

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: CEO REPORT

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Purpose:

- I. To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Conservation:

- I. **Cairngorms Nature:** Confirmation is expected this month of CNPA's latest application to the Nature Restoration Fund for c£300,000 of freshwater restoration projects, delivered mainly through local contractors, projects to be implemented by the Catchment Management Partnerships. Current Biodiversity Challenge Fund projects, totalling c£150,000 include stone dyke restoration in Badenoch & Strathspey, pond creation for northern damselfly on estates in Deeside and Strathspey, fencing to protect montane willow and juniper on Mar Lodge estate and Delnadamph respectively and aspen plants for planting on Deeside.

The fortunes of the incredibly rare pine hoverfly have seen a massive reversal through the very successful captive breeding of 7,000 larvae at Highland Wildlife Park as part of Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms, a Cairngorms Nature partnership project. The project is awaiting the result of an NLHF bid to be able to continue.

Three Celltrack tags were deployed on golden eagle chicks on three estates in the National Park. The tags use both mobile and satellite reception to record and provide near real-time detail on location as well as an in built mortality indicator that recognises non-natural behaviour consistent with illegal persecution events.

2. **Cairngorms Capercaillie Project:** The latest [project highlight report](#) shows that progress across all of the project's approved purposes is on track.

The [visitor survey](#) currently running in Rothiemurchus, Glenmore and Abernethy aims to establish the motivations of different types of visitors and identify ways they can help play a part in capercaillie conservation. The findings will be shared publicly and used to inform the action planning process. The first stage of **research in Deeside** is

now complete. 30 interviews have been conducted with key stakeholders including landowners and land managers, businesses related to tourism and recreation, and representatives from community and interest groups. The **survey for businesses** is now closed. 131 businesses completed the survey. 110 had not engaged with the project before and 27 agreed to follow-up interviews.

All related landowners, neighbours and the Carrbridge & Vicinity Community Council are being asked to comment on **draft design concepts to improve paths and outdoor spaces around Carrbridge**, drawn up following the community consultation in May. Amended and agreed proposals will then form a further round of community consultation. The **trial signage around Carrbridge** encouraging responsible dog walking in capercaillie areas has been taken down at the end of the sensitive time for capercaillie. An end of season report will be produced about the signs and made available on the project website. More information in the latest [Carrbridge Capercaillie newsletter](#). The **trial signage encouraging responsible mountain bike riding** in capercaillie areas on High Burnside and Badaguish is also being removed and an end of season report produced.

Douglas Carchrie has joined the project team as the **Mountain Bike Mapping Intern** responsible for mapping mountain bike trails and signage alongside capercaillie data to enable the MTB community to make more informed decisions about trail development, signage and promotion. There is a project [Facebook page](#) to enable the project to be more active online and extend its reach and there is now [a page](#) on the project website with details of **Freedom of Information** requests received, **governance and management, research reports and tenders**.

3. **Woodland Creation:** The CNPA has recently been consulted about several significant woodland creation proposals across the Park. These include 1100 ha of native woodland to be delivered through a mixture of natural regeneration and planting on Muckrach Moor. Around 400 ha of new native woodland by planting and natural regeneration is being proposed within the National Park's share of the Kinrara estate. Plans have also been advanced for an estimated 2200 ha of native woodland expansion, primarily through natural regeneration, on properties owned by Wildland Ltd at Lynaberack and Gaick over the next 10 years. Furthermore, NTS at Mar Lodge has put forward proposals for new riparian woodland creation along a sizeable stretch of Glen Geldie, which would not only conserve and enhance the aquatic environment through shading etc., but would create a strategically significant corridor of native woodland between the existing woodland of the Spey and Dee catchments. This last proposal has been supported by a grant from the CNP Woodland Challenge Fund, which contributed towards the cost of a detailed peat depth survey. We anticipate being consulted about further significant woodland creation proposals across the Park in due course.
4. **Peatland Restoration:** Two new Peatland Action Project Officers joined the team in July bringing the staff compliment to five with a Peatland GIS Officer and Project Assistant to be recruited this autumn. The team is receiving increased interest in peatland restoration from land managers across the National Park and from potential private investors for carbon offsetting.

