

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: **CNPA APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

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Purpose

To ask the Board to approve our future approach to working with and supporting communities, specifically in relation to the network of Community Development Officers.

Recommendations

The Board are asked to:

- a) **Note the progress made in delivering the recommendations within the August 2012 Board Paper on Community Engagement and Support;**
- b) **Agree that the Local Development Strategy and the National Standards for Community Engagement will form the basis for our continued approach to supporting and engaging (including through consultation) with communities;**
- c) **Agree the future approach to support for the Community Development Officer framework; and,**
- d) **Note the findings of the review of Association of Cairngorms Communities and the revised funding approach.**

Executive Summary

A paper was presented to the CNPA Board in August 2012 outlining key recommendations for the future CNPA approach to engaging with and supporting communities in delivery of the Vision in National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP). This paper provides an update on progress with delivery against these recommendations and outlines our proposed approach for future support and engagement with communities in line with the Cairngorms LEADER Local Development Strategy. The paper highlights the findings of a review of the

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Paper 5 12 December 2014

Association of Cairngorms Communities and sets out a revised funding approach. It also outlines specific proposals for future funding of Community Development Officer posts through offers of grant-aid, underpinned by a Memorandum of Agreement with key organisations.

CNPA APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT – FOR DECISION

Strategic Context

1. This paper focuses on ‘communities of place’ and as such any reference to ‘community’ refers to the geographic communities within the Park, rather than ‘communities of interest’. The approach outlined, however, does have relevance for both. There is a strong shift in public policy towards community empowerment with people being encouraged and given the opportunity to have a greater say in their futures. This process will move forwards in the coming year through consideration of Community Empowerment Bill in the Parliament. The CNPA Board agreed a consultation response to the draft Bill earlier this year.
2. The National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) sets out, as one of three long-term outcomes that we wish to see a sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities. The policy approach is to support and build capacity in communities to deliver their own aspirations. The NPPP identifies that a Cairngorms Local Action Group (LAG) supported by LEADER and other appropriate funding, represents an essential delivery and funding mechanism to realise these priorities. The Cairngorms LEADER Local Development Strategy 2014-2020 (CLDS) provides the strategic framework for Community Led Local Development (CLLD) in the National Park. The Board considered the Local Development Strategy in March 2014 and endorsed delivery arrangements through the Local Action Group, agreeing in September 2014 an ongoing commitment of £70,000 each year, through the Authority’ staffing budget, to support the process.
3. In August 2012 a paper was presented to the CNPA Board outlining the proposed CNPA approach to Community Engagement and Support. The paper identified the role of the CNPA to be in helping communities to become fit for purpose, encouraging a much more joined-up approach with the skills and confidence to meet these challenges. A great deal of work has gone into delivering against these recommendations and a progress report can be found in Annex I to this paper. The recommendations were that we need:
 - a) Better more planned use of existing community networks;
 - b) To review existing community action plans;
 - c) To deliver the NPPP more effectively through communities, developing a more joined up “Team Town” approach;
 - d) To continue to support the Community Development Officer framework to support communities to become more self sustaining;

- e) To enhance role for members in community engagement and support;
- f) A more focussed approach to resourcing community support, dependant on need and capacity; and,
- g) To raise the profile of the best practice work that has been delivered through community engagement and support in the Park.

Recommendation 1: the Board are asked to note the progress made in delivering the recommendations within the August 2012 Board Paper on Community Engagement and Support.

Community Engagement and Support Going Forward

4. The recommendations made in the 2012 Board paper recognised the key issues within the National Park at that time as well as a wide range of political drivers at a national level. The development of the Cairngorms Local Development Strategy 2012-2020 (CLDS), led by the Cairngorms LAG, is strongly aligned with NPPP priorities and now provides a new focus for Community Led Local Development (CLLD) in the National Park. The Strategy identifies key outcomes, engagement structures, principles, and mechanisms for delivery. The CNPA have a key role to play in supporting the Cairngorms Local Action Group (LAG) to deliver this Strategy, as set out in this paper.
5. In 2006 the CNPA agreed that the National Standards for Community Engagement would guide our own approach to community engagement. The CLDS was developed in line with these Standards and utilised a range of best practice tools and techniques to ensure effective consultation and engagement. It is proposed that the CNPA continue to utilise these Standards in our work and to put in place a more consistent approach to all consultation and engagement exercises to ensure best practice is followed. Staff within the Rural Development team will lead on provision of this consistency across the organisation.

