

## **Appendix 7.1: Rothiemurchus<sup>1</sup> Recreation Services Plan**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This appendix is an integral part of the Rothiemurchus Long-Term Forest Plan and is relevant to public access management over the whole estate land-holding.

The aim of this recreation plan is to meet with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive in relation to Capercaillie, a UK endangered species listed in Schedule 1, Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive – giving them the highest level of legislative protection. Since the 2014 sale of a large part of the Rothiemurchus Forest to the Scottish Ministers (Forestry Commission Scotland), no active capercaillie lek sites are within the new forest plan area, but Rothiemurchus continues to welcome a large number of visitors who move through the wider forest area. This means that along with a number of other objectives for public access management, Rothiemurchus gives a high priority to minimising the impact of recreation disturbance on the capercaillie population in the wider forest area.

Reference is made to the Rothiemurchus Ranger Service: this includes all those who welcome and influence visitors; functions include reception, rangers, guides, outdoor instructors, interpretation, cleaning, maintenance, marketing, public and press relations; all work together in a co-ordinated way.

Since surveying of leks and chicks began in 2005 the capercaillie population in Rothiemurchus Forest has consistently been amongst the most successful in Scotland. Leks include the two largest in Scotland.

It was predicted that capercaillie would be lost in Scotland by 2014 unless urgent action was taken (Watson and Moss, 2008). Private and public land managers responded to this challenge and have worked exceptionally hard to ensure that this did not happen. In Badenoch and Strathspey at least, this seems to have worked and the species seems to be holding its own. But capercaillie require large areas of forest if they are to thrive. Although the dramatic decline towards extinction has been halted, the capercaillie remains one of Britain's most threatened species and the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) offers a significant opportunity to be the place where the species is able to bounce back and potentially re-populate other areas of the country. (CNPA Nov 2014<sup>2</sup>)

The Rothiemurchus Ranger Service concludes that recreation policy and management on the estate has succeeded in its main objective (biodiversity enhancement and conservation of priority species) of increasing the meta population of Capercaillie. This has been achieved during a time of changing visitor expectations and more active enjoyment of the forest. The Ranger Service therefore considers it necessary to continue the current policies with more emphasis on the effective communication of how to take responsible access to special areas of conservation. Similarly the Forest Plan's over-arching aim is to enhance habitat for wildlife and only small adjustments to the plan will be required. It is however important to listen to all stakeholders; the Ranger Service regards the Capercaillie Background Paper (CNPA 2013<sup>3</sup>) as being very helpful in bringing together the results of previous work in a comprehensive format, providing the basis of shared understanding necessary for collaboration, consistent interpretation and effective consultation. This has been taken a step further by the Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework that sets out a strategy for how agencies, land managers and communities can work together to further capercaillie conservation within the Cairngorms<sup>4</sup>.

### **2.0 LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The starting point for this plan is the CNPA Capercaillie Background Paper which concludes:

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions: Rothiemurchus is synonymous with Rothiemurchus Estate; Rothiemurchus Forest covers all of the forest area within the former Parish of Duthil & Rothiemurchus East of the River Spey and Upper Rothiemurchus Forest refers to the area sold by the Estate to Forestry Commission Scotland in 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework. Phase 1 Report. Nov 2014. Cairngorms National Park Authority.

<sup>3</sup> CNPA\_Paper5800\_PlanningCommitteePaper1\_Appen4 HRA in <http://cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/planning/new-planning-applications/> search ref 09/155/CP. Appendix 4 of the HRA includes the Capercaillie Background Paper referenced above.

<sup>4</sup> Cairngorms capercaillie Framework. Phase 1 Report. Nov 2014. Cairngorms National Park Authority.

“The requirement that Any Appropriate Assessment needs to be as certain beyond reasonable scientific doubt that direct habitat loss and/or reduction in available habitat through habitat avoidance by capercaillie due to disturbance does not result from any development.” (Where ‘development’ refers to any plan or project.)

The following legislation is relevant:

The Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) 2004. “It is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising its functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.” This also applies to the Rothiemurchus Estate team when delivering public sector plans; e.g. SRDP, Ranger Grants, Single Farm Payment.

