The Discovery Centre and the bird hide are up and running and attracting a lot of visitors. Fantastic work has been achieved on farms to improve the water environment, including bank stabilisation with woody debris and live willow spilling and more recently, removal of obstructions to migrating salmon. Stabilisation of Blairfindy Castle, first stage of developing Scalan Mill and path building on the Speyside Way Spur, have all started. The Tomintoul and Glenlivet Dark Sky Park was launched in December 2018

and this has led to an ambitious application for funding for a £1.3million observatory facility.

## Badenoch Great Place Scheme (BGPP)



This is now established with the Board and team meeting regularly. A Project Officer, employed by Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey, started in April 2018. The first commissioned studies - including interpretation and marketing - are reporting over summer 2019.

## Sustainable design

An innovative seminar on sustainable renovation was hosted in partnership with Scottish Land and Estates in Spring 2019.

## Supporting community organisations

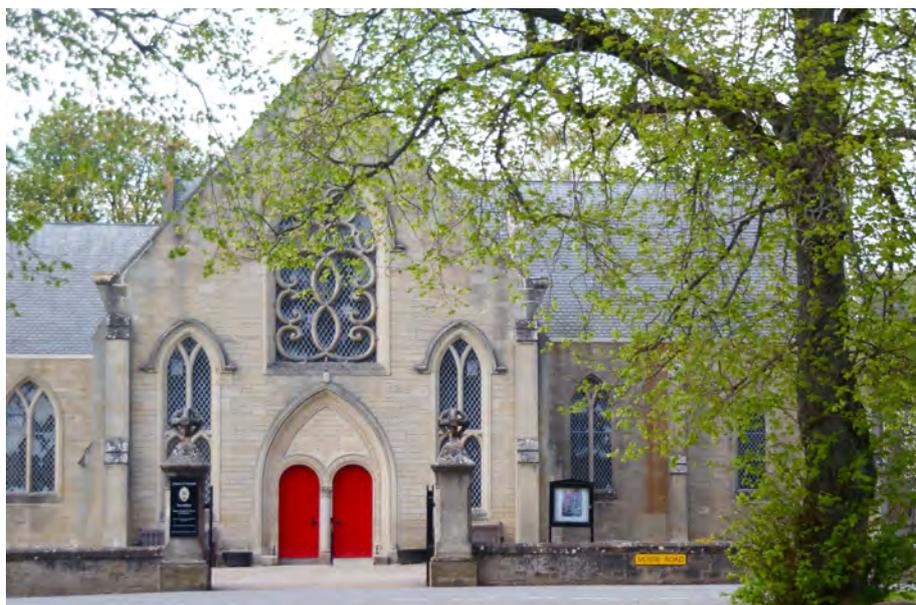
**Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey** is working on Community Action Plan reviews in Laggan and Kingussie.

**Marr Area Partnership** has been involved in the creation of the Upper Donside Business & Tourism Group's LEADER application for a community transport initiative in Upper Donside and provide ongoing support for the Braemar Care Initiative.

**Rothiemurchus Tennis Club** opened their covered training courts at Inverdrue, Rothiemurchus, with help from LEADER funding towards the £380,000 costs.



**Inverallan 2020** are developing plans to transform the church to a multi use community facility, with LEADER funding.



**Grantown YMCA** have secured LEADER funding for the development of a community cinema.

## Cairngorms Economic Strategy

The current Cairngorms Economic Strategy has been reviewed with partners, including Highlands and Islands Enterprise and local authorities, and an updated Action Plan will be consulted on from June 2019.



## Looking ahead ...

Delivery against the actions in the Partnership Plan will continue within the context of a changing policy environment, and the recent climate change and biodiversity emergency announced by Scottish Government will have a profound impact on the work of the Park Authority and partners within the Park.

There will need to be a step change over the coming years on mitigation of, and adaptation to, the changing climate. This will mean increasing the level of peatland restoration and woodland expansion and considering issues, such as, snow patterns in the Cairngorms and water management. On biodiversity the implementation of the [Cairngorms Nature Action Plan](#) becomes even more critical as we look to play our part as the most important area for nature in the UK.

In 2019/20 there are also two reviews that will impact on work in the Park and the work of partners. These are the Grouse Management Review and the Deer Management Review. These will potentially have significant impacts on the uplands of the National Park and how they are managed over the following years. The management of the uplands and the provision of affordable housing will continue to be priorities in the Park, and there are still major issues to resolve including the long term management of Cairngorm Mountain and the elimination of wildlife crime.

However 2019/20 will also see the establishment of the Youth Council for the National Park, the continued expansion of Volunteer Rangers, significant investment across multiple projects from Tomintoul to Badenoch, the completion of the Speyside Way extension and the continued work with the Park's communities on their priorities and projects.

*2019/2020 will be another busy year, with all partners continuing to work together to deliver for everyone who lives, works and visits the Cairngorms National Park.*



[www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)

*Photo credits: Peter Cairns/2020VISION/CNPA; P&K Council; Malcolm Cross; Wee Epics; Angus Findlay; Mark Hamblin/2020VISION/CNPA; Jakub Iwanicki/VisitScotland/CNPA; Kenny Lam/VisitScotland/CNPA; PiP/DDSFB; Linda Pitkin/2020VISION/CNPA; Rupert Shanks; Damian Shields/VisitScotland/CNPA*