# Cairn magazine – summer 2024

Cairn is the official magazine of the Cairngorms National Park. It is produced three times a year (March, July and November) by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. For more information about this magazine see [www.cairngorms.co.uk/magazine](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/magazine).

You can also get all the latest news from the National Park via our social media channels. There are:

* Facebook: @CairngormsNews
* Instagram: @CairngormsNationalPark
* X / Twitter: @CairngormsNews
* LinkedIn: Cairngorms National Park Authority

## Directory of key contacts

Do you have a question about something in the National Park? The contacts below will help you to get to the correct person or organisation to help you.

### Business support

GrowBiz connect@growbiz.co.uk

Cairngorms Business Partnership office@visitcairngorms.com

### Local council services

Aberdeenshire: 01467 534 333

Angus: angus.gov.uk

Highland: 01349 886 608

Moray: 0300 123 4561

Perth and Kinross: 01738 475 000

### Land management and conservation

landmanagement@cairngorms.co.uk

nature@cairngorms.co.uk

### Paths and accessing the National Park

outdooraccess@cairngorms.co.uk

[www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot)

### Planning

All planning questions should go to the relevant local authority in the first instance (see contacts listed under ‘local council services’) or visit [www.eplanningcnpa.co.uk](http://www.eplanningcnpa.co.uk) to view and comment on live applications.

### Recruitment and current vacancies

recruitment@cairngorms.co.uk

### Volunteering

volunteers@cairngorms.co.uk

### Visitor information

[www.visitcairngorms.com](http://www.visitcairngorms.com)

[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)

### Something else?

Email: enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk

Telephone: 01479 873 535

Address to visit us in person:

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## Fàilte / Welcome

Welcome to the summer edition of Cairn, the magazine for residents of the Cairngorms National Park.

Summer is upon us, and across the Cairngorms our towns and villages are playing host to visitors from all over the world. These guests are an important part of our local economy and contribute much to the character of the National Park; however, we are also mindful of some of the challenges increased numbers can bring.

In this issue we meet the team helping visitors enjoy this special place responsibly.

This summer season, the Park Authority has 21 countryside rangers on the ground, working closely with a further 28 rangers from partner services. We also support a team of over 60 volunteer rangers.

That’s over 100 people where it really matters: welcoming, guiding and supporting people to do the right thing from the moment they arrive.

So whilst there will always be some challenges, it’s comforting to know that there’s an expert team in place to prevent issues from arising, and to take action on the occasions that they do.

* We’d love to hear what you think of this summer edition. You can get in touch with us by calling 01479 873 535 or you can email us on haveyoursay@cairngorms.co.uk

## Nature news

### Peat progress

Significant progress is being made to restore damaged peatlands in the Cairngorms National Park and deliver on our climate change commitments. In 2023, our Peatland ACTION team and partners restored 1,345 hectares of peatland, the third year in a row they have exceeded their target.

Peatland restoration is one of the key deliverables in our Partnership Plan and is crucial to capturing carbon, with one hectare of restored peat saving between two and 14 tonnes of CO2 equivalent each year. Restoration work also improves water quality and storage, as well as providing an enriched habitat for a range of species.

A crucial aspect of the project is providing rural jobs and supporting the local economy. Peatland restoration requires specific knowledge, which is why we created a new entrants’ scheme to train up contractors to be able to undertake this delicate work.

In the past three years, five local companies have taken on contracts as a result of the scheme and received training for 12 employees. NatureScot also supported the training of a new machine operator under an apprenticeship scheme.

For more information head to [cairngorms.co.uk/peatland-action](https://cairngorms.co.uk/caring-future/cairngorms-landscapes/landscape-conservation/peatland-action/).

### Farming for nature

The Park Authority has committed more than £100,000 to nature-friendly farming activities this year to help deliver the nature targets in our Partnership Plan.

This involves working with farmers, land managers and partners to explore ways of managing their grasslands to benefit nature, whilst also improving farm profitability. In early July, our team delivered workshops for farmers and land managers interested in managing their grasslands to benefit nature.

We’re also working with farmers to deliver wader conservation. This includes supporting the work of the Strathspey Wetlands and Wader Initiative and the Grampian Wetlands and Wader Initiative to deliver wader-friendly habitat.