SNH Habitat Regulations Appraisal of Plans, Guidance for Plan-making bodies in Scotland, version 2.0, August 2012: “Article 6(3) of the EC Habitats Directive requires that any plan (or project), which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site, but would be likely to have a significant effect on such a site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to an ‘appropriate assessment’ of its implications for the European site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. The plan-making body shall agree to the plan only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned, unless in exceptional circumstances the provisions of Article 6(4) are met.”

The European Court of Justice has widely interpreted what is meant in the Directive by a ‘plan or project’. EC guidance II notes that: “...the Directive does not circumscribe the scope of either ‘plan’ or ‘project’ by reference to particular categories of either. Instead, the key limiting factor is whether or not they are likely to have a significant effect on a site”.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code;

1.1 “....Part I of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gives everyone statutory access rights to most land and inland water. People only have these rights if they exercise them responsibly by respecting people’s privacy, safety and livelihoods, and Scotland’s environment. Equally, land managers have to manage their land and water responsibly in relation to access rights.”

See also page 106: Nature Reserves and Other Conservation Areas.

#### RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR BY LAND MANAGERS

Providing information on the importance of the site and on the best routes for people to follow, and providing good paths, can help to minimise damage and disturbance, and increase public awareness of wildlife.

#### RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR BY THE PUBLIC

Access rights extend to these places but remember that they are carefully managed for nature conservation and to safeguard rare animals and plants. Take care to avoid damaging the site or disturbing its wildlife, or interfering with its management or enjoyment by others. Depending on your activity, you might be requested to follow a specific route or to avoid exercising access rights in a specific area: following such local guidance can help to safeguard the natural heritage of these areas.

### **3.0 PRINCIPLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR GUIDANCE**

The key reference points for establishing the objectives of this plan, as with the Forest Plan, are the site management statements for the various SSSI’s within the plan area. In addition the CNPA Park Partnership Plan 2012-17 is a central document for informing strategy along with the strategies approved for Phase 2 of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework.

Key to understanding issues is the CNPA Capercaillie Framework Phase I Report (CNPA Nov 2014).

This recreation services plan, as an integral part of the Rothiemurchus Estate Long-term Forest Plan will be assessed by Forestry Commission Scotland after broad consultation with stakeholders.

Plan objectives and tasks are fine-tuned based on the estate’s accumulated experience and a number of references on best practice. Key references are listed below and additional references in the bibliography & appendices.

## **References**

- Rothiemurchus Long Term Forest Plan 2006 (2011-2030) (2010 revision)
- SNH (2013) SSSI Management Statements (<http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/index.jsp>)
- Capercaillie Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, Avoiding disturbance of breeding capercaillie - guidance for land managers.
- SNH 2010. Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Available at <http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/access/full%20code.pdf>
- Carter, J. (2008) Rothiemurchus Estate; A Strategy for Interpretation.
- Smout, T.C. & Lambert, R.A. (Editors) Rothiemurchus Nature and People on a Highland Estate 1500 - 2000.
- Jenkinson, S. (2011). People & Dogs in the Outdoors. CNPA
- Hampshire County Council (2013). Planning for dog ownership in New Developments: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/ccbs/countryside/planningfordogownership.pdf>
- SNH Best practice conference – references, date
- Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- Walking-the-Talk (2013). Visitor behaviour in sensitive woodland habitats – repeat photographic survey at Boat of Garten Woods. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No.CR634. ([http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned\\_reports/634.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/634.pdf))
- Boat of Garten Mitigation Measures. Available at [www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/planning), reference 2013/0115/DET (1 Jul 2013, Planning Report App 1)
- CNPA Capercaillie Background Paper August 2013: and its references
- CNPA Capercaillie Framework Phase I Report. CNPA Nov 2014
- Leave No Trace – the 7 principles. [www.lnt.org](http://www.lnt.org)
- CNPA Park Partnership Plan 2012-17
- CNPA recreation strategy
- CNPA development plan
- Useful Links:

