

Cairngorms Capercaillie Project

Operational Management Team - Meeting Notes

Meeting date: 19 Jan 2022, 13:30 - 15.00

Venue: Zoom

Attendees: Alice Buttress (Carrbridge Capercaillie Group)
Anne Elliott (Area Officer, NatureScot)
Carolyn Robertson (Project Manager, CNPA)
Ewan Archer (Head Keeper, Seafield Estate)
Naomi Kaye (Project Co-ordinator, CNPA)
Neil Wilson (Badenoch and Strathspey Trail Association)
Peter Ferguson (Biodiversity Manager, Rothiemurchus Estate)
Richard Gledson (Factor, Balmoral Estate)

Apologies: Colin Leslie (Environment Forester, FLS)
Mark Tate (CEO, Cairngorms Business Partnership)
Ruari Watt (Highland Mountain Bike Development Coordinator, DMBinS)
Uwe Stoneman (Senior Site Manager - Abernethy, RSPB)

1. Actions from previous meeting

All actions have been completed with the exception of setting up a WhatsApp group to aid communication amongst the Operational Management Team.

2. Review and discuss project progress (Oct - Dec) and budget

A Highlight Report detailing the project's activities and progress from 1 October to 31 December was discussed. Good progress is continuing to be made across the majority of work areas. Highlights include the level of engagement in the ongoing consultation for the Mountain Biking Recreation Management Plan for Badenoch & Strathspey, produced as part of the project's work with the mountain biking community; the grant scheme to fund habitat improvement work for capercaillie will open earlier than last year due to demand; high levels of interest in the project's visitor research to support work with visitors to Abernethy, Glenmore and Rothiemurchus. The Cairngorms Business Partnership will be hosting a workshop on 27 January to share with the business community the visit / visitor segmentation model produced as part of the research. Emma Roddick MSP, the Scottish Environment LINK Capercaillie Champion, is due to visit Strathspey in early March to find out more about the project. Issues impacting the delivery of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy and habitat improvement work on Rothiemurchus Estate and Tom an Uird forest remain in hand. The project budget remains on track. Potential savings have been identified in some areas. Options for using the savings were discussed. Some members felt that they could be used to enhance the existing predator control funded by the project and preparatory work for reinforcing the capercaillie population.

3. Update re working with another community

All the thoughts shared at the previous meeting re potential communities (of place and interest) that the project could work with from July 2022 - July 2023 have been shared by the Project Board. The National Lottery Heritage Fund will feed in and the B&O at their next meeting on 24 March, which community to approach.

4. Update and discussion about the trial capercaillie monitoring app

An update was shared on how the app is being used so far and a question posed as to how the app could be promoted more widely without causing issues for capercaillie. It was agreed that information about the app would be shared with OMT members who could then play a role in helping to promote the app to relevant colleagues, for example those involved in survey and land management work.

5. Comms look ahead: January to March

Comms activities over the next quarter will include: promoting the survey for residents and visitors to Deeside (survey closes end of Jan); celebrating the end of Douglas's internship (end of Jan) and the work he's done to support the development of the MTB Recreation Management Plan; announcing that the grant scheme is open for applications from 1 Feb; a blog about habitat improvement work (robocutting) in Abernethy which the project is helping to fund; a media release about the visitor research being published and available on the website for all to use.

6. AOB

A question was raised about the value of aversion and diversionary feeding to help manage predators. OMT members present who responded to the question felt that the techniques may not offer value for money in the context of capercaillie conservation. However, it was noted that the large-scale diversionary feeding trial underway through Cairngorms Connect should be used to help judge the value of diversionary feeding once results are available from the trial.

Actions

1. **Carolyn** - share with OMT members more information on the trial capercaillie monitoring app and who has been introduced to the app so far.
2. **Naomi** - set up a WhatsApp group for all members.