

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CEO REPORT

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Purpose

- I. To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Conservation:

- a) **Cairngorms Forest & Woodland Strategy** – The review meeting held on 15th March was well attended with lots of useful feedback to help shape the strategy. Since then we have been holding discussions with a range of partners on how best to map target areas in the National Park. Looking at a public consultation on a draft strategy in the autumn.
- b) **Moorland Management** We have set up a ‘Scotland’s Moorland Forum’ visit to Invercauld on 2nd June to discuss moorland/woodland integration. CNPA Board visit with East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership arranged for 9th June.
- c) **Peatland restoration** – 24 different areas have been visited and investigated for potential peatland restoration projects, and our Peatland Action Officer, Stephen is identifying which of these should take priority. Some are more likely than others to be hampered by high levels of grazing and may not be included in projects going forward.
- d) **Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership** – Land Management Officer, Lynn Cassels and Communications Officer, Elspeth Grant have both settled in well and already making in-roads into key areas of work. The biggest project being delivered at the moment is the Discovery Centre in Tomintoul; this has been complex and quite challenging but is progressing well.
- e) **Civtech** – The CNPA & SNH have launched a Civtech challenge on raptor persecution. Details at <http://ow.ly/BRIV30c4bo5>

Visitor Experience:

- a) **Long Distance Routes** – The planning application for Speyside way Extension from Ardgael to Inshriach has been submitted but is taking longer than anticipated to finalise. Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) is taking forward design and planning

consent for Deeside Way Extension from Braemar to Invercauld Bridge but is again taking longer to finalise. Speyside Way between Nethy Bridge and Grantown will be made more accessible by improving the existing bridge this summer.

- b) **Mountains and People** – Repairs to mountain paths are progressing well with 30% of the work scheduled for the Cairngorms now complete.
- c) **Active Cairngorms** – CNPA has secured funding to work with NHS and partners to look at options for improving non vehicle access to the proposed new hospital in Aviemore.
- d) **Cairngorm and Glenmore** – partner meetings are being set up to agree how to take forward the programme agreed in autumn 2016.
- e) **Volunteering** – CNPA will start to promote volunteering opportunities including options for volunteer rangers with two public meeting on 17th and 18th June.
- f) **Information and Interpretation** – Work has started on the rebuild of Ballater Station Visitor Information Centre and the refurbishment of Tomintoul Museum. As part of the Year of History, Heritage and Archelogy we are supporting the Association of Heritage Interpreters and Interpret Europe Conference in Inverness and we will be leading two field trips to Tomintoul and Glenlivet and Cairngorm and Glenmore.
- g) **Snow Roads Scenic Route** - The final installation at Tomintoul is complete and visitor leaflet for the route produced and circulated. Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) has appointed a two year part time project officer to take forward the Scottish Enterprise funded Destination Development Project for Snow Roads

Rural Development:

- a) **Planning** – Significant work is ongoing on the evidence base and approach for the Main Issues Report for the next LDP. There are significant applications with the CNPA at the moment including ACM.
- b) **Tourism Action Plan** – The Action Plan submitted to Europarc is being validated in late May with a very thorough three day visit by two Europarc employees. If successful, the Charter will then be re-awarded to the CNP for the third time in Autumn.
- c) **Marketing Strategy** - The focus with Visit Scotland will be promoting the Snow Roads Scenic Route in 2017.
- d) **Make it Yours** – Our focus for 2017 remains visitor-facing staff and the short presentation continues to be popular with visitor attractions with Royal Lochnagar Distillery and RSPB Loch Garten the latest to request inputs to staff training. Ellis Brigham sponsored ‘Tear off maps’ are being reprinted and distributed again this year with the addition of ‘Tread Lightly’ messaging on responsible access included on the reverse side of the map.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) Roseanna Cunningham, Cab Secretary for Env, Climate Change and Land Reform, launched the Park Plan on 1 June 2017. The Cab Sec also went to the latest

snowroads installation at Tomintoul and met with reps from the Landscape Partnership in Glenlivet/Tomintoul.

- b) MOU has been signed between UHI and CNPA on a set of joint priorities.
- c) The CEO has had meetings with a number of stakeholders including Kate Forbes MSP, Graeme Dey MSP, Andrew Thin, Chair of the Land Commission, Jim Savege, CEO of Aberdeenshire Council.
- d) The CEO and Board members attended a lunch with Lord Thurso, chairman of VisitScotland and the CBP. The CEO also attended the RSPB Council Dinner in Coylumbridge. The Convener and CEO attended the SCNP AGM.
- e) A Board evening was held in Glenshee which was well attended and there were some interesting discussion with local community and business interests.
- f) The CEO met with Onekind Scotland to discuss their hare petition in the Cairngorms National Park.