The demand for restoration work continues to outstrip the availability of peatland contractors and this is likely to limit the delivery potential for several years. For the third year in a row several projects did not attract contractors to undertake the work. This in part reflects the lack of peatland contractors as well as the very high demand in the construction sector for machine operators and staff shortages due to Brexit or Covid.

The team is running a training programme for new peatland contractors on Atholl and Tulchan Estates where we will work with at least 4 local contractors to train them on undertaking drain blocking and re-profiling. Furthermore, general training is to be run with the assistance of the Peatland ACTION training team from the Crichton Carbon Centre.

Contractors are working on two Wildland Estates, with three other estates about to see contractors start in September. Breeding bird, herbivore impact assessment and peat depth surveys were undertaken across 9 estates covering several thousand hectares to help with planning new project delivery.

Peatland restoration is now classed as Permitted Development (from 1 April this year) and prior notification applications need to be submitted to Local Authorities. The Peatland team have developed new protocols for this process and applications were submitted for ten estates.

Our target of 557 hectares of peatland restoration management for this year remains challenging given the contractor issues despite the team actually having 955 hectares of potential projects that could be delivered. The majority of our work this year will be drain blocking and there is the possibility to increase this work if weather and contractor capacity allow.

5. **Moorland Management:** East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership is the main focus for CNPA's moorland work. The Partnership's current 5 member estates continue to be committed to the goals of the Partnership and are working on a variety of woodland and scrub expansion projects and peatland restoration schemes, as well as contributing to the Muirburn Code Working Group. Wader, mountain hare and raptor monitoring are now being carried out on a routine basis and suggest healthy populations across most species. Moorland raptor breeding success this year has been encouraging, with golden eagles satellite tagged on 4 estates and hen harriers tagged on Mar Lodge. Interpretation panels have been installed in a new visitor hub in the Ballater office which will be opening to the public soon.
6. **Deer Management:** In line with current NPPP, CNPA is working through Deer Management Groups (DMG) to produce Strategic Land Management Plans (SLMP), which will include deer management, aimed at addressing climate change and biodiversity loss.

Focus will be on the DMGs in the South of CNP: West Grampian DMG, South Deeside North Angus DMG, South Grampian DMG. CNPA and the three DMGs agreed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) around the development of SLMPs that forms part of the successful Heritage Horizons funding bid.

Once NLHF provide permission to start, CNPA and each DMG will begin a two-year development programme towards delivering the Partner Objectives contained in the MoUs.

Visitor Experience:

7. **Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum:** The LOAF met on 25 August discussing the draft NP Partnership Plan and work undertaken this summer on managing for visitors. The main issue discussed was the locking of gates by Network Rail on a well-used path crossing from the village of Dalwhinnie to Loch Ericht and on to Ben Alder. CNPA had not been consulted on the proposed change. The new arrangements prompted objections from community council and a range of national organisations. The Forum advised that current arrangements were unsatisfactory and endorsed the next steps which included that CNPA meet with Network Rail and partners to find a safe and appropriate solution to pedestrians crossing the railway at Dalwhinnie.
8. **Tread Lightly in the Park:** The revised version of Tread Lightly continues to be promoted with key focus on responsible; camping & cooking, litter & toilets, and dog walking. Link here [tread-lightly.pdf \(cairngorms.co.uk\)](https://www.cairngorms.co.uk/tread-lightly.pdf) Further work is required nationally to agree consistent messaging across Scotland so that visitors are asked to behave in the same responsible way wherever they are enjoying the countryside.
9. **Long Distance Routes: Speyside Way:** The extension is now open with a branded start/end point at Newtonmore. An official event to celebrate the new route, promoting the path and celebrating the work of a range of partners, is planned for next Spring. Work is ongoing to improve sections of the route between Aviemore and Newtonmore that were not 'new build' in the extension. Kinraig Community and Anagach Woodland Trust (Grantown-on-Spey) are both being supported to develop designs and funding bids for sections of original path. Discussions are ongoing with Highland Council, Sustrans and Hitrans on improving the signage on the on road section from Kingussie to Ruthven Barracks. **National Cycle Route 7** Sustrans are launching new route promotion encouraging users to explore the local area using the route. **Deeside Way/NCN 195** (these routes coincide) Sustrans, with partners, is leading on work to look at the condition and requirements of whole route from Aberdeen to Ballater with potential for extension to Braemar.
10. **Cairngorms Rangers:** Five full time CNPA rangers are in post and 'on the ground' (including one FTE post designated to support the Capercaille Project), along with nine seasonal rangers including one based in Angus Glens. Four young people who joined the team as part of the national Kickstart programme are 'half way' through the programme with one, following interview, promoted to a Seasonal Ranger vacancy. Throughout the summer the team provide seven day coverage including weekends and weekend evenings. In the 21 weeks since Easter they have talked with 9,794 visitors (close to 1% of people enjoying the National Park). Sadly during this period they have also collected 484 bin bags of litter averaging 23 bags each week. Nature Scotland, RSPB, Forestry & Land Scotland, NTS and Balmoral Estate have all increased their summer seasonal staff and the growing family of Cairngorms Rangers

