



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba



Learning more about our visitors to enable exceptional visitor experiences and a National Park richer in nature

Frequently asked questions

1. Is this research just focused on visitors?

The research is focused on visitors to Rothiemurchus, Abernethy and Glenmore. This will include anybody who visits and enjoys the forests, both people who live locally and those who visit as part of their holiday or day out from further afield.

2. How can I get involved?

There will be an online-based research survey and also a small number of focus groups conducted as part of the research over the summer. We'll be asking people at a number of locations to complete the survey, including at the main visitor centres at Abernethy, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore.

There will also be a number of locations where a survey link (and QR code) will be displayed for people to go online and complete the survey without the need for using paper. The survey can be completed anonymously. For anyone interested and willing to participate in further research (e.g. focus groups), there will be a place in the survey to leave contact details.

To enquire about getting more involved in the project and/or research, to ask specific questions or to share thoughts please email capercaillie@cairngorms.co.uk or get in touch via the project website at: cairngormscapercaillie.scot/more/get-in-touch

3. How will the results of the research be used?

The research is being conducted by an objective third party, Heritage Pathfinder Ltd. All answers to the survey will be independently analysed and reported anonymously. Where names have been left in surveys for follow-up, these will be removed from the associated answers, so no answers will be attributed to specific individuals. Contact details will only be used for the purposes of this research.

The results will help the RSPB, Rothiemurchus and Forestry & Land Scotland and the business community to better understand the needs, wants and preferences of different types of visitors, and what makes an amazing visitor experience for them. This will enable sites to be even better at designing and scheduling appropriate, fun and exciting activities for some visitors and also inform things like interpretation design, help to focus on any

sensitive areas and ensure that there's space for those visitors who crave the simplicity, peace and beauty of the forests, hills and lochs.

The results will be used alongside capercaillie data too, to investigate how businesses and landholders across the Cairngorms can work better together to foster excellent sustainable visitor experiences alongside a thriving capercaillie population.

4. Where can I find the results of the research and can I use them?

Over the research period, we'll find ways to share progress updates in accessible formats to a variety of interested parties, including landholders, businesses and local communities. Once complete, the research findings will be published here: cairngormscapercaillie.scot/communities/visitors for anyone to use.

5. How could this help people enjoy this special area?

An in-depth understanding of what people who use the forest enjoy on their visits (and what they don't) will help all businesses and land managers to cater more specifically for their visitors, whilst caring for the very thing that most people appreciate in the Cairngorms, namely the landscapes and wildlife.

6. How will this help capercaillie?

Capercaillie live in Abernethy Forest, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Forest Park all year round and use the area to breed and raise their young. Each year, over 1 million people also visit the landholdings. This presents challenges as research shows that capercaillie tend to avoid areas near people, thereby limiting the amount of space they have to live. By carrying out this visitor research we can identify what visitors need, so we can better meet those needs in a way that also provides capercaillie with the space they need to thrive.

7. How is this research different to the National Park's existing visitor survey?

This visitor research will collect some similar data to the existing visitor survey, but most of the study involves delving deeper to understand visitors' motivations for visiting, their likes, dislikes and connections with nature and the environment.

The major part of the research is a large visitor survey which aims to collect at least 1200 survey completions. This is a good sample size to draw some general conclusions from the data, but one of the key aims of the research is to understand and categorise the many different types of visitor to this area of the Cairngorms. Because of this, the research is seeking input from a wide variety of people (rather than a 'representative' sample), so survey completions will deliberately be prompted in the further reaches of sites as well as the popularly visited carparks and well-known destinations in the area. The research will yield qualitative insights into visitors, leaving the focus on more quantitative and demographic visitor research to continue via the National Park's regular survey.

8. As an accommodation provider, how might I be able to use the results to improve my customer experience?

A deeper understanding of the different types of visitors and visits, the varying reasons they come, and the kinds of things they want to do should enable accommodation providers to offer added value that ensures they exceed the expectations of their guests. This might take the form of supplying some great pre-arrival information (e.g. a video) or ensuring an appropriate range of information leaflets, maps, online information and interpretation etc. are available that cater for different types of visitor.

9. There are no international visitors and few groups of young people - how will this affect the research?

The research will be undertaken from June to September 2021, both during and outside school holidays to reach as wide a range of visitors as possible to ask them about what they like about visiting. We're aware that some groups of people, such as hill climbers or mountain bikers might be harder to reach, and some visitors may not be visiting at all at the moment due to the pandemic. The research will take account of these limitations and efforts will be made to talk to people via relevant groups and associations, and provision will be made for follow-up research tools which can be used when visitation returns to more usual patterns.

10. What difference has this approach made elsewhere?

Lots of market research has been conducted elsewhere (and here in the Cairngorms) that helps to inform decisions that businesses make about where, when and how to do their marketing to attract new and returning visitors. There are fewer places that have conducted research with visitors to define and understand the different types of visit, as this research will.

The research will investigate why people are visiting, what connection they have to nature, what makes an amazing visitor experience for them, what kinds of values they hold with respect to their impacts on the environment.

Elsewhere, where this kind of visitor research has been conducted, it has helped organisations:

- better understand their visitors' motivations and interests, and therefore what kinds of words and pictures to use to communicate with them – e.g., in orientation signage, interpretation, walks & talks, events etc.
- in planning events, what kinds of things are likely to be popular, when to hold them and how to market them
- through having a list of defined 'types' of visitors/visits, this gives the organisation a common language to refer to visitor types and moves away from making decisions based on personal opinions, to being more visitor-focused

The research process will gather information in a variety of ways to build a better picture of visitors, including:

- Background studies on existing data, findings from comparator sites etc.
- Conducting a visitor survey which will collect responses over the summer of 2021. We'll want to ask visitors to a wide range of areas to complete the survey – and especially those who are trickier to make contact with (e.g., in wilder locations, away from car parks and popular sites)
- A few focus groups with key types of visitors who are likely to have a particularly close or regular contact with the sites e.g., dog walkers, campers.

11. Will access restrictions be introduced?

There are no plans to introduce access restrictions as part of this work. The findings will help land managers plan, promote and manage access so that visitors will find it easy to be responsible for rare animals and plants in accordance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and have great and memorable experiences.

12. How much money is being spent on this research?

Heritage Pathfinder Ltd have been recruited through Public Contracts Scotland to undertake the research and the contract value is £20,000.

13. Who's involved and why?

The Cairngorms Capercaillie Project is leading this work in partnership with the RSPB, Rothiemurchus and Forestry & Land Scotland, who respectively own and manage Abernethy Forest, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Forest Park. The three landholdings are home to capercaillie and together receive over 1 million visits each year.

14. What's happening about other issues affecting capercaillie?

The RSPB, Rothiemurchus and Forestry & Land Scotland are all working to improve conditions for capercaillie on their land. The Cairngorms Capercaillie Project is also delivering action across the National Park to help to address the other issues affecting capercaillie, including lack of habitat, collisions with unmarked fences, predation and genetics. You can read an overview of the project's wider work on this page: cairngormscapercaillie.scot/the-project

If you have any questions that are not covered in this document, please do get in touch at capercaillie@cairngorms.co.uk