Recommendation 2: agree that the Local Development Strategy and the National Standards for Community Engagement will form the basis for our continued approach to supporting and engaging (including through consultation) with communities

Community Development Officers

6. CNPA currently supports four Community Development Officer (CDO) posts across the National Park. Each post is employed as part of a project including Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey (VABS), the Eastern Cairngorms Development Project (including parts of Aberdeenshire and Angus), and the Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust.

7. Each post is part of a wider project which is funded by a range of partners and is tailored to suit the particular context of the communities in which they work. An overview of the projects is shown in Annex 2. The projects share similarities in terms of their aims in delivering positive change in those communities through:
 - a) Project management and support;
 - b) Capacity-building in community organisations; and,
 - c) Establishing links with relevant public, private and voluntary sector partners.
8. The funding for these projects ends in 2015 (two in March, one in June, and one in November). CNPA and our partners are considering how this significant work can continue to be supported beyond this period. Each community goes through cycles of activity dependent on key individuals in those communities, and the particular issues that they face at a particular time. As such, some communities will require varying levels of support at different periods of time to enable them to contribute to Community Led Local Development.
9. Delivery of the CLDS will rely on strong and pro-active communities and the previous programme supported CDO projects in the CNP. The new CLDS Business Plan, however, recognises the need for a more strategic and tailored approach to the 'animation' of projects (i.e. encouraging communities to come forwards with projects to support delivery of the outcomes). That does not mean, however, that the work of the current CDOs is no longer required. Their role is to support and enable communities to engage with Community Led Local Development.
10. We have undertaken a review of the key community support and engagement activities that are required to enable CNPA to deliver our key priorities, and to support delivery of the CLDS. These activities are:
 - a) Providing capacity-building support to community organisations, in terms of governance, finance, and partnerships;
 - b) Organising, facilitating, and administering specific community consultation exercises on behalf of CNPA (e.g. On Local Development Plan) with the objective of ensuring that communities take ownership of and are actively involved in the process;
 - c) Acting in an informal role as a key local contact for CNPA providing an ongoing community engagement and information sharing role;
 - d) Facilitating the process of Community Action Planning (and review) in National Park communities and promoting links with the National Park Partnership Plan, with Cairngorms LEADER Local Development Strategy and other Park Strategies;

- e) Supporting appropriate community organisations to become increasingly sustainable through income generation; and,
 - f) Raising awareness of the Cairngorms National Park brand and brand values with community organisations and projects.
11. Four options to deliver these activities have been considered and are outlined in Table 1 below. A number of these activities also enable our Community Planning partners to deliver their key priorities. As such, any option for delivery must ensure that CNPA is adding real value through its support rather than duplicating other work, or delivering where other partners should be.
12. Option 4, to offer grant-aid based on a Memorandum of Agreement with the key organisations, is the preferred option. Initial discussions have taken place with relevant organisations and the existing projects. If approved, the MoA would be based on the delivery of key activities as outlined in paragraph 10 above.

Table 1 – Options Appraisal for community support and engagement

No.	Option	Assessment
1	Do Nothing – This option would see the current projects come to an end and the CDO network cease to exist	Without a network of CDOs, CNPA would have limited capacity to deliver the key activities outlined above. It is likely that key groups would develop distinct projects, as is currently the case, and may approach CNPA for funding. This option is unsustainable, difficult to plan for, and will lead to an inequality of support between communities.
2	Employ CDOs directly – This option would see CNPA directly employing Community Development Officers	This option would provide CNPA with a strong influence over delivery. Communities may not, however, have the same level of trust in the CDOs as they do at present due to the independent nature of the posts. CNPA would also be liable to meet the full costs of the posts and, as such, fewer CDOs would be employed. This would also duplicate effort in some key areas and directly deliver a service where other partners should be providing support. This option also gives less flexibility with staffing contracts.