[http://vscg.co.uk/documents/uploads/New\\_approaches\\_to\\_influencing\\_dog\\_owners\\_S\\_Jenkinson\\_VSCG\\_0412313.pdf](http://vscg.co.uk/documents/uploads/New_approaches_to_influencing_dog_owners_S_Jenkinson_VSCG_0412313.pdf)

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/eng-dogs-towardsresponsibleuse-04.pdf/\\$FILE/eng-dogs-towardsresponsibleuse-04.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/eng-dogs-towardsresponsibleuse-04.pdf/$FILE/eng-dogs-towardsresponsibleuse-04.pdf)

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/eng-dogs-accessguidancenote-07.pdf/\\$FILE/eng-dogs-accessguidancenote-07.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/eng-dogs-accessguidancenote-07.pdf/$FILE/eng-dogs-accessguidancenote-07.pdf)

## **Consultation to date**

Early drafts of this plan followed the publication of the CNPA Capercaillie Background Paper (2013) and a meeting between Rothiemurchus Estate, SNH and CNPA.

Later drafts were informed by comments received from Rothiemurchus Estate biodiversity and visitor services managers, SNH (including capercaillie specialists), RSPB/FCS Capercaillie Project managers, CNPA, FCS (including capercaillie specialist).

Plan drafts have also been circulated (Nov 2013) to

- Cairngorm, Rothiemurchus & Glenmore Group (CRAGG), all neighbouring estates, & Rothiemurchus concordat Group

## **4.0 THE PLAN**

### **4.1 Current and estimated recreational use & provision at key points – evidence base: numbers, location, timing, behaviour.**

A wide range of data summarised in Appendix 7 and listed below is consistently collected to help monitor trends, the visitor experience and to identify seasonal changes and the visitor journey. The sale of outdoor activities on behalf of a wide range of partner outdoor activity provider businesses including bike hire enables us to gather data on how and when the forest is enjoyed and where customers live. These varied sources of information help us to understand evolving visitor expectations and anticipate and plan for changes in behaviour.

Three hundred and eighty six thousand visits were counted on the estate in 2013; many people will have been counted more than once and many not at all however monitoring is consistently carried out and seasons and years can be compared and weather and other exceptional factors can be nearly eliminated on the basis of the five year average.

As a popular family destination the busiest periods for the Aviemore area remain school and public holidays - July to the middle of August, Easter, October holidays and the New Year. Snow sports, the growth in short breaks and emphasis on the marketing of 'shoulder' months by public agencies and individual businesses has made Badenoch & Strathspey Scotland's leading all year round countryside destination. There are significant seasonal variations in how visitors enjoy Rothiemurchus e.g. birdwatchers in May and June, however, the evidence from feedback forms is that nearly every visitor enjoys walking during their stay. Data collected over the last five years shows external influences such as weather and road conditions in England as well as Scotland, currency variations and events such as additional public holidays, 2012 Olympics and the World Cup have a significant impact on the number of visits.

Key data in relation to meeting the objectives set in the Forest Plan are:

- Visitor behaviour on the path network (Source: spot camera checks since 2013). This is not a simple extrapolation of numbers; e.g. it might be assumed that for every 10,000 visits there is one serious incident, however staff observation is that there is no simple link between numbers and behaviour that might lead to problems.
- Path Use (Source: electronic counter on Old Logging Way since 2011): this also provides the bike: walker ratio
- Off path recreational activity, from staff records of direct observations and other evidence of off-path activity (Since 2013).
- Spot checks using cameras will still be needed to monitor wildlife, dog exercising and the effectiveness of signs and interpretation. (Cameras are set to take ground level pictures only- no faces, and all photographs are deleted immediately following analysis.)
- Incidents recorded by the Countryside Rangers since 2009; access defined by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code as not responsible, such as fires lit in woodland using dead /cut timber or dogs off paths or not under close control (long lead in the undergrowth is recorded as off path).
- Numbers entering Rothiemurchus Centre (excluding the Druie restaurant/cafe) (Source: electronic counter)
- Numbers using Rothiemurchus Centre and Loch an Eilein Visitor Centre toilets since 2009 (Source: electronic counters)
- Number of Rothiemurchus Visitor Guides picked up from 'entry points' and in Badenoch & Strathspey. Annual records since 2009 Number of walks & bike maps sold as an indicator of numbers that seek information from staff (source: number of maps sold through estate welcome desks and Loch an Eilein Car park; 2013)
- Numbers of customers on diversionary activities away from sensitive wildlife areas (source: car parking & outdoor activity ticket sales since 2010)
- Feedback forms (analysed using SNAP )
- Numbers on organised special events (since 2010)
- Numbers granted access for military outdoor training (Source: bookings since 2011)
- From feedback forms, postcode information for all outdoor activity bookings and surveys a high proportion of visitors have visited before, most live more than 20 miles away and over 75% of those