communicate via mobile phone message groups to share experience and any requirements.

11. **Visitor Infrastructure:** Work has commenced on preparation of a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan with funding from VisitScotland. The Plan will set out the case for range improvements to be made over time in capital infrastructure and also maintenance of core assets, including the network of Core Paths and the Long Distance Routes in the Park. The first phase of grants for improved visitor infrastructure have been offered including funding for improved parking near Beinn a Ghlo and new visitor facilities near Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve.
12. **Volunteering & Health Walks:** With the easing of lockdown the majority of the 38 volunteer rangers are now out on the ground, supporting the work of Cairngorms rangers. A review is underway to assess what has worked well over the last four years of our work supporting volunteers and what we can do better going forward. This will be presented to CNPA Board later this year. Currently 12 **Health Walk** groups meet weekly around the National Park following Covid safe protocols. Walk Leader training will take place in September to increase volunteer capacity to support these walks. and Wee Walks Week scheduled for October promoting opportunities to get outdoors as the 'clocks change'.
13. **Local Information Centres:** The 13 LIC's are continuing to provide information to visitors across the National Park with new information and interpretation now installed at Glenlivet Mountain Bike Café and Laggan Wolftrax undergoing redevelopment aimed to be ready for Spring 2022.
14. **Education and Inclusion:** John Muir Award re-engagements following Covid-19 restrictions continues to grow. As the busy season eases CNPA Rangers with partner services will look at how best to restart the Junior Ranger programme. Work supporting Backbone continues, aimed at increasing participation in the outdoors among people from a wide range of backgrounds, and on Sunday 10th October at the Hayfield, Glenmore, an event hosted by Backbone and supported by rangers services and external activity providers, will run a series of engaging and accessible activities aimed at connecting 150 people to the nature and special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park. This is one of three festivals planned to take place in CNP over the next 12 months, with the other two located in Tomintoul and Deeside.
15. **Information and Interpretation:** The new community art installation in Newtomore, supported by CNPA & a range of partners, was opened in gust by Kate Forbes MSP in August. This sculptured shinty stick seat, standing stones and information panels is alongside the start/finish point for Speyside Way. A new community path leaflet (18th in the National Park) is being developed for Kincaig with work on upgraded reprints for Braemar, Grantown-on-Spey, Aviemore and Kingussie underway. Work will start this autumn on a mobile phone app to allow easy phone access to the 'leaflets' in a way that can be understood and used on screen.

Louise Fenlon, our new Communications Coordinator (Publications and Interpretation), joined CNPA from Scottish Ballet on 1 September. Louise's early focus will be on National Park Partnership Plan and Annual Review materials, as well

as liaising with partners on a variety of interpretation projects, including activity at Glen Tanar Estate.

We have been working closely with Alison Hubbard of Cranford Guest House to develop Braemar Local Information Centre, with a suite of new interpretation panels, leaflet displays and signage being installed in the past few weeks.