### Move a mussel

The Park Authority is working with partners to reinforce populations of the endangered freshwater pearl mussel on the Spey next spring, and will carry out similar work on the Dee once river restoration work has taken place.

This follows research suggesting that mussel populations on the Dee have declined by as much as 90% as a result of climate change.

This work will form part of a long-term restoration plan, using innovative techniques such as environmental DNA for monitoring, trialling the translocation of pearl mussels, and researching the logistics of a captive breeding programme.

### Trailblazers

A brand new beaver trail, co-funded by the Park Authority, has opened at Rothiemurchus.

The 7km route – mostly on wide paths with a smooth, firm surface – takes visitors through the ancient forest to Lochan Mor, where beavers were reintroduced last year. Keep your eyes peeled for signs of beavers and lots of engaging content as you walk around.

The trail launch comes at the end of a busy first year for the project, which has seen 18 beavers released within the National Park across three sites. All of the animals have settled in well to their new surroundings and will continue to be monitored closely by project staff.

The team will also be working with farmers and land managers over the next few months to deal with any issues that might arise as a result of beaver activity, talking to visitors about reducing the risk of disturbance, and hopefully looking out for baby beavers (or ‘kits’) as they begin to emerge.

To find out more about the beaver trail go to [www.rothiemurchus.net/visit/map/walking](http://www.rothiemurchus.net/visit/map/walking).

### Good neighbours

A new campaign is working in partnership with Boat of Garten residents and Strathspey Estate to encourage dog owners to continue to be good capercaillie neighbours.

The woods around the village now account for around 2% of the national population, making it especially important to reduce disturbance in key areas.

A vital part of the work is asking dog owners to take care during the capercaillie breeding season (1 April to 31 August). This includes keeping dogs on the path and under close control in the woods around the village, and walking them on a short lead where asked to reduce the risk of capercaillie being disturbed when they are mating, nesting or with young.

Meanwhile, the dedicated ‘Lek It Be’ campaign has been a real success, with the vast majority of birdwatchers, photographers and wildlife guides choosing to give capercaillie space this breeding season and not go searching for them. For more info visit [www.lekitbe.scot](http://www.lekitbe.scot).

### Bearing fruit

Young people from across the National Park have been getting their hands dirty for nature. Alford Academy and Grantown Grammar students planted fruit trees to help improve their school grounds as part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme.

Back in 2013, 18 community orchards were planted to celebrate 10 years of the National Park, and these two new orchards bring the total to 20 orchards to mark the 20th anniversary.

Meanwhile, a group from Kingussie High School have designed and constructed raised seed beds with Forestry and Land Scotland. They harvested Scots pinecones to extract the seeds before sowing them in the beds – a hands-on lesson in sustainable forestry.

And, as part of the Cairngorms 2030 Climate Learning and Education project, staff at Kingussie High have created a list of sustainable actions they’d like to see at the school. This supports the national curriculum ‘learning for sustainability’ goals.

### Rapt attention

The Cairngorms Raptor Project is carrying out a National Park-wide survey of peregrine falcons this year.

Working with local raptor study groups and a team of dedicated surveyors, the aim is to establish the number of breeding peregrines to see how the population has fared since the last national survey in 2014. The data will also help inform future conservation efforts for the species.

### Plantlife projects

Over the past four years, Plantlife’s Rare Plants in the Cairngorms and Wild Connections project has worked with 100 volunteers to translocate 1,000 rare plants, including the threatened twinflower.

The project pioneered techniques for mountaintop fungi identification, explored new farming practices for flower-rich meadows and searched for new grassland sites for waxcap mushrooms. We were delighted to support this project and look forward to working with Plantlife on next steps.

### Beauty spots

The first ever release of threatened dark bordered beauty moth eggs has taken place as part of the Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms project.

750 eggs were released into a specially-selected site in the Cairngorms, having been bred in a dedicated facility at the Highland Wildlife Park. The team will also be releasing caterpillars and adults later in the year.

## In your community

### Affordable housing

Grampian Housing Association’s visionary Old School regeneration project in the Ballater conservation area has won the best use of empty homes to meet social / affordable housing need award at the 13th Scottish Empty Homes Conference.

Organised by the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership and Shelter Scotland, the awards spotlight some of the inspirational people and projects taking place throughout Scotland to address the empty homes issue.

