Nature

The interaction between people and nature is central to addressing many of the challenges we face in the National Park and in society more generally. There is a need to find solutions to the climate emergency that have nature at their centre and the Cairngorms National Park should be a rural exemplar of this approach. This means addressing the big land use and ecological issues in the National Park over the next 25 years that will also continue to have significant positive effects for the next 200 years.

The Nature section of this draft plan sets out the overall outcome we are seeking to achieve, alongside a series of long-term objectives for the National Park. These are supported by a detailed policy framework and a series of actions we plan to take over the next five years, which are set out later in this document.

Outcome: A carbon negative and biodiversity rich National Park with better functioning, better connected and more resilient ecosystems.

OBJECTIVE	**A1.** Ensure the Cairngorms National Park reaches net zero by 2045 at the latest and contributes all it can to helping Scotland meet its net zero commitments.
TARGET / INDICATOR	**Annual progress report on net zero for the Cairngorms National Park.**

OBJECTIVE	**A2.** Increase the amount of woodland cover in the National Park to ensure bigger, more natural woodlands, expanding up to a natural treeline, providing connections across river catchments and around the central core of the mountains. The majority of this will be native woodland and will be allowed to regenerate naturally, without the need for planting or fencing.
TARGET / INDICATOR	**A minimum of 35,000 ha of new woodland cover created by 2045.**

OBJECTIVE	**A3.** Restore and manage peatland within the National Park to reduce carbon emissions and improve biodiversity.
TARGET / INDICATOR	**A minimum of 35,000 ha peatland restored by 2045.**

OBJECTIVE	**A4.** Reduce deer numbers across the National Park to enable woodland to expand, restored peatlands to recover, and wider biodiversity and landscape enhancement to take place.

TARGET / INDICATOR	Average red deer densities on the open range are five to eight per km² across the National Park by 2030. Sika and fallow deer (non-native species) will be contained within their current distribution in the National Park by 2030. Establish deer population in the woodlands of the National Park by 2025.

OBJECTIVE	**A5.** Reduce the intensity of game bird (grouse, pheasant, partridge) management within the National Park. Encourage lower density grouse shooting, as well as the adoption of best practice management techniques and sustainable pheasant and partridge shooting / releases.
TARGET / INDICATOR	**Average gamebird bags per unit area.** **Numbers of game birds released in the National Park.**

OBJECTIVE	**A6.** Stop burning on deep peatlands (currently defined as greater than 50 cm depth) and licence burning on shallower peatlands to reduce carbon emissions and encourage natural regeneration. Reduce wildfire risk by ensuring wildfire action plans are in place.
TARGET / INDICATOR	**No muirburn on peatland soils of over 50 cm depth and burning on shallower peats regulated by licensing by 2023.** **Wildfire action plans cover the whole National Park by 2024.**

OBJECTIVE

A7. Work with farms in the National Park to reduce their carbon footprint through improved management of grasslands and soil. Help join up habitats and ecosystems through increased woodland and scrub, restoring freshwater areas and supporting a greater variety of species. Agree carbon and biodiversity management plans with farmers in the National Park to help guide activities.

TARGET / INDICATOR

Carbon and biodiversity plans are in place for farms across the National Park by 2028.

OBJECTIVE

A8. Target rural payments to support sustainable food production, reduce carbon, increase and maintain the health of habitats and ecosystems, enhance biodiversity and help connect different habitats across the National Park. As part of this we will establish a Regional Land Use Partnership and Framework for the National Park which helps national and local government, communities, land owners and stakeholders work together to achieve net zero and find ways to optimise land use in a fair and inclusive way.

TARGET / INDICATOR

Establish a Regional Land Use Partnership and

Framework for the National Park by 2023.

OBJECTIVE

A9. Restore and connect rivers to thriving wetlands and floodplains as part of a wider restoration of the National Park's freshwater systems, helping mitigate the impacts of climate change.

TARGET / INDICATOR

75% of river systems are restored by 2045.

OBJECTIVE

A10. Connect habitats and ecosystems across all different types of land use in the National Park to create an ecological network, which will bring wider landscape, biodiversity and people benefits.

TARGET / INDICATOR

Establish an ecological network across the National Park by 2025.

OBJECTIVE

A11. Enhance ecosystems across the National Park by increasing the area of land managed principally for their restoration.

TARGET / INDICATOR

At least 50% of the National Park to be managed for ecosystem restoration by 2045.

OBJECTIVE

A12. Develop a more complete understanding of the National Park's species, habitats and ecosystems, and help monitor progress over the long-term through a dedicated Cairngorms Nature Index.

TARGET / INDICATOR

Develop and roll out the Cairngorms Nature Index by 2023.

OBJECTIVE

A13. Manage sites designated to increase the diversity of species present, improve habitats, store carbon and build resilience to climate change. These benefits will be delivered alongside current commitments to maintain and enhance designated features within the area.

TARGET / INDICATOR

Designated sites contribute to an ecological network and wider ecosystem restoration.

OBJECTIVE

A14. Protect vulnerable species and ensure they get back on a sustainable footing, less reliant on targeted action and recovering within a network of habitats. Where necessary, reinforce existing populations and reintroduce lost species as part of a suite of measures to restore biodiversity in the National Park. Ensure species and habitat management adapts to a changing climate.

TARGET / INDICATOR

Species Recovery Curve.

OBJECTIVE

A15. Attract private green investment into the National Park to fund nature's recovery and share the benefits between communities, landowners, workers and wider society. Private finance will be as important as public money in funding nature's recovery given the scale of the climate and biodiversity challenges we face.

TARGET / INDICATOR

The Cairngorms National Park attracts a minimum of £250m of green finance for carbon and biodiversity projects by 2045.

OBJECTIVE

A16. Work with farmers, estates and other land-based businesses to protect, manage and restore habitats and ecosystems across the National Park. Use 'nature-based solutions' to support a diverse economy that will be an exemplar for rural economies across the UK.

TARGET / INDICATOR

The number of land-based businesses using nature-based solutions increases.

OBJECTIVE

A17. Ensure a wider range of people are involved in, benefit from and support activities that protect and enhance nature and tackle climate change in the National Park.

TARGET / INDICATOR

Conduct regular surveys on values and attitudes to nature restoration, land management and landscape change.