Rural Development:

15. **Local Development Plan 2021:** The Plan was adopted on 26 March and has been used to determine planning applications in the National Park since then. The Planning Committee have approved three further items of planning guidance for consultation that will start in September on Housing, Developer obligations and Design and Place-making Guidance. The Plan is actively monitored to make sure the policies are well used and the Plan is delivering the sort of development we want to see in the Park – the most recent monitoring report was presented to Planning Committee in August 2021.
16. **Planning Casework:** There have been two Planning Committee meetings since the last Board meeting, with applications including visitor-related facilities and accommodation, new housing and retrospective track.
17. **Community-led Housing Delivery:** Works have commenced on the Tomintoul Community Housing Project that was approved at May's Planning Committee. The CNPA has called-in the planning applications associated with Braemar's community housing project. The Community-led Housing Group, facilitated by CNPA, is scheduled to meet in late October.
18. **Economic Action Plan:** The Cairngorms Economic Steering Group met in June and August, considering a range of topics including Covid -19 business support activity, the move towards a Well-being Economy, the Green Recovery Fund, Pathways to Rural Work project and the draft National Park Partnership Plan. Attendance and participation at the meetings is good and involves the village business/tourism associations, representative bodies (Cairngorms Business Partnership, Federation of Small Businesses, SCDI, etc) and the relevant public bodies. Next meeting in November will focus on skills and training related issues.
19. **Tourism Action Plan:** Discussions have taken place with Europarc to confirm that development of the Tourism Action Plan and submission of the application to renew the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas can take place in 2022 to align with timescale for development of the National Park Partnership Plan. Most recent meeting of the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership was in August 2021 and focused on the NP Partnership Plan and the proposal to sign up to Tourism Declares initiative.
20. **A9 Dualling project:** Transport Scotland continue to lead the development of the non-motorised user (NMU) route between Aviemore and Carrbridge with the support of CNPA and Highland Council. A review of the timescales for delivery of individual sections is expected to be announced shortly.

21. **Cairngorms Business Barometer:** The 2021 (Quarter 2) results of the [Cairngorms Business Barometer](#) are now available. This regular survey showed a more optimistic picture with businesses demonstrating significantly higher confidence in the short, medium and long term compared to recent quarters. The survey included questions on the barriers to staff recruitment and the responses highlight the impacts on business of the lack availability of suitable accommodation for employees. Highland Council are now funding the CBP to undertake a further detailed survey of business housing needs in Badenoch and Strathspey. Discussions are underway about how to get the best use out of the powers to control short-term lets and HIE is financing research on how to use other non-fiscal measures to control second and holiday homes.
22. **Badenoch Great Place Project:** The project is nearing completion, with the [Badenoch Festival](#) taking place 18-25 September, including a celebratory event on 25 September to mark the achievements of the Project. This event, involving Kate Forbes MSP and Lord Thurso as Chair of VisitScotland, and will bridge the gap between the project and Scotland's Year of Stories 2022. The Badenoch Storylands App has been launched, along with new visitor itineraries, promoting this refreshed destination within the National Park. Complementary on-the-ground interpretation and signage is also being planned for future years. The Green Recovery Fund also funded a project to develop the story-telling culture in the area, led by community group Badenoch Heritage, all linking to the project legacy. All of the work will be promoted at the international Interpret Europe conference in October 2021.
23. **Green Recovery Fund:** At the June Board meeting, members were informed that 28 of 37 applications for the 2021/22 [Green Recovery Fund](#) had been approved using the total £300k budget available of 250k from CNPA and 50k from Cairngorms Trust. The projects are all now underway and a full report will be provided to resources Committee in due course. Highlights of the projects are being promoted by the Communications team in series of social media and blog posts.

Stakeholder Engagement:

24. Two Ministerial visits took place on 11 and 13 August. Mairi McAllan MSP (Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform) visited the Park to discuss progress with the Cairngorms Nature strategy, including a trip to the Highland Wildlife Park to hear about work on wildcat, pine hoverfly and capercaillie conservation, followed by a visit to see woodland regeneration at Seafeld Estate and the award-winning Allt Lorgy river restoration project. Michael Matheson MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport) travelled up to hear about the Heritage Horizons project, visiting the site of the planned outdoor dementia activity centre at Badaguish, hearing about our ambitious sustainable transport plans, and travelling along the old logging way via e-bike. The visit was rounded off with a discussion about Cairngorms Connect with colleagues from FLS, RSPB and NatureScot, and a tour of improvement works on the Cairngorm Mountain funicular railway with HIE.