The Old School development was notable for revitalising an at-risk building and providing 24 properties for social rent: a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom flats and two- and four-bedroom family houses. The site had been identified in the local plan for affordable housing given the real shortage in rural Ballater.

### Community visions

The Cairngorms Trust and Scottish Government, in partnership with the Park Authority, have distributed over £600,000 to community-led projects since 2022.

In the most recent round of their Community-Led Vision Fund, 22 community projects were awarded a total of £364,567.

Support for young people featured heavily in the awards, with grants including preparing high school students for the world of work (IRL Education in Kingussie), funding courses in emergency first aid, bushcraft and mountain leadership (Cairngorms Youth Local Action Group), and a wilderness personal development programme (Wild in Mind in Carrbridge).

To see the outcomes of the projects, head to [www.cairngormstrust.org.uk/who-you-help](http://www.cairngormstrust.org.uk/who-you-help).

### Record response to fire consultation

Thank you to the 1,664 people who responded to our fire management consultation, including nearly 1,000 residents within the National Park.

As part of the consultation, we asked whether a fire management byelaw was part of the solution to tackling wildfire risk in the Cairngorms. 79% of respondents said yes, 16% said no and 5% said don’t know.

Of the three byelaw options we put forward, 17% preferred no fire byelaws, 32% a byelaw at times of high fire risk, 44% a year-round byelaw, and 6% proposed an alternative option.

The Park Authority board considered all your feedback at a meeting on 28 June (after this magazine went to print). If they decide that a byelaw is required, the final wording will be consulted on for a further 12 weeks later this year, before being submitted to Scottish Ministers for their consideration.

The earliest a byelaw would come into place is 2025, but we will continue our education, communication and ranger activity warning of wildfire risks in the meantime.

### Your National Park, your views

18,000 people call the Cairngorms National Park home, from farmers to full-time carers, accommodation providers to manufacturers, estate workers to retirees.

This summer, we’re looking to hear from as many people as possible who call the National Park home. What are your experiences of living and working here? What issues matter most to you? And what's your perspective on issues including affordable housing, transport, tackling climate change and more?

The online survey should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete and, as a thank you for taking part, you’ll have the chance to enter a prize draw to win £100 in vouchers to spend locally.

As with our long-term visitor survey, we'll publish the results in full and repeat the exercise every few years to see how views and opinions change over time. We'll also use the results to shape our next Partnership Plan and gauge whether our work – and the work of partners – is making a difference.

To take part in the survey, and for the chance to win £100 in vouchers, go to [www.cairngorms.co.uk/magazine](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/magazine) or call 01479 873 535.

### Glenmore gains

Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust have agreed to take over Glenmore Visitor Centre from Forestry and Land Scotland after a successful community asset transfer application.

Over a million people visit the Glenmore area each year and the transfer enables the community to take ownership of a key asset that plays a vital role in local tourism. It provides the Trust with a unique opportunity to contribute to sustainable community-led tourism and environmental conservation. For more information visit [www.aviemoreglenmoretrust.org](http://www.aviemoreglenmoretrust.org).

### Dementia activity programme

The Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre at Bagaduish has launched its summer programme of activities for people living with dementia, their family members and carers.

The centre enables people to experience the mental and physical benefits of spending time outdoors. The project is part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme, led by the Park Authority and supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Activities on offer this year include cycling sessions with Able 2 Adventure, nature education sessions with Wild Things, nature walks, basket-making and outdoor music.

The activities all have a therapeutic value, as well as being social and offering peer support. The centre works on a self-referral basis, meaning access is quick and straightforward.

For more information go to [www.alzscot.org/odrc](http://www.alzscot.org/odrc).

### Change for the better

A new Changing Places facility and toilets are set to arrive at Loch Garten later this season, helping make the National Nature Reserve more accessible to residents and visitors.

The project has been funded by the Park Authority and RSPB Scotland. and includes investment in path widening on the site.

### Green prescriptions

GPs and healthcare providers in Badenoch and Strathspey can now prescribe nature-based activities through the Park Authority’s nature prescriptions project.

The project, which is part of Cairngorms 2030, supports people on an individual basis to connect with nature to feel better. Previous trials of nature prescriptions in Scotland demonstrated their effectiveness, with 74% of patients saying that they benefited and 91% of health professionals saying they would continue to offer the service.

