

Cairngorms Capercaillie Project

Progress Report: 1 April – 30 June 2021

The information in this document is submitted and discussed as part of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project's quarterly reporting process to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Project summary

The Cairngorms Capercaillie Project is working to secure the long-term survival of capercaillie in the UK. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund until 2023, the project's actions for capercaillie are being delivered across the Cairngorms National Park.

The project's key actions are:

- to enable communities to develop and deliver their own community-led actions for capercaillie;
- raise awareness of the plight of capercaillie and how people can help;
- research the genetic diversity of capercaillie in the Cairngorms National Park to help inform action;
- improve and create more habitat for capercaillie and undertake predator control in key areas;
- strengthen current capercaillie monitoring to enable more informed decisions

The project is led by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and delivered in partnership with the Badenoch & Strathspey Trail Association, Balmoral Estate, Brook Forestry, Cairngorms Business Partnership, Carrbridge Capercaillie Group, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, Forestry and Land Scotland, Groves Forestry, Rothiemurchus Estate, RSPB, Scottish Forestry, NatureScot and Seafield and Strathspey Estates.

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|--------------------|--------------|
| Project start date | 22 July 2020 |
| Grant expiry date | 30 July 2023 |

Progress towards the project's approved purposes

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| Green | Delivery is on track |
| Amber | Minor issues are impacting delivery |
| Red | Major issues are impacting delivery |

The project's three-step model for enabling community-led action for capercaillie

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|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stage 1: Why? | This is about defining the cause. Why does (or might) capercaillie conservation matter to the community? This is about identifying the key interest groups and leaders in the community and listening to them to identify the issues and themes at play related to capercaillie conservation. |
| Stage 2: How? | This is about identifying how the community feels about the cause by identifying the views held in the wider community, how widespread those views are and where the common ground is. |
| Stage 3: What? | This is about enabling the community to take action for the cause using the data and analysis from Stage 2 and helping the community plan how to monitor and evaluate the actions they deliver in response. |

| Approved purpose | Summary of progress | Status |
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| Empower communities to help ensure the survival of capercaillie through community-led conservation, by implementing the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy and developing, agreeing and implementing action plans with additional communities. | <p><i>Carrbridge community – Stage 3</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Carrbridge Capercaillie Group have developed and delivered the following actions from the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A community consultation to identify paths and outdoor spaces around Carrbridge that could be improved to enable thriving capercaillie areas around the village and paths and outdoor spaces for all residents and visitors to enjoy. - Commissioned a contractor to survey and develop design concepts for improving the paths and outdoor spaces around the village which were identified as a priority through the community consultation. The community will be consulted on the design concepts in due course. - The Carrbridge Community Ranger has been monitoring the trial signage aimed at encouraging responsible access in capercaillie areas around Carrbridge. New messages aimed at birders and photographers have been tested as part of this work. An end of season report will be produced about the trial signs and will be publicly available. - Maintained the Carrbridge Capercaillie Newsletter to keep the community informed. | |

| Approved purpose | Summary of progress | Status |
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| | <p><i>Mountain biking community – Stage 3</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A paid intern has been recruited to work part time from July to October to research and digitally map mountain bike trails, signage and information about trails in Badenoch and Strathspey alongside capercaillie data to create a GIS-based tool for the local mountain biking community to use to make more informed decisions about trail development, signage and promotion. The internship is funded by CNPA. ▪ Trial signage has been developed and will be installed on Seafield Estate, RSPB Abernethy and Glenmore (FLS) to test new rider to rider messages encouraging more responsible riding in capercaillie areas this breeding season. ▪ Scoping meetings have been held with Wildland, Seafield Estate and Forestry and Land Scotland to explore 5 potential projects that could enable the mountain biking community to achieve their goal to unlock 100 hectares of capercaillie habitat with no net loss of trails. | |
| | <p><i>Business community – Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An online survey for businesses is live and being promoted on behalf of the project by the Cairngorms Business Partnership. It aims to identify how the business community feels about promoting the area's natural heritage and ways to enjoy it responsibly. The findings will inform the action planning work with the business community (Stage 3) and provide a baseline for monitoring and evaluation. To date 114 businesses have completed the survey. The target sample size is 132. 23 businesses have opted for a follow-up phone call to share their views in more detail. 85% of businesses who've completed the survey have not engaged with the project before. | |
| | <p><i>Visitor community – Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An online survey for visitors to Glenmore Forest Park, Abernethy and Rothiemurchus is now live and will remain open until mid-September. The survey aims to identify the motivations of different types of visitors to Glenmore, Abernethy and Rothiemurchus, including those who live locally and visit the forests. The findings will be shared publicly and be used to inform the action planning process (Stage 3) with FLS, Rothiemurchus, the RSPB, and the business and mountain biking community where relevant. The survey is being promoted onsite by FLS, RSPB and Rothiemurchus staff and over 30 local businesses. To date 158 visitors have completed the survey. The target sample size is 1,200. | |
| | <p><i>Deeside communities – Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plans are now in place for a consultancy to carry out independent research in Deeside on behalf of the project. The aim of the research is to identify the values, attitudes and beliefs held about the Deeside area and capercaillie conservation to inform the action planning process (Stage 3). The research will be conducted in two stages – listening sessions with key people in the area followed by an online survey for all residents and visitors to the area. The interviews will take place July - August. The findings will be used to develop the online survey which will go live in September. The survey results will be analysed in October and the key findings will be used to inform the action planning process from November. | |