A key focus for the Comms & Engagement team over the past few months has been the National Park Partnership Plan informal consultation, which launched on 15 June. At the time of writing, we have received 272 contributions so far, plus a further 185 comments gathered through our social media activity, and a smaller number (c. 20) of face to face qualitative interviews. The consultation runs until w/c 20 September, when the formal consultation will commence.

Communications:

26. **Active Cairngorms** – work continues with local and national partners on coordinated managing for visitor comms over the summer holidays. We partnered with VisitScotland on a two-day photoshoot to capture imagery of responsible visitor behaviour within the Park, from keeping dogs under close control to littering, camping, wildfires and planning ahead. Over 50 different social media, web and physical assets have been created off the back of this photoshoot, and these have been shared with partners nationwide as part of the ‘Yours to Enjoy’ campaign, ensuring consistency of message across the board.

In light of the tragic incidents at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park earlier in August, we highlighted the importance of water safety across all our channels, including sharing the RNLI’s [‘Float to Live’ video](#) and reinforcing nationally-agreed messaging around using appropriate equipment and taking necessary precautions around water.

In late July we issued a media release about the enhanced police presence in the Glenmore area at weekends, in conjunction with PoliceScotland, Forestry and Land Scotland and The Highland Council. Other notable visitor-related PR activity included a focus on our Kickstart ranger programme (including an interview on Murray Firth Radio), dedicated columns on wildfires and wider ranger activities within the Park, and a BBC radio interview with Pete Crane on wild camping and toilet issues.

We have also teamed up with award-winning filmmaker Abbie Barnes, whose latest project, Abbie Bikes Britain, involves biking from the northernmost point of mainland Britain to Lands’ End via each of the UK’s 15 National Parks. The project aims to raise awareness of the benefits of nature for individuals’ mental health and what we can all do to protect wild spaces. Abbie joined members of our ranger team to walk up Ben Macdui on 2 September.

27. **Cairngorms Nature** – The popular Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend art competition returned in July, with 200 entries from young people across the UK being whittled down to a final shortlist of ten. Over 2,000 votes were cast online and the competition reached over 15,000 people via Facebook alone and 900 engagements. The winning entry was called [‘Sleepy Fox’](#) and it was painted by a young man called Ian, who received a pair of binoculars to help with his wildlife spotting. The other finalists received a goodie bag for their efforts.

A concerted effort has been made this year to extend the period of engagement with young people following the BIG Weekend, and a key strand of this work was the

creation of a dedicated Cairngorms Nature Explorers' e-zine, packed with useful hints and tips for young people to get active in the countryside / green spaces where they live. The first of these e-zines was circulated in August and reached an audience of 144 sign ups, and we will look to expand this further over the coming months.

A separate Cairngorms Nature e-bulletin was sent out to over 1,200 subscribers with a particular focus on the Heritage Horizons project, as well as raptor breeding success as part of the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership and the launch of a new wood ant guide. We continued our monthly Cairngorms Nature columns in the Strathspey and Badenoch Herald and Deeside Piper, focusing on key species and habitats in the Park.

Two raptor stories connected to the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership area made headline news during July and August (Daily Record, Press and Journal, Herald, BBC, The National etc). [The first](#) concerned breeding success for a pair of sea eagles at Balmoral – the first time that the species has bred successfully on the estate – alongside further positive news for golden eagles, hen harriers, red kite, osprey, peregrine, merlin and short-eared owls across the five partner estates. [The second](#) drew attention to a successful golden eagle satellite tagging project, utilising the latest 'Celltrack' technology to monitor birds' movements in real time and provide a better understanding of the species' movements, habitat preferences and mortality.

