

Cairngorms Capercaillie Project Project Board - Meeting Notes

Meeting date: 12 January 2022, 13.00 - 15.00

Venue: Zoom

Attendees: Andy Ford (Director of Nature and Climate Change, CNPA)
Adam Smith (Independent)
Carolyn Robertson (Project Manager, CNPA)
Claire Smith (Senior Conservation Officer, RSPB)
Debbie Greene (Operations Manager, NatureScot)
Naomi Kaye (Project Co-ordinator, CNPA)
Will Anderson (Chief Executive, Seafield and Strathspey Estates)

Apologies: Doug McAdam (CNPA Board member)
Priscilla Gordon-Duff (Independent)

1. Actions from previous meeting

All actions have been completed.

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

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. The project's research to identify areas of common ground in Deeside related to capercaillie conservation is due to close at the end of the month, with 411 Deeside residents and visitors sharing their views to date. 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.

3. Review and discuss project budget

Income and expenditure is largely on track. The issues raised in the previous item have budget implications, however the forecast is for a net gain in match funding due to changes in the habitat improvement plans leveraging greater levels of Forestry Grant Scheme funding. Potential savings have also been identified in some areas of the budget. Options for using the savings were discussed including expanding work on raising awareness; ensuring all fences in capercaillie areas across the National Park are marked; and increasing funds available for the project grant scheme to improve and expand capercaillie habitat, including enhancing fox and crow control.

4. Update re working with another community

Thoughts from the Operational Management Team re possible communities (of place and interest) that the project could work with from July 2022 - July 2023 were discussed. It was agreed that the next step is to scope possible communities in more detail and consult with Operational Management Team members as required. The National Lottery Heritage Fund will feed in and a decision on which community to approach will then be made at the next Project Board meeting on 24 March.

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.

Actions for next meeting

- 1. Carolyn:** Define and cost out options for underspend.
- 2. Carolyn:** Scope out possible communities of place and interest that the project could work with from July 2022 - July 2023.