| Approved purpose | Summary of progress | Status |
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| <p>Raise awareness and increase understanding of the challenges facing capercaillie through a variety of means including social media activities and events, a new online engagement platform, volunteer work, a public app, new resources for schools and genetics analysis.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work is ongoing with Silverback Films who are currently working on a new BBC One series focused on British wildlife, due to air in 2023. It aims to inspire, engage and motivate a UK audience of millions with wildlife issues and conservation. Capercaillie and the project's work are set to feature as part of the series. ▪ This quarter the project website received 3,500 unique pageviews - an increase of 27% on the last quarter. 84% of visitors to the website are new users. (81% in the last quarter) ▪ The following media have featured the project this quarter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strathspey Herald (June) - Glasgow Herald (June) - Daily Mail (June) - BBC Scotland (June) - The Northern Scot (June) - Grampian Online (June) ▪ Plans are being developed with BBC Scotland, STV and Patagonia to feature the project's work with the mountain biking community. ▪ The public capercaillie monitoring app is still live but not being promoted during the breeding season. ▪ An infographic has been developed for use online to help manage irresponsible social media activity about capercaillie during the breeding season. ▪ Two small scale volunteering sessions have been held to screen tracks and mark fences to reduce disturbance and avoid capercaillie collisions. The sessions have been used to inform plans to formally restart habitat work sessions with volunteers this August. | |
| <p>Work with landowners to implement plans to improve and manage around 9,000 hectares of habitat across six estates for the benefit of capercaillie; enable landowners to play their part in capercaillie conservation via a third-party grant scheme targeting landholdings in capercaillie areas.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The following habitat improvement work has been delivered this quarter, improving over 8,040 hectares of habitat for capercaillie: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Balmoral Estate: Manmade drains have been blocked to re-wet areas of forest bog, fencing has been removed and marking repaired on fencing to avoid collisions. - Rothiemurchus Estate: Trackside edges have been screened to reduce disturbance and foxes and crows have been controlled to enhance capercaillie survival. - Seafield Estate: Foxes and crows have been controlled to enhance capercaillie survival and strategic fences have been marked to avoid collisions. ▪ Four applications have been received through the project's grant scheme to enable further habitat improvement. The applications are for costs associated with restructuring woodlands to expand capercaillie habitat; marking fencing over 1km from active capercaillie leks to avoid collisions; and cutting heather to promote blaeberry growth and enable movement of capercaillie and their broods within and between woodland blocks. All applications meet the scoring criteria and are recommended for approval. The next window for applications opens in April 2022. | |