Support is available on a self-referral basis and people can be referred by GP surgeries in Grantown-on-Spey, Aviemore, Kingussie and Laggan. Once referred, people are put in touch with one of the Park Authority’s qualified Green Health Link Workers.

If you, or someone you know, might benefit from a nature prescription, talk to your GP or visit your local GP practice’s website.

### Walk this way

Keen to explore the outdoors and meet new people? Our health walks could be just the thing for you.

Lasting no longer than an hour and led by trained walk leaders, health walks are a great way to enjoy nature, connect with your community and enhance your fitness. To find a group near you go to [www.cairngorms.co.uk/health-walks](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/health-walks).

### Dalwhinnie approval

An application for a new touring motorhome and caravan site at Dalwhinnie was approved by the Park Authority's Planning Committee in April.

The new site will comprise a 38-bay touring caravan and motorhome site, 10 overnight parking spaces, recycling and waste management facilities.

### Brand benefits

The Cairngorms Business Partnership has been speaking to local businesses who are part of the free Cairngorms brand charter scheme, finding out about their experiences of running a business in the area and how they use the scheme to promote their connection to the National Park. View the videos at [www.youtube.com/@VisitCairngorms](http://www.youtube.com/%40VisitCairngorms).

### Volunteers are top of the range

The Park Authority welcomed 25 new volunteer rangers this summer. Established in 2017 with six volunteers, the team is now over 60 strong and is drawn from a wide range of backgrounds.

Volunteers support a network of partners across the National Park, engaging with visitors in our busier locations, helping run events and activities, monitoring wildlife, maintaining paths and much more.

They also support partners such as Alzheimer Scotland at the Outdoor Dementia Resource Centre in Badaguish, Healthy Minds activities run by High Life Highland, and visiting families as part of the work of Home-Start East Highland.

There’s no one ‘type’ of volunteer ranger and members bring a range of life experience, from students and retirees to those working full-time or with full-time caring responsibilities. The role is flexible in terms of time commitment. For more information on how to get involved head to [www.cairngorms.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/volunteer).

### Farming focus

The Park Authority was pleased to welcome leaders from the National Farmers’ Union for Scotland to a local farm in Strathspey.

The visit was an opportunity to discuss shared priorities, issues impacting farmers and crofters, and our commitment to supporting people living and working in the National Park.

Martin Kennedy, President of NFUS, and Jonnie Hall, Deputy CEO, met with our Convener Sandy Bremner, Deputy Convener Eleanor Mackintosh, CEO Grant Moir and other key staff. They agreed to work together closely to support farmers and crofters across the National Park.

Commenting on the visit, Mr Kennedy said: “It was a great opportunity to discuss common issues, address misinformation about the National Park and build relationships for the benefit of our members.”

### Community catch-ups

The Cairngorms 2030 team were in Braemar recently to chat about our restoration plans for the Upper Dee and to showcase some work with local schools.

Aberdeenshire Council also shared their plans to make the village more walking, cycling and wheelchair friendly. The next community drop-in event will take place in Carrbridge later this month.

### Plans develop

Our Local Development Plan helps guide development in the National Park.

This includes where affordable housing, community facilities and other developments will go.

To help shape the next phase of the Local Development Plan process, please share your views on our dedicated website [www.cairngormsldp.commonplace.is](http://www.cairngormsldp.commonplace.is).

## Careers in the Cairngorms

### Your future here careers in the Cairngorms

‘If you told me when I was younger that I’d have left school and gone straight into running my own business I’d have laughed at you,’ says Ben Morrison, owner of Morrison Lawn and Landscape in Grantown on Spey.

Ben, 21, started cutting grass for clients aged 15 and now employs three people full time. ‘A lot of folk feel they need to leave and go down south for work, but I never really had any intention of moving away.’

It’s a conversation that young people and their families will be familiar with right across the National Park – and indeed the whole of rural Scotland. The pull of the big city, the need to move away to build a career.

However, a growing number of young people are bucking the trend and, this September, the Park Authority, Countryside Learning Scotland and a range of partners are coming together to explore what the future of rural careers looks like.

‘There are so many pre-conceived ideas about working in rural areas and this event is all about challenging some of the stereotypes,’ explains Ian Robertson, Chief Executive of Countryside Learning Scotland.

