

Carrbridge Capercaillie Group meeting notes

Monday 22 March 2023

Action Plan: 2022 - 2023

The Action Plan for 2022 - 2023 was approved by the Project Board on 23 June 2022. The Cairngorms Capercaillie Project Team are supporting the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group to deliver the Action Plan. The group met with members of the Project Team to review the progress made against all actions and identify next steps.

Action from the Action Plan 22/23: Update the Carrbridge Paths leaflet to include reference to the seasonal signage and encourage responsible access in capercaillie areas around the village.

Update: The reprint of the Carrbridge leaflet is now expected to be completed after Easter 2023 due to additional design work required.

Action: EG to keep in touch with the CNPA Recreation and Access Team re content and timescales.

Action from the Action Plan 22/23: Purchase and install an all-weather Carrbridge Nature noticeboard to provide a central hub for sharing information about nature around the village.

Update: The Highland Council have confirmed that no planning consent is required if the new noticeboard remains in the same location.

ACTION: Meet with contractor on-site to confirm location and specification before proceeding with the work.

Action from the Action Plan 22/23: Scope the potential for new capercaillie related experiences for visitors and residents.

Update: Landmark's new Ancient Forest Adventure, which includes a capercaillie exhibit, is still in development and due to open this summer. Support has been provided to map the current distribution of the UK capercaillie population for display in the exhibit.

ACTION: Contact Landmark re their communications plan for the opening of the exhibit.

Action from the Action Plan 22/23: Commission the production of small capercaillie keepsakes for visitors and residents and invest the donations received into wildlife projects around Carrbridge.

Update: Items have been ordered.

Action from the Action Plan 22/23: Commission the production of a carved capercaillie to include in the Carvings Trail around Carrbridge.

Update: An alternative site has been identified and landowner permission sought. A carver has also been confirmed. It was agreed that a drop-in event should be held for residents to find out more about this action and the new site.

ACTION: Proceed with arrangements for the drop-in event.

Actions from the Action Plan 22/23: Work with the CNPA Ranger Team and land managers to install seasonal signage around Carrbridge (developed and tested as part of the 2021 Action Plan) to promote responsible access and dog walking in capercaillie areas during the 2022 and 2023 breeding seasons.

Update: In a survey of over 220 local dog owners, the trial sign developed as part of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy to encourage responsible access by dog walkers was identified as a sign that more dog walkers would adhere to compared to other equivalent signs. 77% of dog walkers also complied with the signs last year. It was therefore agreed that they should be installed again.

In response to feedback received from residents it was also agreed that an additional sign should be created, and messages shared on Carrbridge News to help dog owners know where it is appropriate to let their dogs off lead around the village.

The CNPA Ranger team will be safeguarding local lek sites during the breeding season and the group volunteered to be involved.

ACTION: Group members to confirm patrol dates and an additional 'dog off lead' area sign to be mocked up for review.

Action from the Action Plan 22/23: Support more habitat creation and predator control for capercaillie on Seafield Estate.

Update: Seafield Estate have confirmed that they can deliver more habitat creation and predator control as part of the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy.

ACTION: Group to be kept informed as the work is delivered.

Action from the Action Plan 22/23: Support the second phase of the pilot genetic lek survey aimed at developing a more accurate approach to estimating the size of local capercaillie populations using genetic material (droppings).

ACTION: This work is ongoing and group to be kept informed.

Action from the Action Plan 22/23: Commission a parasitology analysis of samples collected as part of the pilot genetic lek survey to check for potential causes of chick mortality.

Update: RZSS have been commissioned to undertake this work and their methodology was shared with the group.

ACTION: The group to be kept informed as work progresses.

Action from Action Plan 22/23: Commission the production of Hapi Capis for Carrbridge residents to adopt.

Update: There have been several requests by residents for replacement Hapi Capis, as well as enquiries from outwith the village. The group are happy to meet local demand, keeping it small scale and free of charge, using recycled materials where possible. There may be potential to work with the new Spey 'mens' shed and the Friday Club if required.

Separately, the Cairngorms Business Partnership may offer a channel to sell Hapi Capis through their online shop. This could include a reference to the story / origin of Hapi Capis in Carrbridge.

AOB

Action from Action Plan 21/22: GWCT's capercaillie population estimate has been published in the Wildlife Biology journal with a credit to the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group for funding the research.