



Scottish
Environment
LINK

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Dear Cairngorms National Park Board,

The forthcoming Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan is a key moment in Scotland's efforts to tackle the twin crises of climate change and nature loss. Continuing as we are is clearly not an option, in Cairngorms National Park or more widely across Scotland. With a consultation opened by the government on new national parks, it is vital we get the management of our current national parks right and that we use our National Parks as leaders in our response to the nature and climate crises.

How we use our land is central to tackling these environmental challenges – both in sequestering carbon in our woodlands and peatlands, and in reversing the rapid decline of our native habitats and species. 1 in 9 Scottish species are at risk of national extinction and our natural environment is one of the most ecologically degraded in the world. Our National Parks, with their remits to conserve and enhance our natural heritage, have never been more important.

As environmental organisations, we welcome the level of ambition in the draft Cairngorms Park Plan. The scale and types of action in this Plan are appropriate for one of Scotland's most iconic landscapes, and taking the lead in this way will inspire and demonstrate success to others across Scotland.

We agree with the 75% of respondents, 50% of that from Park residents, who support this Plan. Nature does not exist in a vacuum but as a living part of our communities, and the Park Authority rightly has a duty to consider the social and economic development of communities within its boundaries as well as our natural heritage. Social and economic development within the park can only be achieved if it is underpinned by healthy functioning ecosystems. At present much of the park's ecosystems are being damaged by excessively and unnaturally high deer numbers and moorland management practices that limit species diversity, ecosystem resilience and release carbon through burning. Reducing these damaging impacts, through increased culling of the deer population, is essential if we are serious about protecting our environment while supporting the economic vitality of our rural communities.

Scotland's efforts should be understood in a global context. The 30x30 ambition – to protect 30% of land worldwide for nature by the end of the decade – has been endorsed by both the Scottish and UK governments. But designating parts of our landscape as protected for nature is not enough without effective management of that land, and in Scotland's case, that must mean fewer deer, moorland



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management and putting nature at the heart of our response to the nature and climate crises. Deer numbers in Scotland are unsustainably high, and, as a result, too much of our land has become overgrazed and barren. This situation is not a natural outcome but the result of land management policies which must now change. As it stands, we have the absurd situation where the public pays landowners to fence and plant trees to capture carbon, while simultaneously in some places deer numbers are kept so high that our native forests struggle to regenerate naturally.

We strongly urge the Park Authority to ensure that the next National Park Partnership Plan includes effective action to tackle deer numbers, increase the diversity of its moorlands and increase natural regeneration of woodland. In doing so, they will be creating a more ecologically balanced Cairngorms, and meeting Scottish Government land management objectives for native woodland expansion, peatland protection, and biodiversity conservation.

Yours,

Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group
Cairngorms Campaign
John Muir Trust
North East Mountain Trust
Ramblers Scotland
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
RSPB Scotland
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Trees for Life
Woodland Trust Scotland