‘Rural careers have changed so much in recent years, with technology seeing many roles evolve and many new roles created. We wanted to celebrate the diversity of opportunities available – from farming to drone flying, hospitality to healthcare – giving young people a chance to hear from people who’ve taken the leap, and to have a go themselves.’

On 12 September we’re hosting ‘Your Future Here’ – a careers fair with a difference – bringing together young people from across the region to get a taste of what rural careers really involve.

This won’t be your traditional careers event – out are the bland corporate stands and endless promo materials and brochures, in are practical workshops and demonstrations, breakout spaces for one-to-one chats, as well as live job and training opportunities.

There will also be a chance to hear from young people just a few years into their career journey in the Cairngorms. People like Lexie Murray, 19, of The Cairn Distillery.

‘Leaving school and going straight into the whisky industry isn’t a very common path for most people but it’s been a great adventure so far,’ Lexie says. ‘I don’t think it’s necessarily the case that you need to leave home in order to get a job: if you’ve got your mind set on something there’s a good chance it can be done in the National Park.’

‘Your Future Here’ – a free event due to take place at MacDonald Highland Resort in Aviemore this autumn – will be a chance to meet up with over 300 young people all in the same boat, wondering what a career in the Cairngorms might look like in practice.

As Ian Robertson explains: ‘We’ve heard loud and clear from young people in the National Park that they wanted something different and ‘Your Future Here’ is our response to that. If you’re keen to stay in the Cairngorms but aren’t sure what careers are available, or what role might suit you best, this event should be the perfect place to start.

For more information and to book your place visit [www.cairngorms.co.uk/your-future-here](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/your-future-here).

Should this be included?? - With thanks to our partners: Cairngorms Business Partnership, Developing the Young Workforce, Growbiz, Lantra Scotland, NatureScot, Scottish Land and Estates, Skills Development Scotland and the University of the Highlands and Islands

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## Cairngorms voices

### In conversation with our rangers

**Pete Short** is one of 21 countryside rangers that make up the Park Authority’s ranger service. The team works in partnership with a further 28 rangers from partner services across the Cairngorms during the visitor season.

#### How long have you worked for the ranger service and how did you get into it?

After studying zoology at university, I worked as a camera operator and mountain guide for various BBC natural history programmes. Long term, I wanted a career in nature conservation and the outdoors, so trained to be a ranger. The Cairngorms National Park ranger service is in its fifth year of existence – I was one of the first seven rangers recruited in June 2020, just before the first lockdown ended. It was amazing to be a part of something new and there was a huge amount of energy behind it.

#### What are some of your key responsibilities?

We’re often the very first point of contact for visitors when they arrive. It’s our job to provide a warm welcome and support everyone to enjoy, discover and connect to the Cairngorms in a caring and responsible way. We also run events and guided walks, work with local schools, deliver conservation activity on the ground and much more besides. Every day is different.

#### What do you enjoy most about your job?

Part of my role involves coordinating the National Park’s junior ranger activity in Badenoch and Strathspey, which is a huge privilege. It has extremely supportive partners and it’s great to meet young people living all over the National Park and listen to their perspectives from growing up in this area.

I love this job as, whatever you’re working on that day, it feels like you’re out there making a real difference in the community.

**George Patterson** is a countryside ranger for Angus Alive, one of 14 partner ranger services that work closely with the Park Authority’s own ranger team.

#### How long have you been a countryside ranger and how did you get into it?

I’ve been in my job for around 18 months and before that I worked here as a countryside technician. I really wanted a role that included education and being outside and, luckily, a role came up and I was able to sidestep into my dream job as a ranger!

#### What do you love about what you do?

Teaching people how to enjoy the environment around us without having an impact on it is always something I’ve enjoyed and been good at. I also work on a number of different projects with schools, from ‘teach the teacher’ sessions on how to deliver outdoor education activities to working with young people who might not otherwise get to experience the outdoors.

#### What is it like to be part of the ranger network in the National Park?

Working with the Park Authority ranger service and other partner and volunteer rangers I’ve seen how, together, we can make a positive impact on the visitor environment.

Being part of this network means we have a joined-up way of delivering important messages and advice to visitors on things like camping, fires and teaching them about responsible access and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

I feel like I get a lot of support and enthusiasm from the partnership. I often meet visitors who have come here after speaking with a ranger from elsewhere in the National Park and I love that. We’re all passionate about the outdoors and nature, and importantly we enable people to become passionate about it too.