| Approved purpose | Summary of progress | Status |
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| <p>Monitor, test and evaluate ideas throughout delivery, applying learning from the project to refine activities including habitat improvement work, survey techniques, promotional activities and the community action planning model.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A draft Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is in the final stages of development following feedback from the Project Board and project mentor on behalf of NLHF. ▪ As part of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan a short survey for everyone working within the project (and the Scottish Capercaillie Group) is currently live. The aim of the survey is to capture how people are currently feeling about the project. This will provide a baseline for monitoring and evaluation and insights to inform ongoing project development and legacy planning. ▪ A tender has been published on Public Contracts Scotland to conduct a brood survey in the Castle Grant area of Seafield Estate to help measure the impact of the predator control work being delivered in the area on behalf of the project. (A brood survey commissioned by the project was conducted in the same area in 2020) ▪ A tender has been published on Public Contracts Scotland to analyse 60 capercaillie droppings collected this lek season to identify the most effective storage method for the droppings. The findings will be used to inform plans for a trial genetic lek survey in 2022. The aim of the genetic lek survey is to establish whether the use of genetic material provides a feasible alternative to current survey methods used to estimate population size which are reliant on capercaillie sightings. ▪ The trial signs developed by the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group to encourage responsible access in capercaillie areas around Carrbridge and test new messages targeted at birders and photographers, are being monitored by the Carrbridge Community Ranger. An end of season report will be produced about the signs to help inform future work. | |
| <p>Develop an innovative and replicable model for community-led species conservation that enables communities to successfully coexist with their natural heritage, sharing the project's findings internally and externally with UK organisations, and further afield, to create a legacy of learning.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The draft Monitoring and Evaluation Plan includes tools that will be employed to monitor and measure the success of the model. ▪ James Hutton Limited have been commissioned to produce a film documenting the process and outcomes of the project's work with the mountain biking community over the next two years to provide inspiration, learning and evidence, in a way that can stimulate further debate and learning. | |

Milestones

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| Green | Delivery is on track |
| Amber | Minor issues are impacting delivery |
| Red | Major issues are impacting delivery |

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Recruitment | | | | |
| Recruit Project Officer, Communications Officer, Project Administrator, Community Ranger and Capercaillie Advisory Assistant | | | | |
| Raising awareness | | | | |
| Develop a Comms Plan | | | | |
| Launch a new project website | | | | |
| Commission the design of capercaillie related resources for primary schools | | | | |
| Develop an online capercaillie hub | | | | |
| Genetic research | | | | |
| Analyse DNA from capercaillie feathers collected from across the National Park | | | | |
| Deliver an action planning workshop in response to findings from the DNA analysis | | | | |
| Trial a genetic lek survey | | | | |
| Habitat improvement | | | | |
| Improve over 300 hectares of habitat for capercaillie in Abernethy Forest | | | | |
| Improve over 30 hectares of habitat for capercaillie in Baddengorm Woods | | | | |
| Improve over 400 hectares of habitat for capercaillie on Balmoral Estate | | | | |
| Improve over 300 hectares of habitat for capercaillie in Tom an Uird Forest | | | | |
| Improve over 4,500 hectares of habitat for capercaillie on Rothiemurchus Estate (includes predator control) | | | | |
| Improve over 3,000 hectares of habitat for capercaillie on Seafield and Strathspey Estates (includes predator control) | | | | |
| Launch a grant scheme to enable further habitat improvement for capercaillie | | | | |

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Capercaillie monitoring | | | | |
| Launch a public capercaillie monitoring app | | | | |
| Conduct brood, lek and occupancy surveys | | | | |
| Project monitoring and evaluation | | | | |
| Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan | | | | |
| Community-led action - Carrbridge community (researching community views was completed in the previous phase) | | | | |
| Plan actions | | | | |
| Deliver actions | | | | |
| Community-led action – mountain biking community | | | | |
| Research community views | | | | |
| Plan actions | | | | |
| Deliver actions | | | | |
| Community-led action – visitor community | | | | |
| Research community views | | | | |
| Plan actions | | | | |
| Deliver actions | | | | |
| Community-led action – business community | | | | |
| Research community views | | | | |
| Plan actions | | | | |
| Deliver actions | | | | |
| Community-led action – Deeside communities | | | | |
| Research community views | | | | |
| Plan actions | | | | |
| Deliver actions | | | | |

Risks and Issues

| Risk / Issue | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation | Priority |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Monitoring and evaluation information and processes are not used effectively to strengthen the project, inform legacy planning and help safeguard the project from inherent risks. | Low | High | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is in the process of being finalised. A culture of reflection is embedded in the project and professionally facilitated where possible. | High |
| 2. Covid related restrictions limit project activities and pace. | Low | High | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive approach taken to ensure activities continue within current guidelines and meetings take place in person where possible to improve productivity and build relationships. The visitor research period has been extended into September to increase the potential for including international visitors. Potential also exists to conduct follow-up research at a later date once visitor patterns stabilise. | High |
| 3. Project information is used to undermine public support for the project. | Medium | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Board have strategic responsibility for project communications. A Comms Officer and Comms Plan is in place. All project documents are written for a public audience and published on the project website (as far as appropriate). | Medium |
| 4. The project increases capercaillie disturbance or is perceived to do so. | Medium | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are working closely with landowners, landmanagers and community members allowing them to stay informed and respond to any issues or perceptions related to disturbance. An Operational Management Team is in place and able to identify ways forward when necessary to address issues or perceptions related to disturbance. Comms assets are actively shared with partners and third parties to reduce the need for capercaillie filming and photography. All survey work is completed under licence and all habitat improvement and monitoring work is carried out in accordance with legislation related to capercaillie. The project operates within the Capercaillie Data Sharing Policy. | Medium |