Table 1 – Options Appraisal for community support and engagement

No.	Option	Assessment
3	Tender – This option would see CNPA tendering a contract for delivery of key services	This option would provide CNPA with a strong influence over delivery and would ensure a transparent funding process. It may, however, mean that it is more challenging for delivery partners to attract match funding and, if so, fewer CDOs would be employed. This would also duplicate effort in some key areas and directly deliver a service where other partners should be providing support. Both Options 3 and 4 also potentially introduce more flexibility in financial commitments as tenders and grant offers can be fixed according to need with fewer considerations than with employment contracts.
4	Offer of Grants underpinned by a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) – This option would see CNPA offering grant to existing organisations (e.g. MAP/VABS) to support delivery of activity	Preferred option This option would provide best value for money enabling CNPA to enhance the service of existing organisations to deliver key activities without duplication. These organisations would have the benefit of being independent from CNPA and geographically spread. Some organisations would require more support than others dependent on number of communities and partner support for delivery. This approach also has the benefit of being more sustainable and enabling CDOs to focus on delivery rather than managing and funding the project. See also the comment in Option 3 about flexibility.

13. Proposed arrangements to deliver Option 4 in the National Park are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 - Proposed arrangements to cover the National Park

Area	Arrangement	Est. cost to CNPA
Aberdeenshire & Glenshee	The Marr Area Partnership (MAP) is a Community Development Organisation for the Marr area of Aberdeenshire including the area within the National Park. Aberdeenshire Council have a SLA with MAP for community economic development. CNPA would offer grant-aid underpinned by MoA to cover additional and enhanced activity including covering the Glenshee area.	£45k for a 3 year agreement: £15k per annum

Table 2 - Proposed arrangements to cover the National Park

Area	Arrangement	Est. cost to CNPA
Angus Glens	There are few people living within the Angus Glens within the National Park. Angus Council will take the lead in community development in this area with support as required from CNPA staff.	Possible small scale funding to support key initiatives
Badenoch, Strathspey, & Blair Atholl	Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey (VABS) is a charitable company limited by guarantee which supports third sector groups (community & voluntary groups, social enterprises). CNPA would offer grant-aid underpinned by MoA for delivery of key activity and to cover the Blair Atholl area. VABS may require proportionally more assistance due to the larger number of communities covered and the number of major projects in the area. VABS will also require to bring in further partner funding in due course.	£105k for a 3 year agreement: £35k per annum
Tomintoul & Glenlivet	Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust is a HIE Account-managed Community, employing a Development Officer. CNPA funding is in place to support this post until November 2015. During 2015 we will enter into discussions with partners as to the most appropriate way to delivering key activities and to promote integration with the HLF Landscape Partnership Project.	£15k for current year. Up to £45k for a further 3 year agreement: £15k per annum
TOTAL CNPA FUNDING PER ANNUM		£65,000

Recommendation 3: agree the future approach to support for the Community Development Officer framework.

Association of Cairngorms Communities

14. The Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC) is an independent organisation solely funded by CNPA and meets four times a year. AoCC also hosts two meetings of the Planning Representatives Network per year on behalf of CNPA. The AoCC recently undertook a review to identify how well they are meeting their stated aims. The review identified that they are meeting their aims to a large degree and that AoCC is a valuable networking opportunity. The review also identified that AoCC needs to be more proactive, widen its membership, and be clearer about how it adds value to other community forums across the National Park.

