

Cairngorms Capercaillie Project Project Board meeting notes and actions

Meeting date: 14 January 2021, 10.00 - 12.00

Attendees: Adam Smith (Independent)
Andy Ford (Head of Conservation, CNPA)
Carolyn Robertson (Project Manager, CNPA)
Claire Smith (Senior Conservation Officer, RSPB)
Debbie Greene (Operations Manager, NatureScot)
Doug McAdam (CNPA Board member)
Naomi Kaye (Project Administrator, CNPA)
Pete Mayhew (Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience, CNPA)
Priscilla Gordon-Duff (Independent)
Will Anderson (Chief Executive, Seafield and Strathspey Estates)

Venue: Zoom

1. Review actions from previous meetings

Actions completed

2. Review Quarter 3 Highlight Report

A Highlight Report, detailing the project's activities and progress from October to December, was discussed. Progress is being made across all areas of work. Residents, mountain bikers and businesses in particular, are actively and positively engaging with the community-led work.

No major concerns were raised. It was agreed that more detail could be included to track progress on predator control and fence work. The impacts of Covid were discussed related to the habitat improvement work and planned visitor research. It was agreed that Covid should be included in the Risks and Issues log and the revised national population estimate, commissioned by the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group, should also be included in the log.

The budgets for community-led work were discussed and the following authorisation levels were agreed;

- Project Manager - up to £5k.
- Operational Management Team - above £5k up to £25k.
- Project Board – over £25k.

3. Review and sign-off Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)

A draft MoA was discussed and the following recommendations were made:

- Commencement and termination - reduce the notice time required to extend the agreement or change to an annual review.
- Include a clause related to Covid, e.g. responsibilities around contingency planning and working dynamically.
- Responsibilities of all parties – remove either 19 or 20 as the points are largely the same.

4. Review and agree draft approach to communications

A draft Communications Plan for the project was discussed and all agreed it was a positive start. The following suggestions were made:

- focus on positive messages and opportunities with capercaillie living in the Park
- revise target audiences to include gamekeepers; land managers within 'businesses'; and hunters within 'outdoor enthusiasts'
- Focus on maps and visual imagery
- Focus on the project's work across the Park
- Challenge misinformation with a targeted approach
- Don't respond directly to negative press
- Consider carefully the range of views held by communities working with the project and how to ensure all communities have an equal voice

5. Facilitated session re plans for project monitoring and evaluation

Session led by Caroline Porter (The Evaluator). The Board were asked for a 'wish list' of what they would like to see monitored and evaluated within the project. The below were offered as examples of what could be measured and not intended to be exclusive:

- Level of ownership and buy in
- Story of conservation
- Collaboration
- Level of trust
- Economic impact - in broader sense
- Learning, who and what context
- How much is it embedded in community
- Potential for replication or scalability
- Diversity - in terms of people (are we reaching diverse communities)
- Transparency
- Clear messages getting through
- Where one vision is getting through

The Board felt that the project evaluation should;

- Be robust, without too many variables that could discredit or undermine it
- Not purely quantitative, this can be very dry and unengaging / uninspiring
- Include simple graphics that show impact and identify room for further work / review
- Helpful for other projects (now and in the future) and to inform broader picture
- Include review points to help identify whether or not more of a specific intervention (e.g. increased habitat improvement) is within the project's scope before 2023, or should be included in a legacy project, which could run for another 5 years, for example.
- Measure hard work, passion and involvement of different communities
- Measure whether or not communities feel they have delivered something worth their time and effort and enhanced their enjoyment
- Identify how it feels for the communities involved

- Measure economic impact
- Evaluate how messages have travelled within and outwith the park and particularly to those with are in a position to influence policy

6. AOB

- Revised capercaillie population estimate – see Actions.
- Covid - the Board agreed that it is not realistic to expect all partners to adopt exactly the same approach to Covid guidelines. CNPA could however provide advice and support for partners with less capacity and resource to adapt to the guidelines.

Actions

1. **Carolyn:** Update Highlight Report and Risks & Issues Log as discussed (see point 2)
2. **Carolyn:** Follow-up with CNPA's Director of Corporate Services re suggested amends to the MoA (see point 3). Update the MoA in response and circulate to Board for review.
3. **All:** Share any final comments on the Communication Plan with Carolyn by 1 Feb.
4. **Jocasta:** Redraft the Communication Plan with recommendations (see point 4) and any further comments received from Board.
5. **Carolyn:** circulate The Evaluator's tender response for more insight into the potential for the project's monitoring and evaluation work (done)
6. **Carolyn:** circulate the Specification of Work for the revised capercaillie population estimate commissioned by the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group (done)