

## **Cairngorms Capercaillie Project Operational Management Team - Meeting Notes**

**Meeting date:** 31 March 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)  
Jocasta Mann (Communications Officer, CNPA)  
Kirsty Rose Parker (Director, The Evaluator)  
Mark Tate (CEO, Cairngorms Business Partnership)  
Naomi Kaye (Project Administrator, CNPA)  
Neil Wilson (Secretary, Badenoch and Strathspey Trail Association)  
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:** Joan Cumming (North Region Environment Advisor, FLS)  
Keir Smith (Senior Operations Manager, Scottish Forestry)

### **1. Actions from previous meeting - see actions**

### **2. Communications Plan**

A draft project Communications Plan was discussed and felt to be a strong start. It will be adapted in response to ongoing monitoring and evaluation throughout the project. There was discussion around the project's brand guidelines, which will enable each community to maintain their own identity under the banner of the project. The group also discussed how elements of the Comms Plan will help to build a common and stronger voice around key topics. It was felt that there should be a greater emphasis on 'enjoyment'; the 'guiding community' should be included in key audiences; stronger links should be made with national messaging, e.g. Respect, Protect, Enjoy; and messaging should also be included related to the positive impacts of capercaillie conservation on other species. There was a discussion around the strength of peer to peer messaging and an open invitation for all partners to advise on opportunities to do this.

### **3. Highlight Report**

A Highlight Report is produced each quarter to track project progress. It also includes a full breakdown of the project budget across all areas of work. The Highlight Report for the last quarter was shared for discussion prior to being published on the project website.

#### **4. Mountain bike community-led action**

Ruari gave an overview of the mountain bike community's progress since January. A diverse group of 22 local riders has formed to take this work forward. The group have been learning about the issues affecting capercaillie, including habitat fragmentation and human disturbance, and have been identifying actions they feel they can take to help, whilst also enabling their community to grow and develop. The group have now developed a goal and set of actions to be shared in May. A draft budget for the MTB group's work was shared for discussion.

A discussion was had around the need to focus on an expanding capercaillie population, and considering areas the birds might use in future, as well as the areas they're using now; and the link with other species - reduced disturbance to capercaillie will benefit other wildlife, however trails in new areas may have a negative impact on other species.

Peer to peer messaging was also discussed and how the MTB group has the potential to be highly effective in helping capercaillie and other wildlife by sharing messages with less informed riders, particularly related to irresponsible access which is socially unacceptable, and responsible access which, through increased frequency, becomes unsustainable.

#### **5. Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy**

Trial signage to encourage responsible access in capercaillie areas around Carrbridge has been a focus of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group over the winter as outlined in the [strategy](#). The effectiveness of the signage will be monitored by the Community Ranger. It was noted that signage has been installed in the past around Carrbridge, but that new messaging is being tested through the trial signs and the Community Ranger's presence, to encourage people to adhere to the signs and monitor the effectiveness of them, is new.

Another focus has been path improvements around Carrbridge, again as outlined in the [strategy](#). The aim of the work is to improve paths and outdoor spaces around Carrbridge in areas that are not sensitive for capercaillie or other wildlife, to encourage people to use those areas. A community consultation will run from April to May when residents will be invited to share their views. Survey and scoping work in response to the results of the community consultation will begin once the community consultation ends at the end of May. A draft budget for the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy was also shared for discussion.

## 6. Open discussion

Attention was drawn to the visitor research, which will inform work with the visitor community in Abernethy, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Forest Park. A consultant (Heritage Pathfinder) has been commissioned to undertake the visitor research and is in the process of meeting key people and developing an initial research plan to deliver from May to August.

## ACTIONS

1. **All** - Share any further comments about the Comms Plan with Jocasta, particularly related to key audiences, protocols for working well as a partnership and key issues around which we need a common voice.
2. **Anne** - Introduce Jocasta to the relevant NatureScot Comms Officer.
3. **Jocasta** - Update the Comms Plan in response to feedback and share the updated version, including brand guidelines, once ready.
4. **Carolyn** - Share the documents presented by Ruari about the MTB group's work.
5. **All** - Feedback to Carolyn any comments on information in the Highlight Report.
6. **Naomi** - Include Wildcat on the agenda for discussion in the next meeting.
7. **Issie & Uwe** - *action from previous meeting* - liaise re the idea of Uwe attending a Carrbridge Capercaillie Group meeting to share ideas around a high quality immersive 'capercaillie experience'.
8. **Carolyn** - re-share the Partnership Agreement for final comments and sign-off.