15. As a result of the review AoCC have agreed to take steps to ensure:
 - a) Feedback is given at meetings of individual member groups to ensure two-way flow of information;
 - b) One meeting per year is held away from the Lecht to give others a chance to attend and combine this with a visit to a local project or initiative;
 - c) Membership is broadened to include social enterprise organisations;
 - d) Members take greater control of the agenda and bring forward suggestions; and,
 - e) The profile of AoCC is raised, for example through an online presence.
16. To encourage AoCC to make improvements CNPA have formalised funding arrangements with AoCC via a grant offer for the current year (2014/15). This offer is for £4k in line with previous years and includes specific conditions which will be monitored and reported on by AoCC. It is hoped that this formalised approach will provide more security to AoCC and also encourage the organisation to proactively address the key issues that have arisen during review.
17. Looking forwards it is proposed that CNPA continue to support AoCC based on a three year funding offer (estimated £9k for three years) subject to making continued progress towards the identified improvements in paragraph 15. AoCC has already been strongly encouraged to seek alternative funding options and to consider ways in which it can reduce its costs.
18. The opportunity for the AoCC to have a closer working relationships and alignment with the Cairngorms Local Action Group is an option for further consideration.

Recommendation 4: note the findings of the review of Association of Cairngorms Communities and the revised funding approach.

Fit with other Plans and Strategies

19. The proposed approach to community support and engagement will be fundamental in the delivery of the NPPP and associated plans and strategies i.e. the Cairngorms Local Development Strategy, the Local Development Plan, Cairngorms Nature, Active Cairngorms and the Cairngorms Economic Strategy.

Implications – CNPA contribution to Delivery of the Strategy

20. The decisions about the financial resources associated with this paper will be taken through consideration of the CNPA Corporate Plan in due course. The estimate for

community support and engagement are outlined in Table 2 above (£65k per annum) and for AoCC (estimated 3k per annum) to cover meeting costs and expenses.

21. The key CNPA staff resource required to support this approach is the existing CNPA Community Support Manager who will continue to work closely with the LEADER team, community development organisations, and Association of Cairngorms Communities to deliver the ambitions outlined in the paper above.

Strategic Risk Management

22. The CNPA Risk Register was submitted to Board as an Annex to the Audit Committee Annual Report in Sept 2014. There are a number of specific risks set out there that are relevant to this paper, particularly surrounding the lack of community capacity to deliver the NPPP objectives and the risks associated with lack of community leadership. The need for a framework of CDOs is recognised as a key mechanism to support delivery of the NPPP and the next Corporate Plan. The costs have already been factored into early budget considerations and the approach proposed will ensure value for money whilst allowing for appropriate flexibility in the management of our financial resources.
23. Our engagement with and support for communities is key to our relationships and reputation with the communities. The reputational risk to the CNPA of no longer funding community support initiatives would be high. It would also impact on the ability and willingness of communities to engage with the CNPA or buy-in to their part in delivering the NPPP.

Next Steps

24. Subject to approval, CNPA will work with MAP and VABS to agree a Memorandum of Agreement. We propose to use the Finance and Delivery Committee to endorse terms of the MoA. This activity will be based on key outputs as outlined in paragraph 10 above and will be subject to monitoring and review. Further discussions will take place during 2015 with HIE and Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust to plan for future funding and delivery arrangements.
25. CNPA staff will continue to work with AoCC to support them in making improvements as outlined in paragraph 15 above and to monitor these in advance of any further funding offer being made.

Annex I – Progress since August 2012 CNPA Board Paper

August 2012 Recommendations	December 2014 Progress Report
a) Better more planned use of existing community networks: <i>more proactive and effective use of existing community networks to promote key messages about the National Park and CNPA.</i>	Following a review in July, AoCC have agreed to seek to be more proactive; broaden membership; ensure feedback between members; hold one meeting per year away from the Lecht; and establish an online presence. AoCC remains the key community network and information is regularly distributed through this channel. A separate distribution of Community Council and Association contacts is also used regularly.
b) Reviewing existing community action plans: <i>ensure that community action plans are reviewed as and when the community themselves feel it is appropriate, supported by the Community Planning Partnerships.</i>	Two communities have recently reviewed their Action Plans. Both processes instigated by communities themselves. Support available for any community wishing to do this, often requires external factors to trigger this development.
c) Delivering the National Park Partnership Plan more effectively through communities, developing a more joined up “Team Town” approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>support communities to work together more effectively and consolidate their structures/create new structures;</i> ii. <i>encourage communities to communicate/collaborate more effectively;</i> iii. <i>promote sustainable community approaches with emphasis on income generation & higher levels of community empowerment utilising the special qualities of the National Park; and,</i> iv. <i>Bring businesses and local communities closer together through the CBP</i> 	<p>Team Towns have now been established in 8 communities in Badenoch and Strathspey. VABS are considering extending this initiative into communities of interest, e.g. village halls and business associations. CBP have been involved in the early discussions with business associations.</p> <p>Most communities in the National Park now have a social enterprise organisation which seeks to generate income for investing back into the community, either through the management of an asset (hall, commercial site etc) or through the installation of small scale renewable projects (e.g. micro hydro).</p>

