

2. VISION

Together, we are strong

The Cairngorms National Park is already the most important single area in the UK for nature conservation – it has both European and global importance. The quality, variety and extent of species and habitats are exceptional, many of which are internationally rare and all are set within world-famous landscapes.

Across large parts of the National Park, the existence of these havens for biodiversity is thanks to actions by past and present generations of land and water managers, who have helped to shape and conserve them.

Furthermore, many organisations, individuals and agencies from a range of sectors are all committed to, and undertaking sterling work for, the benefit of biodiversity in the National Park.

The positive impact of this work is enormous, helping to underpin both many aspects of the Park's biodiversity and the economic benefits that flow from it – whether directly in the use of resources such as timber, fish and game, or indirectly through the massive benefits linked to clean water, tourism, recreation, health and wellbeing.

This is a great starting point for this new Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Together we can make an even greater difference to this special place for biodiversity.

Cairngorms Nature – the next steps

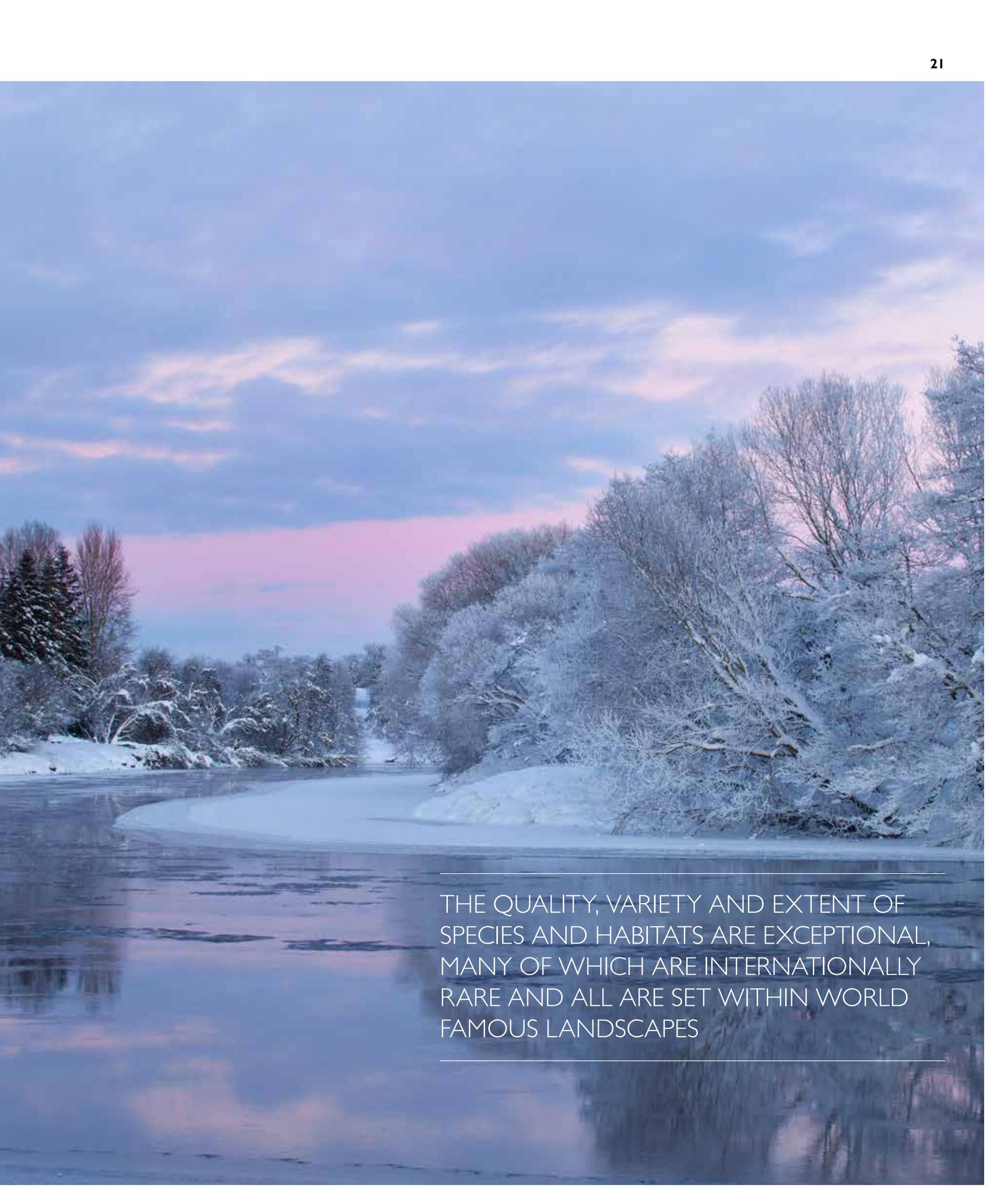
Cairngorms Nature is a new partnership, open to all who want to contribute. All it takes to be a partner is a desire and commitment to help deliver the Action Plan. The Action Plan describes where we want to be in five years, the partnership will get us there.

This Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNAP) builds on the foundations laid by the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan (CLBAP) 2002 – 2012. The CLBAP described in some detail the habitats and species in the National Park, their local, national and international significance and outlined key threats, issues and opportunities. It guided work in the National Park for over ten years and delivered considerable biodiversity gains. Many of the issues and opportunities highlighted in developing and delivering the CLBAP have been continued into the work of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.

The plan does not cover everything to do with biodiversity in the National Park, nor does it include everyone who is doing a great deal of valuable work. The four aims describe the priorities. Those priorities reflect the National Park Partnership Plan and commonly agreed areas of immediate need. The list of key partners identifies agencies and groups that will provide the drive and support, but is not meant to represent all those who are doing work in the Park.

The Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group will provide strategic leadership of Cairngorms Nature, overseeing the development of the partnership and the delivery of the Action Plan. Members of the Strategy Group are listed in Section 3: Strategy.



A wide-angle photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, a calm river reflects the sky and the surrounding trees. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, purples, and blues, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The trees are heavily laden with snow, and the ground is also covered in a thick layer of white. The overall mood is serene and quiet.

THE QUALITY, VARIETY AND EXTENT OF SPECIES AND HABITATS ARE EXCEPTIONAL, MANY OF WHICH ARE INTERNATIONALLY RARE AND ALL ARE SET WITHIN WORLD FAMOUS LANDSCAPES





Our vision is that...

...nature in the Cairngorms National Park will be cared for and treasured by all who live and work here and all who visit. Natural habitats, rich in distinctive species, will be even more diverse, even more resilient and even better connected than they are today.

Where we are now and where we want to be in 50 years

LAND MANAGEMENT	
2013	2063
<p>An active land management community based fundamentally around conservation, food production, timber, woodfuel, energy production and sport is vital to the management and enhancement of habitats supporting biodiversity.</p>	<p>The land management community is thriving. It receives strong public support for the services it provides. Nature conservation is incorporated within all land management activities. Land management is tailored to ensure that the patchwork of habitats is even more diverse and rich in native species, encouraging the recovery of those that have been in decline.</p>
FORESTS AND WOODS	
2013	2063
<p>The largest remaining areas of semi-natural woodlands in Britain are concentrated in the main river valleys of the National Park. They include 25 per cent of the entire Scottish resource of native woodlands; the greatest extent of Caledonian pinewood; some of the best surviving fragments of ancient floodplain forest in the UK; and some of the largest remaining stands of Aspen.</p> <p>The woodlands are nationally and internationally important for many rare species of birds, mammals, invertebrates, lichens, plants and fungi.</p> <p>In places, the forests are fragmented, and regeneration is restricted by overgrazing by deer.</p>	<p>Patches of forest and woodland, some miles across, some as small as football fields, link together through farmland and open ground. They are expanding up hillsides and into quiet areas, providing refuges for species to flourish, like the once critically endangered but now flourishing capercaillie.</p> <p>They are made up almost entirely of native trees: a patchwork of different woodlands, including productive plantations, all with rich understories, trees of all ages, clearings, bogs and deadwood scattered throughout.</p> <p>The UK's largest natural forests are considered an exemplar of woodlands managed for multiple benefits.</p>

WETLANDS, WET GRASSLANDS AND FRESHWATER

2013

The National Park contains some of the most important wetlands in Europe and the most important area of natural floodplain in Britain. Away from the Insh Marshes, there are only small areas of wetland. Many lowland wetlands have been drained.

Strathspey is the most important UK mainland breeding site for farmland waders, though numbers are declining.

In a UK context, rivers and lochs in the National Park have a high degree of naturalness and are largely of good ecological status. Most of the Park's water is of excellent quality and internationally recognised for important habitats and species.

