

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title: Producing a Sustainable Tourism Strategy**

**Prepared by: Tourism Development Working Group  
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### **Purpose**

This paper is a follow-up to the Tourism Development Working Group's (TDWG) first paper to the Board (Paper 1-16/01/04) identifying the key issues for tourism in the Cairngorms, and seeks approval of expenditure to take forward one of those key issues.

### **Recommendation**

- Following the Board's endorsement to develop a Sustainable Tourism Strategy, it is recommended that the Board agree expenditure to commission a consultant to undertake this work.

### **Executive Summary**

The production of a sustainable tourism strategy that meets the requirements of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is an initiative identified within the CNPA's draft Corporate Plan. The National Park Authority does not have sufficient staff resources to undertake this work in-house to meet the submission deadline of April 2005. This research is an identifiable piece of work with clear objectives and outputs which can be managed by staff and the TDWG to ensure that the strategy is produced within a reasonable timescale. As a result the Board is asked to endorse this expenditure so that a consultant can be commissioned to undertake this work.

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## PRODUCING A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY

### Introduction

1. At its last meeting (16 January 2004) the Board endorsed the production of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy that will enable the CNPA to meet the requirements of the Europarc Federation European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. In addition, this initiative is identified within the CNPA's draft Corporate Plan within the theme 'Encourage and Support balanced, thriving stable communities in the Park'.
2. After considering the available NPA resources and in-house capacity, and to ensure that the whole process is kept within a reasonable timescale, it is recommended that a consultant be commissioned to produce the strategy. It is expected that this will cost in the region of £15-20,000 and this compares with Forest of Bowland AONB who have set aside £30-45,000 and the Yorkshire Dales National Park who estimate that their strategy may cost in the region of £60,000.
3. This is largely due to the original report which was produced by Europarc Consulting in spring 2003 outlining the actions required for the Park Authority to work towards the Charter; the significant amount of reports that have been produced or are currently being produced (eg marketing strategy, economic baseline report, visitor survey results, cultural heritage research that will be provide background; and the existence of the TDWG encompassing all key tourism interests in the Cairngorms area.
4. Board Members will be aware that expenditure of more than £10,000 on consultancy projects cannot be delegated, (as outlined in 'Project Approval Process and Update', Board Paper 12 12/09/03) and this Paper is to seek approval of the Board for this level of expenditure. Following this Scottish Executive approval will be sought.

### Background

5. The National Park is committed to the concept of sustainable tourism and the emphasis it places on striking the balance between meeting the needs of the visitor, environment and the host community for current as well as future generations. The European Charter has been specifically designed to provide a framework to manage sustainable tourism in protected areas.
6. The Charter outlines a process and provides guidance to ensure that the Park is able to manage sustainable tourism effectively and innovatively through 12 principles. These include the development of a strategy and action plan; the setting up of a permanent forum to ensure all stakeholders are involved; a commitment to on-going consultation with the private sector; and a means to ensure that targets are set and progress is evaluated.
7. The process is as important, if not more so, than gaining the Charter itself.
8. To be successful, it is important that all the key stakeholders are involved in its development and implementation.

9. The private sector will ultimately be a key beneficiary, though individual businesses are unlikely to see the full benefits until later in the process when the action plan is implemented. It is important nonetheless to involve them from the start, and make particular efforts to engage them in the development of the strategy.
10. This approach has borne fruits in the Mourne Mountains AONB, which was awarded the Charter last year.
11. Early work on the Charter will make an important contribution to the current Cairngorms branding exercise; and in due course the accreditation of the Charter can be used within marketing and promotional activities.

### **Proposed Research**

12. The two main reasons for proposing that this work should be undertaken by a consultant are the best use of in-house staff resources and to ensure that the strategy is produced within a reasonable timescale. Commissioning a consultant to undertake this work will allow the Sustainable Tourism Officer to continue to provide on-going support to the TDWG and the initiation of some projects already identified as priority eg point entry signage. Secondly, The CNPA will shortly register with Europarc as a candidate Charter Park and thereafter will work towards submitting its application with evaluation taking place in spring 2005. Realistically, this timescale is only achievable with additional help and expertise. It is envisaged with a start date of April 2004 that the final report will be produced by mid November 2004.
13. In addition, there are a number of other advantages to be taken into account:
  - This is a piece of work that is easily definable with clear objectives and outputs that can be managed at arms-length by Park staff and the TDWG;
  - Much of the initial work will be collating and analysing existing and recently commissioned strategies and plans, which is work that consultants do on a regular basis to ensure a thorough understanding of existing and current work to avoid duplication;
  - A consultant will also allocate time to ensure that the strategy is developed in consultation with key stakeholders and set up meetings or other means by which this will be achieved;
  - The consultant will have experience of developing similar strategies; and
  - This proposal represents good value for money in comparison to other protected areas who do not have the same level of background work in place

### **RECOMMENDATION**

14. The Board is asked to approve this level of expenditure of up to £20,000 to commission consultants to produce a sustainable tourism strategy, so that the CNPA can submit its application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas in spring 2005.

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