

Cairngorms Capercaillie Project

Progress Report: 1 July - 30 Sep 2021

The information in this document is submitted and discussed as part of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project's quarterly reporting 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.

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

Stage 1: Why?	This stage 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 stage 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 stage 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
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 delivered the following actions from the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consulted all landowners and the Carrbridge & Vicinity Community Council on draft design concepts for improving paths and outdoor spaces around Carrbridge to enable thriving capercaillie areas around the village and paths and outdoor spaces for all residents and visitors to enjoy. - Developed plans to consult the community on the draft design concepts. Two drop-in sessions will be held in Carrbridge Village Hall and residents will be able to share their views online. The consultation will be open for 4 weeks from Sat 16 Oct. - Published FAQs about the consultation on the village noticeboard and Facebook page. - Maintained the Carrbridge Capercaillie Newsletter to keep the community informed. - The Community Ranger has developed an autumn programme of guided wildlife walks around the village for residents and visitors. ■ Issue: An updated Action Plan for the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy is outstanding. The Carrbridge Capercaillie Group will begin work on the plan in December supported by the Project Manager. 	

Approved purpose	Summary of progress	Status
	<p><i>Mountain biking community – Stage 3</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A community action plan (project plan) has been developed based on the goal and actions developed and agreed by members of the mountain biking community in February 2021 and the progress made since. The plan will be reviewed and updated every 3 months from January 2022. The actions and goal - to unlock 100 hectares of habitat for capercaillie with no net loss of trails - is now known as the Trail Feathers project. ▪ The Mountain Bike Mapping Intern, employed as part of the Trail Feathers project, has begun to research and digitally map mountain bike trails, signage and information about trails in Badenoch and Strathspey alongside capercaillie data to help the MTB community develop a strategic plan for trail development and management in the area. The plan will be developed by members of the MTB community from October to December through a series of workshops and consultations with landmanagers and other key stakeholders. 	
	<p><i>Business community – Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The online survey for businesses - to identify how the business community feels about promoting the area's natural heritage and ways to enjoy it responsibly - has been completed by 131 businesses, allowing a 95% confidence level in the results. The survey is now closed. Follow-up phone calls are in the process of being completed with businesses that opted to share their views in more detail. The results of the survey and follow-up phone calls will be analysed in October to identify areas of consensus and a draft community action plan (Stage 3) will be developed in response. 	
	<p><i>Visitor community – Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The online survey for visitors to Glenmore Forest Park, Abernethy and Rothiemurchus - aimed at identifying the motivations of different types of visitors to those areas, including those who live locally - has been completed by 1,227 people. The survey is now closed. The target sample size was 1,200 to ensure views were gathered from a wide variety of visitors. Further research will be conducted in October through a series of focus groups. The results of the survey and focus groups will be analysed in late October and a draft community action plan (Stage 3) will be developed in response. 	
	<p><i>Deeside communities – Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The first stage of research in Deeside is complete. 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). Listening sessions have been conducted with 30 key people connected to the area. The results of the interviews are in the process of being analysed to identify areas of common ground. Residents and visitors will be invited to share their views about those areas via an online survey to identify degrees of consensus in the wider community. The survey will go live in October and the results will be used to inform the action planning process from November. 	

Approved purpose	Summary of progress	Status
<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"> ■ The project has been selected as a finalist in the Conservation Award category in the Helping It Happen Awards 2021, organised by Scottish Land & Estates. The winner will be announced on 27 October. ■ This quarter the project website received 3,196 unique pageviews and attracted 829 new users. A project Facebook page was launched in August and currently has over 400 followers. ■ The following media have featured the project this quarter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scottish Field (July) - Deeside Piper (July) - BBC Radio Scotland (September) ■ To date volunteers have donated 1,657 hours to the project. ■ An autumn programme of volunteer sessions has been launched. The sessions - already oversubscribed - will involve volunteers improving capercaillie habitat on Seafield, Rothiemurchus and Balmoral Estate. A winter programme is in the process of being developed. ■ An online session has been held for landmanagers and others who work in capercaillie areas, e.g. CNPA Conservation Officers, to introduce them to the capercaillie monitoring app. This marks the first stage of rolling out the app to target groups, before promoting the app more widely. 	
<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 7,800 hectares of habitat for capercaillie: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baddengorm Woods: 1,900 trees have been planted to expand habitat and increase cover. Trackside edges have been screened with turf and shrubs to help reduce disturbance. - Balmoral Estate: 1,100m of fencing has been removed to avoid collisions. - Rothiemurchus Estate: Foxes and crows have been controlled to enhance capercaillie survival. - Seafield Estate: Foxes and crows have been controlled to enhance capercaillie survival and marking has been replaced on a strategic fence to avoid collisions. ■ Habitat improvement work funded by the project's grant scheme is underway. The work involves restructuring woodlands to expand capercaillie habitat; marking fencing over 1km from an active capercaillie lek to avoid collisions; and cutting heather to promote blaeberry growth and enable movement of capercaillie and their broods within and between woodland blocks. ■ Issue: Habitat improvement plans for Rothiemurchus Estate and Tom an Uird Forest are currently under review as some elements are no longer viable. The Project Manager and Capercaillie Advisory Officer are working with both landholdings, NatureScot and Scottish Forestry to resolve this. 	

