

Carrbridge Capercaillie Group meeting notes

Wednesday 6 April

Proposed Action Plan: Feb 2022 – July 2023

The Carrbridge Capercaillie Group developed an Action Plan to deliver by July 2023. As with the previous Action Plan for 2021, it is based on the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy which Carrbridge residents were consulted on in 2020. The Carrbridge Capercaillie Group use the Strategy as a high-level document and Action Plan(s) to provide more detailed descriptions of activities and associated costs.

The Project Board met on 15 February to review and discuss the proposed Action Plan. All members of the Board were supportive of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group and their enthusiasm to help capercaillie and willingness to volunteer their time and energy to do so. Board members felt that this should be applauded.

Of the 17 proposed actions, the Project Board approved 13, including 1 conditionally. For the actions that were not approved, the Board wanted to reassure the group that the budget assigned to those actions could still potentially be spent on those areas of work as part of the wider project and Board members were keen to find ways for the group to still be involved in delivery.

On 9 March, the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group stated via email that they intend to put a response to the Action Plan feedback together to be considered by the Project Board and would then welcome a meeting with a member of the Project Board to discuss this.

Action: The Carrbridge Capercaillie Group to share their response to the Project Board's feedback by the end of April.

Approved actions in the proposed Action Plan: Feb 2022 – July 2023

Of the 13 actions approved by the Project Board the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group agreed that the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project Team, on behalf of the group, should proceed with the following actions:

1. Commission the production of 20 Hapi Capis for the group to give to residents on request.
2. Work with CNPA staff and the Carrbridge Tourist & Business Association to update the Carrbridge Community Paths leaflet to include reference to the seasonal signage created by the group to encourage responsible access in capercaillie areas around the village.
3. Develop and cost out a variety of ideas for the 'capercaillie experience' for the group to review and discuss with Landmark.
4. Establish whether any professionals are available to conduct brood counts around Carrbridge this August in order to gather new data on local productivity.
5. Contact the Capercaillie Protection Project in Poland (a 4 year pilot programme of reintroduction in the Bory Dolnośląskie Forest and Augustowska Primeval Forest) to invite someone from the project to speak locally, either as part of an existing talks programme or as a standalone event.

Safeguarding capercaillie areas this breeding season

All landowners in capercaillie sensitive areas around Carrbridge confirmed that they wish to re-install the signage trialled in 2021 to promote responsible access from April to August, during lekking and breeding season, as part of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy. An additional landowner, who was not part of the 2021 trial, confirmed that they also wish to install the signage this year. The signage is now in place and the Community Ranger is on the ground encouraging people to adhere to the signage.

The Community Ranger is also safeguarding the lek sites around the village throughout April and into May. Safeguarding local lek sites is an annual activity as part of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy.

The group raised concerns about vehicles parked near some of the local lek sites early in the morning and groups of dogs being exercised off lead in a capercaillie sensitive area where the seasonal signage is now in place. These concerns have been followed up with the Community Ranger.

NatureScot Scientific Advisory Committee Report

A new report by the NatureScot Scientific Advisory Committee has advised on ways to help reverse the fortunes of capercaillie in Scotland, which could be lost within two to three decades if we don't move quickly.

The report advises that poor breeding success in the UK capercaillie population is the primary cause of recent decline and breeding success appears to be too low to allow the population to recover. The main factors driving poor productivity are a high loss of nests and young chicks and the two main reasons for this are increased levels of predation and human disturbance.

The report is not, in itself, a plan for action. The NatureScot Scientific Advisory Committee were not asked to consider interactions with wider biodiversity and communities, or costs and practicalities, for example. These and other factors need to be taken into consideration and that is the next step which is now underway led by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and NatureScot.

The Carrbridge Capercaillie Group have been invited to share their views, along with other stakeholders, in response to the report and to attend a workshop with organisations, agencies, land managers and technical experts on 4 May to explore the stakeholder views shared and use that information to focus-in on how proposals on the areas of action outlined in the report could be delivered.

Action: The Carrbridge Capercaillie Group to share their collective views in response to the report through the online survey and confirm who will attend the workshop on behalf of the group.