are on holiday. A survey carried out in February 2014 concluded that approx. 5% of the cars arriving at Loch an Eilein had occupants who live within five miles.

Gaps in the existing level of knowledge to the Cairngorm, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Group area (CRAGG): it is important that the data can be compared with future research.

1. More detailed information on numbers of visitors and the pattern of use of the whole CRAGG area.
2. Use of the path network: new electronic, people and bike counters might be considered for installation on the Loch an Eilein circuit, near Lochan Deo and on the Lairig Ghru path South of Coylumbridge as well as the sharing of information with Glenmore and Cairngorm.
3. Information on the range of visitors including the mapping of visitor characteristics against motivations - values, attitudes, interests and expectations; to guide how best to provide for and influence people.

#### **4.2 Community of interest engagement report updated – in the new context of what visitors understand, need, expect and do not expect and how to anticipate change**

To enable better understanding of local expectations, Rothiemurchus management has actively developed relationships with visitors, the local community, business community and other communities of interest.

We actively encourage visitors to tell us about their visit and how it could be better. Their comments are monitored daily – social media several times a day. Only a small proportion of the overall numbers respond however management and the team believe that it is indicative of the visitor experience and helps identify issues and trends.

Direct comment through social media is significant and effective but has to be taken in the context of which groups of visitors regularly and actively use social media. i.e. younger visitors. We therefore continually look for a range of effective ways of forming relationships with our visitors to enable us to understand their expectations.

To encourage local ownership and involvement, we write to each Rothiemurchus resident annually with a newsletter and offer them free Annual Friends membership which includes complimentary parking at Loch an Eilein and we also encourage and support community events.

Community of Interest engagement events:

- 2006 Long-term Forest Plan process started with scoping exercise in 2002
- Developing key messages with staff (in house & partners); training sessions (as required)
- CRAGG: from 2000, joined with representatives of all stakeholders (land managers, businesses, community reps & agencies) to develop and deliver a management strategy. Currently involved in its review & audits. In addition; six-monthly co-ordination meetings between Rothiemurchus and the FCS Recreation & Tourism manager for Glenmore.
- Communicating with our Friends of Rothiemurchus: 795 memberships in 2014.
- Participating in local membership organisations and networks including the Aviemore Business Association, Cairngorms Business Partnership, Outdoor Activity Providers Group, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland Highland Cluster, CNPA Events Forum, Cairngorms Attractions Group (marketing to the family market), and the Cairngorm Strathspey Deer Management Group.
- The relationship with our outdoor activity partner businesses, invited to work with us because they are acknowledged as leading industry professionals. Meeting annually.
- Working with and hosting visits and tours from local schools, community groups, colleges and other organisations. As required.
- Organising and hosting talks and visits on topics of local interest. As required.
- Developing relationships with a wide range of relevant experts other than our business partners: researchers e.g. carbon dating, responsible dog exercise in conservation areas, map makers, specialist journalists. As required

- Increasingly the most effective way of engaging communities of interest is online through Social Media. Constant active involvement in a wide range of social media is essential. This is particularly useful for communities of specific interest such as mountain bike riders, bird watchers and photographers, and also as a means of letting our 'fans' share their authentic experiences and interest in Rothiemurchus. These are reviewed daily and responses made as required.

### 4.3 Best practice

What works from our experience? What could we do more of, based on experience elsewhere?