| Risk / Issue | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation | Priority |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 5. The diverse range of interests, organisations and groups involved in the project presents challenges to effective partnership working. | Medium | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All partners and areas of work are represented on the Operational Management Team. All project partners operate under a Partnership Agreement. CNPA Board and CNPA Management Team are members of the Project Board. The Project Board operate under a Memorandum of Agreement. | Medium |
| 6. Community-led elements are not managed in an effective, transparent and defensible way limiting the benefits of the project and causing disengagement and mistrust in communities. | Low | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All learning captured from the development phase (and ongoing learning in delivery phase) is being applied. The Operational Management Team (responsible for helping to strengthen the project's community-led work) comprises of representatives from all the community groups and organisations involved. A three-stage model is in place to ensure work with other communities is only carried out if it's considered within the scope of the project and the community is considered viable to work with the project resource available. | Medium |
| 7. Project activities conflict with other initiatives, e.g. curlew and wildcat conservation. | Low | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations involved in potentially conflicting activities are project partners represented on the Operational Management Team and Project Board, operating respectively under a Partnership Agreement and Memorandum of Agreement. | Medium |
| 8. FGS funding applications may be unsuccessful causing a shortfall in match funding. | Low | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All partners applying for FGS funding are experienced in the process and have a good track record of securing funding. Additional resource is being provided by the project to help strengthen claims. | Medium |
| 9. Continued cold and wet weather during capercaillie nesting and breeding season could overwhelm the benefits of the project. | Low | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue delivery - the project's work is vital to enhance capercaillie survival, even in difficult years; maintain proactive comms internally and externally; review the issue at Project Board to identify a way forward. | Medium |
| 10. Genetic analysis reveals capercaillie population in the UK is at risk of becoming functionally extinct. | Low | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue delivery and fast track the action planning work scheduled in response to the genetic analysis; review the issue at Project Board to identify a way forward. | Medium |

Budget

| Income | Expected | Received to date |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| National Lottery Heritage Fund | 2,033,600 | 84,985 |
| CNPA | 60,280 | 30,280 |
| NatureScot | 50,000 | 20,000 |
| Scottish Forestry | 28,000 | 8,000 |
| Forestry Grant Scheme | 133,473 | 0 |
| RSPB | 40,000 | 25,000 |
| RSPB Abernethy | 10,000 | 3,080 |
| Seafield and Strathspey Estates | 217,347 | 53,552 |
| Rothiemurchus Estate | 41,669 | 0 |
| Balmoral Estate | 11,500 | 0 |
| Baddengorm Woods | 48,240 | 0 |
| Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland | 75,000 | 1,440 |
| Volunteer time (in-kind) | 125,750 | 29,471 |
| RSPB in-kind (technical support for the app and online hub) | 27,800 | 1,470 |
| Total | 2,902,659 | 257,278 |

Breakdown of income / contributions received

| Partner / Funder | Nature of contribution | Total to date |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| National Lottery Heritage Fund | Grant | 84,985 |
| CNPA | Donation | 30,280 |
| NatureScot | Donation | 20,000 |
| Scottish Forestry | Donation | 8,000 |
| RSPB | Donation | 25,000 |
| RSPB Abernethy | Contractor payment - field layer survey prior to heather cutting | 3,080 |
| Seafield and Strathspey Estates | Contractor payment - fence removal & repair prior to replanting | 36,092 |
| Seafield and Strathspey Estates | Contractor payment - groundwork prior to felling and replanting | 17,460 |
| Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland | Contractor payment - trail maintenance and inspection training | 1,440 |
| Total | | 226,337 |

| Volunteer time (in-kind contribution) | Total to date |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Carrbridge Capercaillie Group | 11,055 |
| Mountain biking group | 8,488 |
| Volunteers delivering habitat improvement work | 957 |
| Capercaillie monitoring | 1,746 |
| Digital volunteer managing the project website | 7,225 |
| Total | 29,471 |

| RSPB (in-kind contribution) | Total to date |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------|
| Capercaillie monitoring app development | 1,470 |
| Total | 1,470 |