28. **Make it Yours:** Promotion continued for the [new video training resource](#) for businesses and their employees, and discussions have started about restarting face to face sessions later in the year / early next, to provide more tailored support for those who need it. We are also working with colleagues at the Cairngorms Business Partnership on an application to VisitScotland's Year of Scotland's Stories 2022, with a particular emphasis on the Badenoch The Storylands project and the aural history of the Park area.
29. **Corporate communications:** alongside our ongoing proactive and reactive media activity around managing for visitors, there have been a number of key news stories in the past few months. These include the awarding of £303k to 28 local projects as part of the Green Recovery Fund; a celebration of the Growbiz business support scheme; responding to Rewilding Britain's erroneous claim that 44% of the Park comprises driven grouse moors; and the coordinated announcement (alongside NLHF) that we had been successful in our bid for up to £12.5m for the Heritage Horizons project. This latter story was covered extensively by the BBC, Press and Journal, Daily Record, Scotsman and a number of other publications, and has since been followed up with a story about the proposed dementia centre and details of the ministerial visit on 13 August. Elsewhere, Grant Moir was interviewed by STV about the Local Development Plan and affordable housing in the area, and we responded to various requests for comment on the Dalwhinnie railway crossing.

During August we explored a rural workforce theme, with [Doug McAdam writing a column](#) celebrating the work of farmers, crofters, gamekeepers, foresters and more that manage the land across the Park. [A piece on farming](#) showcased the work of the Duffus family at Mains of Auchriachan Farm near Tomintoul (who are committed to working with nature to enhance and conserve their land), whilst a [column by Vicky Anderson](#)

shed light on her work for the Strathspey Wetlands and Waders Initiative, collaborating closely with local farmers to protect waders returning to breed on the farms in Strathspey. We plan further activity on this theme over the coming months, including a gamekeeper working on the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project and a path builder working within the National Park.

30. **Website and social media:** From Jan to August 2021 across all channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) we now have an audience of 57k followers and have reached 3.2 million account users with content about Covid-19, visitor management, CNPA and CNP news, Gaelic, BIG Weekend, land management, planning and more.

Since the start of the year, 177,176 people have visited the website, viewing a total of 485,771 pages and spending an average of 1 minute 47 seconds on the site. A recent batch of website upgrades – including an improved desktop menu, the introduction of news and key content ‘quick links’ on secondary pages, and the creation of a new blog, photo and video section – will hopefully deepen visitor engagement, and we will conduct further analysis on this over the coming months.

We launched a social media promotional campaign for the National Park Partnership Plan on 15 July across the Cairngorms News Facebook and Twitter accounts, alongside Instagram and CNPA LinkedIn. We have posted 54 unique posts, reaching 220,000 account users who engaged 24,443 times with content, shared our posts 165 times, left 185 comments and clicked through to the consultation platform 583 times.

We have devised a system to collate comments and assign sentiment, and will add these comments to the informal analysis. There has been an exceptionally high level of debate and conversation on Instagram, which is something we will take forward into the formal consultation phase in late September.

Organisational Development:

31. **Business Continuity Planning (BCP)** Latest Scottish Government guidance is that working from home is encouraged, and 1 metre distancing must remain in place in public sector offices. In line with this guidance, and our move towards a hybrid approach where it is expected that most staff will work some of their contractual hours in the office and some at home, we have now conducted two surveys to inform our office return plans. Staff were asked to identify their preferences regarding work location, and teams were asked to identify how best we could align these preferences to make best use of the space in the office. Staff numbers have increased over the last 18 months, and we are planning for a return to a hot-desking environment, rather than for people to return to the desks they operated in prior to the pandemic. This approach respects the importance of collaboration, and the office will be reconfigured to support this. Small on-site meetings will be trialled in September with a view to larger numbers using the office in October. Whilst we hope to be able to host an on-site Board meeting in November, that will depend on whether or not SG guidance removes the 1m distancing rule in public sector offices, as currently with this rule, the board room can only accommodate 12 people. We are however exploring possibilities for hybrid staff and board meetings.