(for evidence base refer to bibliography at 3.0 and appendices) :

- Promote the area as internationally recognised for the richness of its wildlife, protected by the EU Habitats Directive;
- Welcome people with respect as individuals and the dog too as part of their family;
- Focus on establishing expectations of an outstanding experience and delivering expectations consistently;
- Establish reliable and appropriate standards of care of visitors and the built environment as well as the exceptional natural environment. Independent accreditation of these standards;
- Provide the basics in a friendly & appropriate way: signs, car-parks, toilets, food, paths, dog exercise areas;
- Keep it all clean, tidy, well maintained and looking fit for place and purpose. If somewhere or something looks ‘cared for’, people will care for it;
- Work with agencies, businesses and neighbours as partners, with mutual respect for responsibilities, expertise and experience (e.g. CRAGG, Rothiemurchus Concordat);
- People come to Rothiemurchus to relax, so they are generally ‘switched off’ and information has to be provided and reinforced in a variety of appropriate ways. E.g. information given verbally has to be supported by written information. (NHS experience in effective communication);
- Management makes a difference (experience from Boat-of-Garten and Rothiemurchus);
- We help visitors understand and engage in positive behaviour. They want to choose what information they are given and how they receive it, they want to be entertained not ‘educated’ or ‘taught’. The use of thematic interpretation and TORE (Ham, S. 2013, Interpretation, Making a Difference on Purpose, Fulcrum Publishing);
- Deliver information in a few key messages: e.g.’ Leave No Trace’, ‘Why Rothiemurchus is different’, ‘You can help care...’ e.g. by parking at LAE, taking a Ranger led tour, keeping to the promoted paths, enjoy Rothiemurchus outdoor activities;
- Measure and monitor and use the information to inform change.

### 4.4 Management in relation to species protection

Manage for	What visitor services can do	What CNPA, SNH, FCS, HIE, Visit Scotland, Sport Scotland and others can do
Visitors not aware of the importance of the area for wildlife and conservation.	<p>Promote understanding of the significance of the area for wildlife</p> <p>Promote awareness that wildlife needs to feel safe by being undisturbed</p>	<p>NC (Scotland Act) 2004 “It is the duty of every public body and <u>office holder</u>, in exercising its functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.”</p> <p>Promote understanding of the international significance of the forest as a special area for conservation and wildlife.</p> <p>Promote understanding that an area recognised for its international importance for its wildlife requires special care and may not be appropriate for some activities.</p> <p>Ensure that all plans and projects meet Natura requirements.</p>
Wildfire prevention.	<p>Awareness that wild fires should not be lit in the forest;</p> <p>Awareness that deadwood is an important part of the forest;</p> <p>Awareness of Leave No Trace and to care;</p>	<p>Raise awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that wild fires should never be lit in the forest except in designated camping or picnic areas.</li> <li>• of the importance of dead</li> </ul>

