

Cairngorms Capercaillie Project

Carrbridge Capercaillie Community Working Group | Meeting notes

Date & time: Thu 2 May, 6.30pm – 8pm

Venue: Carrbridge Village Hall

Attendees: *Carrbridge Capercaillie Community Working Group*; Alice Buttress, Becky Badger, Ewan Archer, Frank Law, Issie Inglis, Justin Prigmore, Charlie Miller. *Observer*; Fiona Angella. *Cairngorms Capercaillie Project staff*; Carolyn Robertson, Emma Rawling, Molly Doubleday. *CNPA*; Andy Ford

Apologies: Martyn O'Reilly

- The group discussed the last meeting held on 4 April at which only Carrbridge residents were present. The meeting was generally positive. The group agreed that they want to continue helping to move the project's activities in the village forward. They want to focus on conserving capercaillie; better understand their role as a group; become more cohesive and more structured in their decision making.
- The group reflected on the project's foundations in the village, specifically the information evening in 2017 as all members are aware of the different views held about the event. CNPA have been reflecting on this to ensure improvements are made for future events and the principles at play related to inclusivity & trust are central to the project's activities in the village going forward. The group still feel there was an overwhelming show of support at the event which informed the Community Council's decision to support the project. The group unanimously agreed that it's now time to move on as there's enough positivity in the village to move forward and looking back isn't helping to save our capercaillie.
- The group discussed their purpose and principles for working going forward and agreed the following;
 1. To provide **positive momentum and support**, enabling the community to have a say and identify what they can do to make a positive contribution to capercaillie conservation around Carrbridge.
 2. The group are **genuine and active advocates** for the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project and the project's activities in village.
 3. The group aim to **represent the best interests of the community** regards the project's activities in the village. *The group recognise that they're not in a position to represent the feelings of the whole community, but this will be done through an external facilitator and are keen to recruit new members, being as inclusive as possible.*
 4. The group want to **help residents become more informed** about the project's activities in the village, learn more about their local capercaillie and get involved.
- A basic standalone website will be established for Carrbridge residents to access information about the project's activities in the village and the wider work of the project across the Park. It was recognised that the current project webpages on the CNPA website are difficult to find and not fit for purpose in the context of Carrbridge.
- A monthly newsletter delivered to all households in the village will also be created to help keep residents more informed. The first edition will be delivered in early June.
- The role of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Community Ranger, Emma, was discussed and in particular the challenges that Emma's faced trying to operate in the spirit of the project as a community-led Ranger, rather than a Ranger deciding on behalf of the village what should and shouldn't be done. Emma is acutely aware of the sensitivities in the village regards her role. When given the opportunity Emma has been able to reassure residents and gain support. Emma is not introducing change, her role is simply to reinforce existing messages and guidance and help people learn more about capercaillie around Carrbridge. The group agreed that it's counterproductive to be secretive about capercaillie and the presence of capercaillie around the village has been public knowledge long before the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project was launched.
- The group agreed that Emma should continue to be present in the woods around the village for the coming months whilst capercaillie are raising their young. Emma will continue to take an informal & friendly approach with everyone she meets. The group discussed the need to work with the dog walking community around the village whilst being careful not to isolate this community. Emma confirmed that she will be encouraging dog walkers to voluntarily keep their dogs on leads in the woods north of the village where capercaillie are present. If dog walkers wish to exercise their dogs off lead Emma will continue signposting them to Ellan Wood & Carr Plantation.

- Emma took the opportunity to thank Ewan Archer and Seaford Estates for kindly hosting two volunteer work parties recently that involved local people marking more fences to help capercaillie avoid colliding with them.
- The group discussed how they'd like to work with the Project Board for the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project. To date Becky, Frank and Martyn have all attended Project Board meetings to represent the group. The group expressed concern that they had not been consulted prior to Martyn representing the group most recently. Concerns were also raised regards personal views being shared with the Project Board which were not representative and expressed disappointment that the Project Board may get the impression the working group were not supportive of the project
- The outcomes of the Project Board meeting and the most recent meeting with the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) were discussed. Both the Project Board and the NLHF are in support of a revised approach to the project's activities in Carrbridge following an extended period of listening & learning in the village. It was highlighted that the Development Phase (which the project is currently in) is designed to test ideas and approaches in order to inform and strengthen Delivery Phase work. It was acknowledged by the Project Board in particular that Carrbridge residents and the Carrbridge Capercaillie Community Working Group had made a significant contribution to this process; helping the project to reflect and learn.
- Next steps for a revised approach were discussed. All were in agreement that an external facilitator should be recruited to work for Carrbridge residents. The facilitator will host a series of workshops, one to one meetings and meetings with key interest groups in the village to identify what residents would like to include in a capercaillie related action plan for the village. The facilitator will enable all interested residents to explore and decide how they'd like to help capercaillie based on what's meaningful & relevant to the village and where consensus lies.