

Cairngorms Capercaillie Project

Operational Management Team - Meeting Notes

Meeting date: 12 May 2021, 14:00 - 15.30

Attendees: Andy Ford (Head of Conservation, CNPA)
Anne Elliott (Area Officer, NatureScot)
Carolyn Robertson (Project Manager, CNPA)
Ewan Archer (Head Keeper, Seafield Estate)
Issie Inglis (Carrbridge Capercaillie Group)
Naomi Kaye (Project Administrator, CNPA)
Peter Ferguson (Biodiversity Manager, Rothiemurchus Estate)
Richard Gledson (Factor, Balmoral Estate)
Ruari Watt (Highland Mountain Bike Development Coordinator, DMBinS)
Uwe Stoneman (Senior Site Manager - Abernethy, RSPB)

Apologies: Keir Smith (Senior Operations Manager, Scottish Forestry)
Joan Cumming (North Region Environment Adviser, FLS)
Mark Tate (CEO, Cairngorms Business Partnership)
Neil Wilson (Badenoch and Strathspey Trail Association)

This meeting was an open, informal discussion. This is a summary of the topics that arose and the discussion that followed.

1. Lek surveys

At the time of this meeting the results from lek counts were still being collated. A discussion was had around the need to focus on trends and results at a landscape scale and the risks of attributing results to site specific interventions as the picture is much broader and more complex.

2. Communications

It was agreed that Andy, as Chair, will reply to emails about the project sent by members of the public to OMT. All OMT members will be copied into his replies. If individual OMT members are contacted with enquiries related to the project, members agreed to manage these emails independently. It was felt that, where possible, members of the public should be invited to meet OMT members in person to help build relationships.

3. Partnership Agreement

A discussion was had around the responsibilities outlined in the Partnership Agreement. OMT's collective responsibility is to advise, make recommendations, provide feedback and identify opportunities to help develop and strengthen the project's work.

4. Listening to communities

A discussion was had around the project's approach to gathering views from communities to inform the development and delivery of actions to help capercaillie. The project has and will continue to secure sample sizes that enable a 95% confidence level in the results. Through this process it's likely that over 3000 people will share their views with the project. This will provide a robust and invaluable insight into how people think and feel about capercaillie conservation. This information will be publicly available to also help inform work outwith the project.

5. Ticks

A discussion was had around tick burden on grouse chicks and the possible impact on capercaillie. Members raised that it would be helpful to understand more about the issue but disturbance caused by research could cause more harm than good and the practicalities of managing ticks is also a significant challenge. It was noted that tick research is currently outside the scope of the project, but that building a greater understanding of the issue was important.

6. Opportunities for the mountain biking community

Ruari shared an update on the mountain biking group's work including scoping meetings with landowners and developing messages to share rider to rider this breeding season, via social media and on signage. Ruari invited ideas for volunteer sessions that the group could get involved in as they're keen to help with habitat improvement work.