	<p>High fire risk signs when high fire risk;                  Provide woodland camping and BBQ experience in controlled environments;                  Ensure rapid response to fire alerts, make evening patrols, co-ordinate Fire plan with neighbours.</p>	<p>wood for wildlife and should not be moved or burnt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of the responsible use of disposable BBQs</li> <li>• of the care that should be taken with all fire</li> <li>• how quickly fire can get out of control</li> </ul>
<p>Prevention of off-path activity and penetration into core wildlife areas, during the breeding season and in winter when wildlife is stressed by cold and food availability.</p>	<p>Encourage awareness of the importance of not disturbing wildlife by keeping to the promoted path network;                  Provide dog exercise areas</p>	<p>Promote awareness and enable understanding of the consequences of disturbing wildlife particularly throughout the breeding season and winter.</p>
<p>Ensuring people and dogs use and stay to promoted paths, with dogs under close control.</p>	<p>As above;                  Use all interpretation to:                  Promote SOAC &amp;;                  Encourage visitors to stay on promoted paths                  High standard of maintenance of promoted paths.                  Continue to provide all-year-round public W.C.s at LAE and Rothiemurchus Centre.</p>	<p>Promote responsible behaviour as per SOAC &amp; interpretation of SOAC                  Look for long term solutions to support the provision of public benefits</p>
<p>Over-crowding of paths by too many people or users travelling at different speeds, leading to braiding and creation of unofficial paths</p>	<p>As above;                  Create new or widen existing paths, promote separation of use in terms of time and place and responsible behaviour as per SOAC.</p>	<p>As above;                  Support delivery of public benefit with funding</p>
<p>Promotion that conflicts with SOAC, e.g. social media comment, maps, magazine articles, inappropriate images in tourism promotion, advice from accommodation providers.</p>	<p>Develop relationships with other tourism businesses in the area;                  Sustain daily social media monitoring</p>	<p>Awareness of the effect of inappropriate promotion;                  Ensure responsible enjoyment in Special Protection Areas is communicated effectively</p>
<p>Visiting activity provider businesses who do not contribute to land and visitor services management.</p>	<p>Maintain contact with single-interest groups.</p>	<p>Increase SOAC understanding in special interest groups; e.g. single track mountain bikers;                  Local Business Association raises profile of best ways to see wildlife;                  Sport Scotland support for Train the Trainer (e.g. Leave No Trace accreditation)</p>
<p>Disease outbreaks (e.g. foot &amp; mouth)</p>	<p>Maintain farm hygiene; bio-security at Fishery; raise awareness to visitors of moving pathogens in mud, on boots, on bikes, etc</p>	<p>UK wide containment strategies, prevention plans, etc. Co-ordinate with neighbours authorities and agencies.</p>
<p>Climate &amp; weather</p>	<p>Fire plan as above;                  Reduce CO2 emissions</p>	<p>UK strategy for low carbon Britain</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<p>Ensure that funding for public benefit is from sustainable sources;                  Sustainable activities and attractions.</p>	<p>Ensure public funding enables private land managers to deliver public benefits according to Natura requirements and visitor expectations in a National Park.</p>

#### 4.5 Aims & objectives

The over-riding aim is: To Maintain the SAC/SSSI's in favourable condition.

Public access management is an integral part of sustainable land management. At Rothiemurchus conservation of the natural and cultural heritage and the provision of facilities and services for public access are critical activities that are collectively achieved in a coordinated way as part of delivering sustainable land use, learning, enjoyment and social and economic well-being. The special combination, intensity and volume of public interest at Rothiemurchus means that none would be achieved if they were to be treated as competing aims, they have to be mutually supportive and contribute together.

#### 4.5.1 Paths & People: How the plan meets the needs of the estate, conservation & visitors

Wildlife Conservation Needs	Operation
Habitat in good condition – suitable feeding & breeding habitat & shelter	Forest Plan – habitat enhancement; thinning, regeneration, woodland expansion, fire (prevention & response) plan and deer management plan.
Access for management	Maintaining and improving routes for deer culling, timber extraction, fire-fighting and other wildlife management.
Minimise recreational disturbance	Manage public access to ensure SOAC compliance; Inform and meet public expectations; Reduce fragmentation & loss of suitable habitat caused by path proliferation; Develop and maintain suitable path screening.

Visitor Needs	Operation
High quality & relevant information.	Provide a sense of welcome, parking & information; Deliver information through key messages and using a variety of media: e.g. internet, leaflets, signs, face-to-face; Deliver information through organised activities, providing entertainment, positive experiences;
High quality and easily accessed recreation facilities	Provide high quality facilities: parking, promoted path network; toilets, dog-exercise areas, camping  Overnight camping etc properly provided for with choices, e.g. Coylumbridge, youth campsites at Loch an Eilein and Luineag side and overflow sites at Loch and Eilein and Luineag side.  As per SOAC, provide for responsible access for: walking, dog walking, cycling, horse riding, mountaineering, rock climbing, running, wild camping, wildlife photography & watching, wild swimming, canoeing, cross-country skiing, picnics.
Fulfilment of expectations, e.g.: welcome, activity in the outdoors, sense of adventure, sense of place, providing a local and authentic experience.	Facilities, services and maintenance to high standards; Ease of access but maintaining the long walk in to retain a sense of remoteness.
Views	Maintain strategic viewpoints adjacent to promoted routes.
Security & safety	Maintenance of facilities, careful planning of management operations, risk assessment & management.