Approved purpose	Summary of progress	Status
<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 brood survey has been conducted in the Castle Grant area of Seafield Estate to help measure the impact of the predator control work being delivered in the area as part of the project. (A brood survey commissioned by the project was conducted in the same area in 2020) ▪ A tender - advertised on Public Contracts Scotland - has been awarded to RZSS 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. ▪ Issue: A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is outstanding. The Project Manager and project mentor (assigned by NLHF) are working with the contractor to resolve this. 	
<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 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will include tools to monitor and measure the success of the model. ▪ James Hutton Limited have begun to interview the members of the mountain biking community involved in the Trail Feathers project to document - on film - the process and outcomes of the project 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 Framework				
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. 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. ▪ The Operational Management Team operates under a Partnership Agreement. ▪ Members of the CNPA Board and Senior Management Team are members of the Project Board. ▪ The Project Board operate under a Memorandum of Agreement. 	High <i>Increased from medium last quarter</i>
2. Community-led elements are not conducted in an effective, transparent and defensible way limiting benefits and causing disengagement and mistrust in communities.	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All learning captured from the development phase (and ongoing learning in the 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 with the project resource available. 	High <i>Increased from medium last quarter</i>
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 Plan is in place. ▪ All project documents are written for a public audience and published on the project website (as far as appropriate). ▪ A project Facebook page has been created in part to provide a new opportunity to dispel myths and correct misunderstandings. 	High <i>Increased from medium last quarter</i>
4. Habitat improvement work delayed or unviable due to changes onsite, delays in the process of applying for FGS funding and or conflicting advice.	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partners applying for FGS funding are experienced in the process and have a good track record of securing funding. ▪ Additional resource is provided by the project to help strengthen applications. ▪ Scottish Forestry and NatureScot are project partners and members of the Operational Management Team. 	High <i>Increased from medium last quarter</i>

Risk / Issue	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation	Priority
5. 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 Framework will be in place. A culture of reflection is embedded in the project and professionally facilitated where possible. 	High <i>No change</i>
6. 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 help build relationships. 	High <i>No change</i>
7. 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 to stay informed and respond to any issues or perceptions related to disturbance. The 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 relevant legislation. The project operates within the Capercaillie Data Sharing Policy. 	Medium <i>No change</i>
8. Project activities conflict with other initiatives, e.g. wader 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 <i>No change</i>
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 <i>No change</i>
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 <i>No change</i>

Budget

Income	Expected	Received to date
National Lottery Heritage Fund	2,033,600	360,239
CNPA	60,280	50,280
NatureScot	50,000	35,000
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	68,852
Rothiemurchus Estate	41,669	0
Balmoral Estate	11,500	2,500
Baddengorm Woods	48,240	0
Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland	75,000	1,440
Volunteer time (in-kind)	125,750	32,850
RSPB in-kind (technical support for the app and online hub)	27,800	1,470
Total	2,902,659	588,711

Breakdown of income / contributions received

Partner / Funder	Nature of contribution	Total to date
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Grant	360,239
CNPA	Donation	50,280
NatureScot	Donation	35,000
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
Seafield and Strathspey Estates	Contractor payment - fence removal, replacement and marking	15,300
Balmoral Estate	Contractor payment - removal of 1,100m of deer fence	2,500
Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland	Contractor payment - trail maintenance and inspection training	1,440
Total		554,391

Partner / Funder	Nature of contribution (Added value - not in the original budget)	Total to date
CNPA	6 month internship to support MTB community work	6,762
Forestry Grant Scheme	Fence marking on Seafield Estate	22,752
Forestry Grant Scheme	Scarifying to promote natural regeneration on Seafield Estate	5,672
Total		35,186

Volunteer time (in-kind contribution)	Total to date
Carrbridge Capercaillie Group	12,469
Mountain biking (Trail Feathers) group	9,024
Volunteers delivering habitat improvement work	1,236
Capercaillie monitoring	1,746
Digital volunteer (project website design and development)	8,375
Total	32,850

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 trail 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 trail signs to encourage responsible riding in capercaillie areas	160
	Trail Association website to increase visibility, build awareness and support	454
Total		1,760

Contractor	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
RZSS	Developing a new approach to estimating the size of the UK capercaillie population using genetic material	9,853
James Hutton Institute	Evaluation film to share the learning and achievements of the mountain biking community; working to deliver conservation solutions in the Cairngorms National Park	18,000
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	7,443
Heritage Pathfinder Ltd.	Researching visitor attitudes and beliefs to inform action to enable thriving capercaillie areas and high quality, sustainable visitor experiences	20,000
Total		148,086

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	Planting native trees 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 Coordinator (P/T)	Supporting project delivery and providing admin support	77,200
Project Manager	Managing the project as a whole, including staff and contractors	170,700
Project Officer (P/T)	Supporting project delivery	105,900
Total		860,364

* Total costs for the delivery phase, i.e. 3 years (2020 – 2023). Costs include equipment and overheads.