August 2012 Recommendations	December 2014 Progress Report
<p>d) Continue to support the Community Development Officer framework to support communities to become more self sustaining: as resources become tighter consider reducing number of CDOs supported but develop Service Level Agreements with key agencies to ensure consistency of delivery with the voluntary/community groups across the Park</p>	<p>Existing CDO projects have been very successful, delivering various and significant benefits across the National Park. As set out in this paper, CNPA has now reviewed how this can best be delivered over the next three years and is recommending the establishment of Memorandum of Agreement with key agencies.</p>
<p>e) Enhance role for members in community engagement and support: better utilise Members to support delivery of key messages and community projects and encouraging people to get involved.</p>	<p>Board members have been very supportive and involved in key community projects across the National Park, for example in Tomintoul and Glenlivet, Braemar, and Ballater. Board members engaged in agreement on new structures as outlined in d) and regularly attend Community Council meetings.</p>
<p>f) More focussed approach to resourcing community support, dependant on need and capacity: enhanced support for key communities as appropriate including communities with key issues and threats as well as proactive communities with the capacity to deliver more complex projects for wider benefit.</p>	<p>Tomintoul & Glenlivet remains a strategic focus for CNPA and partners. Significant staff and financial resources have been invested in supporting the work of TGDT and supporting joint working with other community bodies. CNPA has also recently taken on the reestablishment and administration of the partnership 'Transform Team'. Staff resources have also been utilised in other communities where there is a desire to deliver more complex projects, e.g. Boat of Garten and Ballater.</p>
<p>g) Raised profile of the best practice work that has been delivered through community engagement and support in the Park: communicating good work and best practice with partners through showcasing good examples and creating opportunities for communities to network and learn from these.</p>	<p>A community celebration event is being planned for 2015 to recognise the excellent work that communities have undertaken in recent years. Projects from the National Park were shortlisted in all but one of the recent Rural Innovator Awards at the Scottish Rural Parliament and CNPA worked closely with AoCC to organise a regional event prior to the full Rural Parliament in November.</p>

Annex 2 – Current Community Development/Liaison Officer Network Coverage and Funding

Area	Current CDO Project	Funding 2013-14
Aberdeenshire Angus Glens & Glenshee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastern Cairngorms Development Project, one CDO employed by Ballater Royal Deeside. • Funding has also been provided to MAP on a one off basis to support key initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNPA £17,600 • Aberdeenshire Council £5k
Morayshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Development Officer employed by Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust. • A small amount of additional funding was also provided for a short-term marketing officer post to match a graduate placement scheme. 	HIE Account Managed with HIE, CNPA, and Moray Council all contributing 15k per annum over a three year period ending in November 2015
Badenoch & Strathspey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Communities Project, one CDO employed by VABS • Our Community A Way Forward Project, one CDO employed by VABS 	<p>Strengthening Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNPA £15k • Highland Council £10k • Robertson Trust £17k • European Social Fund £52k <p>Our Community A Way Forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNPA £16,000 • Highland Council £4k
Blair Atholl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VABS have extended their remit to deliver Community Action Planning in the Blair Atholl area, the first time this has been done in full 	CNPA funding (6k one off payment to VABS) to support community action planning exercise in Blair Atholl
TOTAL CNPA FUNDING PER ANNUM		£69,600