Wider Estate Needs, Hill and Farm Land	Operation
No conflict with stalking or game management	Responsible access welcomed all year. Provide information re-stalking activity; Provide promoted hill routes for all-year access
No conflict with farming activity	See above re paths and interpretation, staying on promoted paths.
Diversionary activities allow the estate to engage with visitors and deliver key messages in a fun way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnic areas (Loch an Eilein, Inverdrue)</li> <li>• Rothiemurchus Centre includes a farm shop, gift shop, card shop, café/restaurant, toilets, ranger base, meeting point shelter.</li> <li>• Loch an Eilein visitor centre includes gallery, shop and toilets.</li> <li>• Fishery (2.44ha stocked loch, tuition and wildlife hides) Also occ fishing at Drumintoul 1.49ha and additional pike fishing at Loch Pityoulish – 8.01ha, Loch an Eilein – 57.45ha and Lochan Mor – 2.75ha.</li> <li>• Clay-pigeon shoot designed for a range of skills and disciplines.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TreeZone &amp; other activities around Inverdrue: ranger guided tours (farm, forest, history) pony trekking, quad bikes, Segways, 4x4 driving, archery, bike hire, cross-country skiing, wildlife photography, canoeing, tubing, weddings, corporate training)</li> <li>• Sled dog centre at Moormore</li> <li>• Charged car parks and camp grounds</li> <li>• Events</li> </ul>
Focus areas for public access provision	Loch an Eilein, Inverdrue/Lochan Mor, Coylumbridge Camp & Caravan Park, An Camas Mòr & Dell woods, Allt Na Caber Clay target shoot, Inverdrue fishery.
No disturbance or intrusion to residential curtilage	Working with partners & neighbours to ensure good planning of promoted path network and other recreation areas.

Visitor Services Provision	Activity
Enabling correct visitors expectations	364-day countryside and estate information service at Rothiemurchus Visitor Centre. Seasonal at Loch an Eilein carpark and visitor centre; Website and social media; Rothiemurchus visitor guide (2013: 120,000 copies); Explorer walks map (20,000 p/a) covering 3 waymarked routes & Biking Map (250 p/a) covering 3 waymarked routes; Outdoor Activity sales: online, via front desk staff or by phone; Designated core paths managed by the estate: 20.6km (inc 4km beyond the forest edge); 3.1km other promoted forest routes; 12.7km other promoted hill access path; Threshold signs – 6 Notice/Information boards – 3; Seasonal signs – 8
Countryside views	Maintain/replace key viewpoints: Achnahatnich road end on the Old Logging Way; Lochan Deo of Carn Elrig, Cadha Beag and towards Invereshie; Allt Coire Buidhe; Multiple views across Loch an Eilein; Other general glimpses of the hills through the trees, at least every 200m.
Toilets	x 3 Rothiemurchus Centre – 105,000 in 2013 x 4 Loch an Eilein – 43,000 in 2012 x 4 Fishery x 1 Shoot
Car Parking	Promoted: Fishery 20 & coach friendly Inverdrue (Woodland 30, Triangle 20, Centre 10, Aviemore Gallery 10) Overflow for events (up to 1500 in farm fields) Loch an Eilein 50 & coach friendly via Croft Road Shoot 10 (Moormore 4 specific for Sled Dog centre, now on FCS land) Whitewell 5 St John's Church 15 (for church use) Coylumbridge Hotel 700 (for Hotel clients, but also used by others taking access to trails) Informal at roadside: Loch an Eilein road 4 Tullochgrue 5 Coylumbridge 15
Activity centres	Shoot (7.4ha), Pony trekking stable (informal trails through 110ha), Treezone (0.5ha), Fishery (4.3ha), quad biking (through 84ha) Farm shop & café (Inverdrue), gallery (Loch an Eilein) Camp (20 pitches) and caravan (17 touring, 50 static) pitches over 3.06ha
Health & safety	Tree & infrastructure monitoring & maintenance; careful planning of events & operations
Public funding for public outcomes.	Use of public funding such as the Scottish Rural Development Programme for the protection of biodiversity and Ranger Grants for the provision of public outcomes.