Breakdown of expenditure / investment

| Community | Community-led action | Total |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Carrbridge | Revised national capercaillie population estimate to help inform action | 2,400 |
| | Study of predator activity in capercaillie areas in Kinveachy Forest to help inform action | 7,260 |
| | Printing and production of trial signs to encourage responsible access in capercaillie areas around Carrbridge | 453 |
| | Path surveys and feasibility work to enable thriving capercaillie areas around Carrbridge and paths and outdoor spaces for all residents and visitors to enjoy | 4,965 |
| Total | | 15,078 |

| Community | Community-led action | Total |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Mountain biking | Equipment to repair trails to reduce habitat loss and fragmentation | 1,146 |
| | Printing and production of trial signs to encourage responsible riding in capercaillie areas | 160 |
| | Trail Association website to increase visibility, build awareness and support | 454 |
| Total | | 1,760 |

| Contractor / Third party | Work | Total |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Highland Field & Forest / Instinct | Brood surveys to help measure impact of habitat improvement work, predator control and community-led action to reduce disturbance | 5,172 |
| RZSS | Researching the genetic diversity of capercaillie in the Cairngorms National Park to inform action | 62,768 |
| The Evaluator | Monitoring and evaluating the project to measure impact and share learning | 24,850 |
| The Evaluator | Researching public attitudes and beliefs about the Deeside area and capercaillie conservation to inform community-led action planning in Deeside | 5,500 |
| Heritage Pathfinder Ltd. | Researching visitor attitudes and beliefs to inform action to enable thriving capercaillie areas & high quality, sustainable visitor experiences | 20,000 |
| Total | | 118,290 |

| Landholding | Habitat improvement work | Total |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Abernethy | Heather cutting (with a robocutter) to improve c300 ha of habitat | 50,000 |
| Baddengorm | Replanting woodland with native species to expand habitat | 6,800 |
| Baddengorm | Marking fencing with wooden markers to avoid collisions | 5,000 |
| Balmoral Estate | Heather cutting, fence removal and marking fences with wooden markers to improve c400 ha of habitat and avoid collisions | 18,900 |
| Crannach Nature Reserve | Heather cutting to improve habitat | 1,290 |
| Lynamer, Nethy Bridge | Restructuring woodlands (removing non-native trees) to expand habitat | 2,673 |
| Rothiemurchus Estate | Screening trackside edges to reduce human disturbance | 1,600 |
| Rothiemurchus Estate | Heather cutting and creating grit beds to improve habitat | 5,450 |
| Rothiemurchus Estate | Marking fences to avoid collisions | 1,600 |
| Rothiemurchus Estate | Predator control to enhance capercaillie survival in key areas | 83,315 |
| Seafield and Strathspey Estates | Felling and replanting with native species to expand habitat by c90ha | 58,290 |
| Seafield and Strathspey Estates | Removing, replacing and marking strategic fences to avoid collisions | 15,300 |
| Tombain Plantation | Marking fencing with wooden markers to avoid collisions | 4,944 |
| Total | | 255,162 |

| Project staff | Work | Total * |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Capercaillie Advisory Assistant (P/T) | Capercaillie monitoring to inform work and measure impact | 44,700 |
| Capercaillie Advisory Officer (P/T) | Strategic support for capercaillie monitoring & habitat improvement | 59,350 |
| Communications Officer (P/T) | Raising awareness and understanding about capercaillie & the project | 91,350 |
| Carrbridge Community Ranger | Supporting Carrbridge community-led action | 103,150 |
| Gamekeeper | Predator control on Seafield Estate | 168,014 |
| Highland Development Co-Ordinator | Strategic support for community-led action | 40,000 |
| Project Administrator (P/T) | Administration support for the project and community groups | 73,900 |
| Project Manager | Managing the project as a whole, including staff and contractors | 170,700 |
| Project Officer (P/T) | Supporting project delivery across all areas | 138,400 |
| Total | | 889,564 |

* For the delivery phase (2020 - 2023) Costs include equipment and overheads.