

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY FINANCE & DELIVERY COMMITTEE

FOR DECISION

Title: TOMINTOUL AND GLENLIVET DARK SKY APPLICATION

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Purpose

This paper sets out the approach to a “Dark Sky” application for Tomintoul and Glenlivet and seeks the Committee’s decision on whether the Authority should act as a lead applicant for this bid.

Recommendations

The Finance & Delivery Committee is requested to:

- a) Consider whether it is appropriate for the Authority to act as a lead applicant for the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Dark Sky project.

Introduction

1. The Dark Skies Places Programme was started in 2001 to encourage communities around the world to preserve and protect dark sites through responsible lighting polices and public education. More information about this programme can be found at <http://darksky.org/idsp/> which includes an explanation of various types of designation, including “Dark Sky Communities” and “Dark Sky Parks”.
2. The Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership Programme (TGLP) includes an aspiration to apply to the International Dark Association (IDA) for Dark Sky status. A Dark Sky designation over a territory is a land possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment.

Dark Sky Application

3. The current proposal from within the TGLP is that Crown Estate Scotland (currently under interim management) and the Authority should act as joint applicants for Dark

Sky Park status. Within this framework, Crown Estate Scotland (CES) would act as lead applicant, as the majority of the land to be covered by this application is in their ownership. The Authority would be the second applicant as the lead partner in the TGLP. The Authority is also requested to act as a lead applicant as the process requires a commitment to provide monitoring data after 5, 10 and 25 years in order to maintain Dark Sky designation if successful.

4. Other partners involved with this process at this stage are the Cairngorms Astronomy Group, a newly constituted group formed by the volunteers leading the Dark Sky process, who received assistance of Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey with their formation, and TGLP. Neither of these partners will satisfy criteria as Dark Sky applicants, particularly given the requirement for long-term monitoring.
5. As a further applicant responsibility, the Authority would be required to submit the Annual Report to the IDA and would receive IDA communications to forward to the other partners. Cairngorms Astronomy Group working with CES would be the lead partners working to maintain DSP compliance, holding events and maintaining interpretation infrastructure. The responsibilities are outlined more fully in Annex I, with an example of an annual report linked at the end of the Annex.

Implications

6. There are some ongoing staff resource requirements implicit in this process should the Authority become a lead applicant. The Director of Conservation and Land Management is supportive of this application being made and that staff resource requirements can be absorbed without need for added staff resources.
7. Any application involving the Authority as a lead applicant would have to make clear that the terms of application do not convey any form of planning approval for any elements of the project, and that each and any planning application made through the Dark Sky project would be considered on its respective merits.
8. The intended designation to be applied for is a “Dark Sky Park”, although the application is clearly an area of the Cairngorms National Park. There may be some expectation by IDA that the Authority will ultimately seek Dark Sky status for the entire Cairngorms National Park. The wider implications of the designation sought is likely to be more fully exposed through the application process. For the purpose of this paper and approval sought, the Authority is seeking to support the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Dark Sky application specifically.

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