### Other Resources:

Vehicles: 3 x 7-seater Land Rovers, 2 x Ranger vans, 3 x fishing boats,

Other Equipment: fire response equipment, radios etc,

Staff: Approx. 70 staff working either directly Rothiemurchus or through partner businesses who have face to face contact with customers and who help deliver key messages.

### 4.5.2 Meeting Future demand

Rothiemurchus Forest will be able to meet increasing demand for enjoyment of the outdoors if each visitor has an awareness of the consequence of their actions and responsibility to minimise disturbance to wildlife and other users. It would be a mistake to conclude that there is one “SOAC” incident per 5,000 visits so that there will be one more for every additional 5,000 visits. There is no evidence of a direct relationship between disturbance by visitors and the number of visitors. For example; the overall visitor numbers have not changed significantly since the 1970s; but the 1994 Ranger Annual Report recorded a total of 158 “SOAC” type incidents against 73 recorded in 2013. The challenge is to influence behaviour by understanding, anticipating changing trends in demand and finding effective ways of communicating with local residents, businesses and visitors.

On-going engagement and research will enable the estate to respond to changes in attitude and anticipate any increase in demand for recreational services from projects or plans that could have an impact, either on their own or in combination; e.g.: the development of the new community at An Camas Mòr, the A9 up-grade, evolution of trends and technology development, e.g. in mountain biking, and public promotion of enjoyment of the outdoors.

The estate will continue to work with partner organisations (partner businesses, neighbours, CNPA, THC, SNH & FCS) to design and deliver recreational facilities and interpretation that meets the demand for recreation from both locals and tourists and reduces negative impacts on wildlife and other estate objectives.

Public agency commitment to promotion and funding for non-market public outcomes is essential.

#### 4.5.3 Monitoring – as key to understanding progress re objectives:

Early warning of possible deterioration is provided on the map based information.

Note:

The Ranger Service records the number of SOAC incidents that could affect capercaillie (dogs out of control; people in conservation areas during breeding season; dogs out of control or off path; camp fires & wild fires). With effective management there is no direct relationship between disturbance and numbers of visits.

	Deliberate litter off path/roadside	Vandalism; e.g. cutting trees for bush craft or making bike routes	Dogs not under control	Wild fires	Comment
2012	35	5	14	12	Wet summer
2013	15	19	4	36	Dry summer; new signs for dog owners.

Sources of data on visitor numbers:

- Rothiemurchus Centre at Inverdrue (Electronic counter at door to reception, toilet counter and counter for Druie Restaurant, bike hire and outdoor activity sales)
- Loch an Eilein car park customers, car park surveys, youth group campsite use.
- OLW electronic counter figures
- Campsite bookings
- Event & military access bookings (number of events & total participant numbers),
- Camera trap records of walkers, bikers and dogs under control (data destroyed after counting)
- Walks and biking map sales

## 5.0 NEXT STEPS

- I. Rothiemurchus Long-term Forest Plan (2016) scoping exercise - completed 2015

2. With SNH, CNPA and FCS, assess the sustainability and viability of the plan, ensuring that it is deliverable.
3. Finalise and approve plan as part of the long-term forest plan

## **Appendix 7.2**

CNPA Capercaillie Background Paper; August 2013

## **Bibliography**

Rothiemurchus Estate Interpretation Strategy (please e-mail [piers.voysey@rothie.net](mailto:piers.voysey@rothie.net))

CNPA, Boat of Garten visitor survey 2013 titled: SNH Commissioned Report No. 634 Visitor behaviour in sensitive woodland habitats - repeat photographic survey at Boat of Garten Woods.  
[http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned\\_reports/634.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/634.pdf)

## **END NOTE**

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<sup>ii</sup> Note: Some map based information will be kept confidential to the land manager, SNH, CNPA and the Capercaillie Project Officer.