

December 2015

EAST CAIRNGORMS MOORLAND PARTNERSHIP

Statement of Purpose

The East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership comprises six estates (Mar Lodge, Mar, Invercauld, Balmoral, Glenavon and Glenlivet) and the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Purpose of Partnership

The over-arching purpose is to demonstrate a clear contribution to the four aims of the National Park, the National Park Partnership Plan and Cairngorms Nature Action Plan through moorland management. This includes recognition of the varied priorities and objectives of the estates, and the need to maintain viability of estate enterprises as a basis for delivering a viable mix of public and private interest outcomes.

Specifically, the purpose is to collaborate on a landscape scale across land holdings to enhance the following, alongside the estates' sporting and other management objectives:

- Woodland and scrub expansion;
- Peatland restoration;
- Raptor and other priority species conservation;
- Landscape enhancement.

In doing so the partners seek to demonstrate the combined delivery of public and private interest outcomes and the successful integration of grouse moor management with other land use objectives.

Outcomes

The partners set out to achieve the following outcomes:

- Combined delivery of private and public interest outcomes;
- Greater habitat diversity, including expansion of woodland and scrub in key locations;
- Retained sense of wildness and landscape value;
- Diverse wildlife populations appropriate to the landscape and habitats;
- Improved understanding of moorland habitat and species management;
- Collaboration and communication based on a set of agreed principles.

Work Programme

The estates and CNPA commit to developing a programme of work that will identify what is currently being achieved, explore and agree the scope for enhancement and collaborate where relevant to deliver practical work on the ground. This includes:

1. Using mapping to identify opportunities for habitat enhancement including woodland and scrub potential;

2. Identifying opportunities for peatland restoration;
3. Explore options to improve the balance of biodiversity including consideration of raptor populations and enhanced raptor conservation;
4. Collaborating with CNPA and neighbours where appropriate in planning new/upgraded hill tracks and fences;
5. Demonstrating best practice in muirburn planning and implementation;
6. Trialling methodologies for the monitoring of mountain hare populations to inform management policies;
7. Engaging local communities and visitors in understanding management goals and approaches;

Partners

The core partners are the six estates (Mar Lodge, Mar, Invercauld, Balmoral, Glenavon and Glenlivet) and the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Advice and support from others (organisations and expert individuals) will be sought to help address specific topics.

Reporting

CNPA continues to support the Wildlife Estates Scotland initiative and where possible this partnership will align reporting formats to support wider WES reporting.

Success will be monitored by continual assessment jointly among partners on an annual rolling basis for an initial three years from 2015. 6-monthly progress reports will be circulated to keep partners informed.

Context

The Cairngorms National Park comprises some of the most valued environments in Scotland which provide biodiversity, employment for local people and a place for people from all over the world to visit and enjoy.

The Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2012-2017 ('CNPPP'), identifies moorland as one of the special landscape qualities of the Park, broadly identified as the areas linking the low ground farmland and woodlands in the Park's valleys to the high peaks and plateaux¹.

The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-2018 ('CNAP') recognises that the moorlands of the National Park are a cultural landscape which is a 'product of human action'². Deer stalking, grouse shooting, farming, fishing and crofting are all 'fundamentally important to the biodiversity, culture and economy of the National Park'. It is also accepted that 'moorlands contract and expand'².

Heather moorland specifically covers some 40% of the National Park³. The six partner estates include approximately 50% of the Park's moorland and the estates set out to manage it in such a way as to balance the environmental, social and economic well-being of the moorland and the communities who live and work there.

The 50 year vision in the CNAP incorporates a desire that, by 2063, nature conservation will be incorporated into all land management activities⁴; there will be a natural transition from woodland to montane through the moorland belt to the montane area; raptor persecution will have long ago

ceased to occur; productive grouse moors will contribute environmentally, economically and socially to the Park; the majority of blanket bog will be in a favourable condition contributing to carbon capture and water retention⁵; and visitors will respect the wildlife and landscapes they come to see⁶.

At present it is recognised that there are concerns about the integration of management for grouse with other land use objectives. The concerns relate largely to impacts associated with track construction, fencing, muirburn contrary to best practice, stark divides between moorland and woodland, peatland erosion, species persecution (raptors) and management (mountain hares).

This partnership will address these issues collaboratively with a view to enhancing the overall delivery of environmental, economic and social objectives.

References

- 1 *Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2012 – 2017, Page 21*
- 2 *The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-2018, Page 9*
- 3 *The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-2018, Page 17*
- 4 *The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-2018, page 24*
- 5 *The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-2018, page 26*
- 6 *The Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-2018, Page 27*