

# Improving our paths for people and wildlife

## Part of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy

### Aim of the path improvements

To enable thriving capercaillie areas around Carrbridge and paths and outdoor spaces around the village for all residents and visitors to enjoy.

### Background

In 2019, 247 Carrbridge residents completed a questionnaire to share their views about capercaillie conservation. The majority of respondents felt capercaillie should be protected for future generations and should always be in Scotland. In response, the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy was created by the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group; a group of local volunteers.

All of the actions in the strategy are based on the common views identified through the questionnaire. Those common views include:

- a perception that disturbance by dogs is the most important threat to capercaillie (along with lack of suitable habitat)
- a willingness to follow local signage for the benefit of capercaillie and to voluntarily avoid a capercaillie area during sensitive times of the year

Overall, the highest level of community consensus exists for promoting responsible access and dog walking and creating safe spaces for capercaillie. With this in mind, actions were included in the strategy to improve paths and signage around the village to help make places away from capercaillie areas more enjoyable and inviting places to be.

The plan, as outlined in the strategy, was that the Community Ranger would audit all the trails and signage around the village to identify areas for improvement. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to Covid restrictions. Instead, the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group identified paths and outdoor spaces for improvement using their own knowledge and experience as residents. The group updated the Carrbridge & Vicinity Community Council in January and March, and in April invited all residents to take part in the first community consultation about the paths and outdoor spaces identified for improvement.

### **First community consultation (April – May)**

All residents were invited to share their views on 17 paths and outdoor spaces identified for improvement by the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group. Specifically, residents were invited to answer the following questions: Have the right paths and outdoor spaces been identified for attention? Have any been missed? In the areas identified, what do they think could be improved?

In total, 79 residents (16% of the community) shared their views using feedback forms provided (on and offline). Most public consultations attract a response rate of 10 to 15% and through the consultation process residents also volunteered to help with the work.

The consultation enabled the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group to identify the priority paths and outdoor spaces for improvement. The group then commissioned a contractor to survey and develop draft proposals for improving those areas.

### **Second community consultation (October – November)**

From 16 October to 7 November, residents will be invited to share their views about the aforementioned proposals. Two drop-in sessions will be held in Carrbridge Village Hall on Saturday 16 and Monday 18 October for residents to view the proposals, ask questions and leave feedback. Both drop-in sessions will be attended by a member of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group and members of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project team. Residents will also be able to view the proposals and share their feedback online via a closed webpage for the community.

Prior to this consultation, all relevant landowners, neighbours and other stakeholders including the Carrbridge & Vicinity Community Council have engaged in a pre-consultation and support the proposals being shared with the community.

## FAQs

### **1. How has this path improvements project come about?**

All of the actions in the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy are based on the common views of residents identified through a questionnaire in 2019. The results of the questionnaire identified that the highest level of community consensus exists for promoting responsible access and dog walking and creating safe spaces for capercaillie. With this in mind, actions were included in the strategy to improve paths and signage around the village to help make places away from capercaillie areas more enjoyable and inviting places to be.

### **2. How will improving paths around Carrbridge help capercaillie?**

To help capercaillie thrive around Carrbridge, residents and visitors (and their dogs) must have paths and outdoor spaces away from capercaillie areas that they can easily access and enjoy.

### **3. Do paths and outdoor spaces around Carrbridge really need improving?**

In May the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group consulted the community on a range of paths and outdoor spaces around the village that could be improved. 79 residents responded to the consultation. The results found that all of the paths and outdoor spaces were considered to be 'really important' for improvement.

### **4. Which paths and outdoor spaces have been prioritised for improvement?**

The roadside path to Carr Plantation; the snakey bridge in Carr Plantation; the bridge viewpoint; the entrance to the riverside path and the riverside path itself; the entrances to Ellan Woods by the Village Hall and Landmark; and a new path from the station to Landmark.

### **5. Why is the bridge viewpoint included in the project?**

The results of the first consultation identified the bridge viewpoint as a priority for improvement. In addition, all of the path improvements proposed form a package of works to improve paths and outdoor spaces throughout the village, away from capercaillie areas, for all residents and visitors to enjoy. Members of the Highland Council have not yet expressed an opinion on the bridge viewpoint proposal, but support the proposal being shared with the community.

**6. Why is the new path from the station to Landmark not included in the second consultation?**

A draft proposal has been developed and all related landowners engaged positively in the pre-consultation, including Network Rail. However, Network Rail were unable to provide a final response in time for the consultation, so the proposal has been removed.

**7. Do any of the draft proposals involve cutting trees down?**

No.

**8. How can residents see the proposals and share their views?**

Residents can see the proposals and share their views via a closed webpage for only the community to use. Residents can also view the proposals and complete a paper feedback form at drop-in sessions in Carrbridge Village Hall on Saturday 16 October (10.00 – 14.00) and Monday 18 October (10.00 – 14.00 and 17.00 – 19.00).

**9. Will the paths & outdoor spaces be improved?**

Only if the landowners are in support, and then - only if the majority of residents who respond to the consultation are in support - along with community bodies - and funding can be secured.

**10. If they go ahead, who will pay for and deliver the improvements and maintain them in future?**

The Cairngorms Capercaillie Project will work with landowners and community bodies to explore the most effective ways in which the improvements can be funded, delivered and maintained. Several potential funding sources have already been identified, including Paths for All and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

**11. How long will it take to deliver the improvements?**

This depends on the support and funding that can be secured and how the plans change in response to the community consultation, but it is hoped that some improvements will be delivered over the next 12 to 24 months.