2063

Rivers naturally meander and waters rise and fall seasonally across land grazed by livestock. Large, interconnected wetlands help prevent damaging flood events in the Park and further downstream. Natural processes in river catchments do not affect the productivity of land.

Farmland wader populations have recovered and increased throughout the National Park, and the Park is nationally recognised as a model of wet farmland management for conservation on productive land.

The high water quality status has been maintained or increased.

MONTANE

2013

The Cairngorms plateau is the largest and most important example of montane habitat in the UK. The area is of high national and European significance for many arctic-alpine specialist species.

People regard the Cairngorms as one of the UK's last great wild areas. The mountains attract thousands of climbers and walkers each year; trampling and erosion are issues on some of the more popular routes.

Climate change threatens many of our rarest and most fragile species.

2063

The plateau supports healthy plant and animal communities and are even more widely regarded as the most significant area of montane habitat in the UK.

The Cairngorms are renowned for wild land qualities, which visitors continue to enjoy responsibly. A network of sensitively managed paths in popular areas protects fragile soils and rare species.

The National Park is a focus for research into the effects of climate change, and a range of mitigation and adaptation trials and approaches are underway.

MOORLANDS	
2013	2063
<p>Nearly half of the National Park is moorland, including upland heath and blanket bog. Many of the designated upland habitats, including blanket bog, are in unfavourable condition. Small, isolated patches of montane scrub are some of the finest remnants of a habitat that has virtually disappeared in the UK.</p> <p>Uplands are important breeding areas for red grouse and species such as merlin and golden plover. Moorland management, stalking and grouse shooting are fundamental parts of the land use, economy and culture of the Park.</p> <p>Much of the Park was recently designated as being of European importance for golden eagle, although raptor persecution and high-intensity management have a detrimental effect on biodiversity in many areas.</p>	<p>Moorlands have structural diversity and link habitats together sympathetically. A natural transition from woodland to montane scrub to upland heath is developing throughout the National Park.</p> <p>Raptor persecution ended decades ago and a full complement of native raptors lives and breeds across the National Park.</p> <p>Productive grouse moors and high-quality stalking remains a mainstay of life, contributing environmentally, economically and socially.</p> <p>Most of the blanket bog is in favourable condition, retains water and acts as a carbon sink. The contributions it makes to ecosystem services are widely recognised.</p>
GRASSLAND AND FARMLAND	
2013	2063
<p>Farmland and grassland in the National Park have often been managed less intensively than in most other parts of the UK. The economic pressures of modern farming in a global market are leading to a demand for higher output systems of farming than in the past, impacting on grassland biodiversity.</p> <p>Some grasslands and river banks support many rare plants, invertebrates and fungi.</p>	<p>A patchwork of productive land uses is good for wildlife. It supports thriving communities and reflects centuries of tradition. Delivering biodiversity benefit is an integral part of high-quality food production and does not impact on profitability.</p> <p>High-quality grasslands support a healthy range of nationally and locally important species.</p>

PEOPLE

2013

Some residents place a high value on their surroundings and are keen to get involved in discussions about how to manage them. The national and international significance of habitats and species is understood by many specialists and interested individuals.

Visitors come to the National Park motivated by the landscapes and wildlife. Wildlife watching is a burgeoning tourism industry that complements the already substantial sporting and recreational offerings.

Opportunities for non-residents to volunteer or contribute in some way are site and organisation-specific and relatively small scale.

2063

People who live in the National Park are proud of the nature around them and are more widely involved in its management.

Land-based and tourism businesses thrive by looking after the environments they rely on; and contribute to conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Visitors respect the landscapes and wildlife they come to see and want to contribute to protecting them.

People working in the Cairngorms National Park will have easy access to the latest knowledge, thinking and research and use it to realise further biodiversity benefits; to deal with the effects and impacts of climate change; and to tackle the threats posed by invasive species.

Our knowledge of biodiversity and ecosystems will continue to grow through proactive research. Habitat and species mapping and monitoring will be even more comprehensive and up to date; policy makers and practitioners will have access to current information and advice via a centralised database.

An integrated habitat network will extend across the Cairngorms National Park, allowing species and ecosystems to respond and/or be robust enough to adapt to climate change. Peatlands and woodlands will function as carbon sinks and wetlands will mitigate against the worst impacts of extreme weather events. Designated sites will act as key nodes within wider integrated habitat networks.

Monitoring and management of invasive species will be more proactive, preventing and limiting the spread of the most damaging species so they do not have negative impacts upon the effective functioning of ecosystems.