

# Cairngorms Connect

## Highlights Report

1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023

The Cairngorms Connect Partnership has seen noticeable progress in 2023 across all areas, from restoration delivery, to communications and involvement, and science and monitoring.

The scale of achievements has been remarkable, and a testament to the hard work by staff and volunteers from across the partnership in a wide range of habitats, altitudes, and weather.

For the first time, decades of data have been collated from the entire Cairngorms Connect Partnership to better understand the potential of forest regeneration in the presence of deer. This resulting research was published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology* in September 2023.

As we continue to work intergenerationally to deliver our 200-year vision, 2023 saw the continuation and development of our work with schools and youth groups as well as a new initiative to involve 18–25 year olds with the creation of the Cairngorms Connect Youth Cohort. A group of nine local young people came together to learn about landscape-scale restoration and develop ideas for future youth involvement within the Partnership.

Last, but not least, it was a real honour to have our work featured in the Sir David Attenborough-narrated documentary *Saving our Wild Isles* in March 2023 which has been watched by thousands of people across the UK.

We look forward to continuing to drive forward this important work, and identifying opportunities to involve people of all ages, locally, nationally, and internationally.

### Cairngorms Connect Board



Supported by



Chaira Alagia



Ronan Dugan



Pete Short



Lizzie Brotherston



Lizzie Brotherston



Kirsty Pollard



Sally Phillips



David Sim



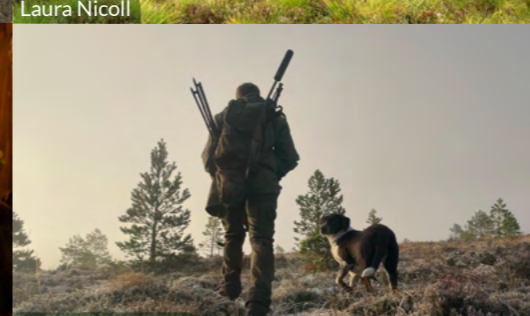
Lizzie Brotherston



Laura Nicoll



Rupert Shanks



Lizzie Brotherston



Chaira Alagia



Caitriona Parmenter

## Partnership Staff Highlights

“This year, we recorded our first short-eared owls breeding successfully on Wildland Cairngorms. It certainly is wonderful to witness these species, big and small, thriving in the regenerating landscape of Wildland and Cairngorms Connect.”  
– Ronan Dugan, Conservation Assistant, Wildland Limited

“A highlight for me was being involved in the plantation restructuring work at RSPB Scotland’s Craigmore Forest. From the outside, Craigmore appears a uniform pine plantation. A short foray into the wood, however, reveals flushes of birch holding their own amongst the pine; juniper craning for light; and the remains of large pines – hinting towards a more open, natural forest in days gone by ...”  
– Kirsty Pollard, Forest Ranger, RSPB Scotland

“My highlight has been working with our volunteers. The soggy day up Meall a’ Bhuachaille in July was particularly satisfying! Seeing folk so happy to give up their time to take care of the Cairngorms Connect landscape makes me optimistic about the future of this place and its local community.”  
– Laura Nicoll, Glenmore Visitor Centre Supervisor, Forestry and Land Scotland

“The highlight for me was Cairngorms Connect Science Team and partners achieving the publication of ‘Woodland expansion in the presence of deer’, in the *Journal of Applied Ecology*. This applied science not only provides a strong evidence base for our work, but hopefully can inspire others to apply a similar approach elsewhere.”  
– Ian Sargent, Nature Reserves Manager, NatureScot



Sign up to the Cairngorms Connect newsletter for monthly updates and details of local events.

[cairngormsconnect.org.uk](http://cairngormsconnect.org.uk)

# Cairngorms Connect Progress

## Landscape-scale Restoration



**359.4** ha  
of Scots pine  
plantation  
restructured

**1914** ha since 2019



**205** ha  
of peatland  
restored

**1184.5** ha since 2019



**2474** ha  
of non-native  
conifers removed

**5791** ha since 2019



**11** trees  
installed in the  
River Tromie to help  
slow the flow

**20** ha of floodplain restored  
since 2019

## Science & Monitoring



**1447** moths  
have been recorded  
across 69 surveys

**14,428** since 2019

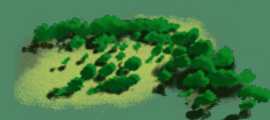


**6500** willows  
walked in and planted  
in and around the  
Loch A'an basin

**11,072** since 2019



**1200** scats from badger, fox and marten collected by  
Forestry and Land Scotland ecology interns



**1** paper published in Journal of Applied Ecology

## Community Impact



**328**

local young  
people attended  
youth engagement  
workshops with  
Cairngorms Connect

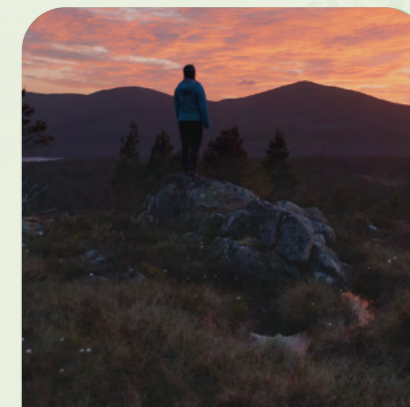
Photo by Lizzie Brotherston



**6229**

people attended  
an event, workshop,  
or talk with  
Cairngorms Connect

Photo by Pete Short



**600,000+**

people watched  
"Saving Our Wild  
Isles" including  
200 people at our  
screening event

Photo by Ben Cherry / Silverback Films



**60+**

staff employed  
across the  
partnership,  
including 1 newly  
hired Trainee  
Deer Stalker

Photo by Jack Ward



**1,500**

hours of  
volunteering  
at the  
Tree Nursery

Photo by Lynn Cassells



**647** kg of Cairngorms Connect Venison  
made available through the CC Venison Project at  
events, workshops, and sales to local businesses.

Photo by James Stevens



**£479,264**

Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Programme  
funding has been spent locally

**£1,929,845** since 2019