32. **Staffing update:** Since June, staffing updates are as follows:
- a) Staff who left the organisation were:
 - i. Diane Buchan, who retired from her role as Finance Officer,
 - ii. Lianne Starbuck-Stephen, who was a Seasonal Ranger, left for a permanent Ranger position.
 - b) Internal promotions, following a competitive internal recruitment process were:
 - i. David Clyne was appointed the Head of Heritage Horizons post
 - ii. Andy Ford was promoted to the Director of Nature and Climate Change post
 - c) External appointments, following a competitive external recruitment process were as follows:
 - i. Matt Watson and Thomas Plant have joined the Authority, as Peatland Action Project Officers, to the expanding Peatland Action team.
 - ii. Jenny Allen has joined the Ranger Services as Ranger Admin and Policy Assistant
 - iii. Joanna Hampson has joined the Communications and Engagement Team as Digital Content Coordinator.
 - iv. Colin Mclean has been appointed to the Head of Land Management post, replacing Will Boyd-Wallis.
33. **Youth Employment:**
- a) **Internships:**
 - i. Douglas Carchrie was appointed to a 4-month mountain Bike Trail internship
 - ii. Vanessa Altweck was appointed through Inclusion Scotland to an 8-month internships as Admin Assistant
 - b) **KickStart posts:** Scott Hastings was appointed to replace Lianne Starbuck-Stephen as a Seasonal Ranger. It was fantastic to see one of our Kickstart Rangers develop so much as to have the confidence to apply for this promoted post, and he had a very successful interview.
34. **Shared Services:** Continued work to provide HR support the Scottish Land Commission has included the development of new policies, the development, staff consultation and pay remits
35. **Organisational Development:** The organisation will be doing the Best Companies Staff Engagement Survey this year, which will feed in to our overarching approach to Organisational Development.

The Organisational Development Programme Board has met twice since June and is tasked with:-

- a) Coordinating final implementation of current Organisational Development Strategy and the migration of the organisation from business continuity operations to “new normal” operations.
- b) Coordinating the development of revised Organisational Development Strategy during 2022/23 on the back of the staff survey in Autumn 2021.

- c) Coordinating the delivery of the Organisational Development Strategy and the work associated with the architecture needed for the organisation to deliver (IT, data management etc.

This Board have informed the Hybrid Working Approach, and the “New Normal Project”, as well as ICT infrastructure enhancements to support these approaches.

36. **LEADER/CAIRNGORMS TRUST:** The LEADER Programme continues toward a closure at end of December 2021, with a small number of live projects coming to a conclusion over the final part of 2021 calendar year. All outstanding grant claims to the Scottish Government from the Authority as Accountable Body have now been settled, giving a clear financial position for the Authority on our LEADER management. The audit period for this programme could extend up to 10 years beyond the closure of the programme at the end of the year.

Scottish Government are now trialling new approaches to funding of Community Led Local Development (CLLD). The Cairngorms Trust, acting as the Local Action Group (LAG) has secured £50,000 from the ‘Testing Change’ fund to trial a grant awarding Youth LAG and extend the Green Recovery Fund approach as a model of future local level, community led investment. These approaches will be developed over September and will include the Cairngorms Youth Action Team in the development of a ‘Youth LAG’ in the design and awarding of grants to youth initiatives.

Grant Moir
September 2021

Board Member Updates

Doug McAdam

On the 27th July together with Deirdre Falconer and Carolyn Caddick I visited the ongoing peatland restoration work high up in upper Glen Tromie. Stephen Corcoran CNPA's Peatland Action Programme Manager was on hand to talk us through the site activity as was McGowan from the contractor undertaking the work.

This was an excellent and informative site visit. As well as seeing areas of completed work one year on, we saw areas in the process of being restored which highlighted the skilled work required from the digger drivers. Sam Hesling the contract manager from McGowan the contracting firm also explained to us about the challenges of working in such a high altitude and remote site. He also told us about his firm's approach and commitment to this work including their apprenticeship programme. The work is quite delicate and detailed, the environment very sensitive and challenging and the results are by no means guaranteed. All highlighting the skill that is needed by the guys doing the work on the ground. One of the biggest risks highlighted was what could happen when the next phase of the A9 duelling kicks off and the demand for digger and plant operators increases. This is a real potential risk to the peatland delivery programme and something that highlights the need to train and skill more young people into this trade.

Given peatland restoration is one of, if not the biggest single project activity the CNPA are undertaking, I would highly recommend such a visit to my Board colleagues.