Communications:

- a) **Cairngorms Nature Big Weekend** - This event took place across the park with over 1500 people attending around 60 events including 'behind the scenes' estate visits and volunteering events. About 150 people attended the opening and closing events where Peter Cairns presented *Scotland the Big Picture* followed by a panel discussion. The ranger-led School Art Competition received 241 entries from 18 schools and Nick Baker selected the 3 overall winners from 37 shortlisted entries at an event in Blair Castle with 116 parents and children attending. Following a successful bid for LEADER funding, a full time officer has been appointed to develop and deliver the Cairngorms Nature Weekend over the next 2-years and make it more sustainable going forward. The 2018 Cairngorms Young Presenter competition will be launched in June. This year's winner Alex Bayley visited the Cairngorms with his family in April.
- b) **'Wee Walks Week' 2017** - This will take place on 16-23 September with a target of 560 participants.
- c) **Make It Yours campaign** – This will be promoted at the CBP Spring Conference at Glen Tanar in June and has recently been presented to Royal Lochnagar Distillery, RSPB and Highland Wildlife Park. In 2017 we will target key visitor attractions and larger hotels and will work to enhance the presentation with new images and video. In addition, the CNPA trialled tear-off map pads to help businesses promote the National Park to visitors and encourage them to stay longer and to travel around the Park. The map pads were extremely well received and the CNPA has secured sponsorship from Ellis Brigham to produce 1,000 map pads for 2017. The reverse of the map promotes the 'Tread Lightly' campaign.
- d) **CNPA's Annual Review 2016/17** – This is being prepared for submission to Ministers in September and a Gaelic Language Plan progress report will be submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig in July. Both will be available on our website. Work on our next 5-year Gaelic Language Plan will go out for consultation in the autumn for Board approval in 2018.

- e) **Columbia Sportswear** – 23rd May saw the launch of a new commercial partnership between [Columbia outdoor wear and all UK National Parks](#). This is the first of its kind taken forward by NPP and is a significant step forward.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Office Extension Project** – The contractor has been appointed – AW Laing Ltd. Demolition is due to commence in July, and the proposed completion date is 29 June 2018. Arrangements are in place with local venues for meeting rooms during this period.
- b) **Staffing update** – Lee Haxton (Community Support Manager) and Matthew Taylor (Planning Officer) have resigned, and Elspeth Grant (Education and Inclusion Officer) has been seconded to the TGLP Project. All three posts are currently being recruited, in addition to a part-time Planning Officer post. Sian Jamieson was appointed to the Digital Campaigns Officer post, and joined the Authority on 10th April, together with Lynn Cassells who was appointed to the TGLP Land Management Officer post. Ian Sikora was appointed to the Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend Development Officer post
- c) **Equalities** – The Equality Mainstreaming and Outcome Report, incorporating the new set of Equality Outcomes 2017 – 2021, Gender Pay data, mainstreaming report and update on Equality Outcomes (2013 – 2017) was published in April. This report details the equalities targets and work for the Authority for the next 4 years. The Update Report is due for publication in April 2019.
- d) **Organisational Development Strategy 2** – ODS 2 has been approved following consultation with staff and S&RC. We have identified officers to lead each of the 4 work streams, and are in the process of setting up the work streams, and identifying actions for the next 12 – 18 months. One of the work streams, Developing our Teams is focusing on interaction between staff and board. We are currently consulting with staff on potential actions to enhance this interaction, and we will return to Board later this year with a proposed strategy in this regard.

Future dates for diary

RHS – 22 to 25 June

Europarc – 6 to 9 September

NPUK Conference – 25 to 27 October

Grant Moir

June 2017

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Board Member Update

Judith Webb – I attended the Cairngorms Nature steering group and the UHI Integrated Land Use Conference. I also attended the social media training through which I learned a great deal and although I won't be rushing to get a Facebook, twitter or Instagram account I now have a much better understanding of the value that CNPA's social media presence, and examination of data related to its use, has for us.

This year I managed to attend five events at the Cairngorms Nature Big Weekend. The Big Weekend was a big success and the approach of not just another nature fair of face painting and storytelling - but real access and insight into land management and its complexities within the Park - marks this out from other events and also serves well to educate those attending. Feedback on the weekend is still coming in, but seems very positive; there are a few things that we could improve on for future years mostly around the event booking information and the constraints of this outsourced element. I would encourage all Board Members to get the dates for 2018 into their diaries and make a point of attending at least one event.

Dave Fallows - I attended a conference/workshop for audit committee chairs of public bodies held in Stirling on March 19th. This was a valuable and interesting event which went into the issues of governance and risk assessment and the overall role of audit and risk committees extremely well with good presentations and good dialogue in question time. Well worth attending! Participants agreed that it had been worthwhile and that future events of this kind would be welcomed.