
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 National Park Forest Strategy** - The public consultation closed on 23rd March. 294 responses were received and these are being analysed to be brought to Board with the final Strategy in September.
- b) **Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework** - In April 2018 the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project successfully secured £550,000 funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to test approaches to co-designing recreation plans with communities and work up plans for habitat creation and communications and engagement. The work over the next 15 months (development phase) will lead to a second round application for £3.5 million to roll-out and deliver work over the following 3.5 years (delivery phase). The project is currently recruiting for five new posts, including a project manager.
- c) **East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership** - Dr Jos Milner has been appointed as ECMP officer, working 3 days per week and funded by CNPA and the partner estates. There has been significant progress on several of the projects being developed under the Partnership. The wader project (with the British Trust for Ornithology) has managed to insert data loggers into approx. 80 nests. This work will help us better understand wader productivity in a Cairngorms grouse estate landscape. We are having initial discussions with estates regarding woodland development opportunities. We are starting to map muirburn plans for the 6 estates so that we can see the extent of 'no burn' and 'burn with caution' areas.
- d) **Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership** - The job share Land Management Officer post has been filled and will start week commencing 25th June. A large collaborative AECS scheme has been submitted that (if successful) will result in river restoration works to approx. 3km of the River Avon, the Discovery Centre has been completed and is now open to the public, the Blairfindy Castle stabilisation project, after a delayed start, is now underway with survey and design work commencing week of 18th June. A draft application has been prepared for the Dark Skies project and a Lighting Amnesty launched involving farming and domestic lighting improvements. Successful archaeology events have been held discovering lost settlements and recording built heritage. The new Tomintoul and Glenlivet area website is currently being developed with Phase I live week of 12th June.

- e) **Cairngorms Nature** - The period covered by the current Cairngorms Nature Plan (2013-2018) is coming to an end. A Final Report detailing the progress made towards targets, highlighting some of the high-profile conservation work that has taken place and a full assessment of the actions in the Plan will be published as an on-line web page, going live on the 20th June 2018. The next Cairngorms Nature Action Plan will follow a similar format and reflect the three main conservation challenges in the Park, as set out in the National Park Partnership Plan. Consultation on the next Action Plan will take place between 20th June 2018 and 14th September 2018. The consultation and the Final Report will both be launched at a Cairngorms Nature seminar in Kingussie on 20th June.

Visitor Experience:

- a) **Long Distance Routes**
- **Speyside Way:** Final planning applications will be submitted this summer and it is anticipated that work of the extension to Newtonmore will be complete by summer 2019. Work is now required on signage, interpretation and creating a start/finish point at Newtonmore. Once the extension is complete the focus will be on upgrading the original route in partnership with Moray and Highland Councils.
 - **Deeside Way:** Planning will be resubmitted this summer for the path line to Invercauld Bridge of Dee.
 - **National Cycle Route 7:** dual carriageway designs for A9 between Aviemore and Carr-bridge that also include a national standard, multiuse, off road route path appear challenging and further work is required.
- b) **Mountains and People Project** – The five year Mountains and People project within both National Parks in Scotland is at its ‘half way’ point. The work includes significant upgrades to 52km of key mountain paths, and the involvement & commitment of people through training, volunteering and learning. CNPA are working to maintain a sustainable legacy at the end of the project in both path maintenance and public involvement.
- c) **Active Cairngorms** – The main focus currently is improving opportunities for active travel in Aviemore with the options phase nearing completion with the support of the Highland Council and the local Councillors confirmed. The next stage bid for further funding potentially using Sustrans grants. The overall aim of this project is to make active travel within and around Aviemore as easy and attractive as driving a car particularly focussing on access to the proposed new Hospital and the existing junior school. Links to Aviemore orbital path, NCN7, Speyside Way and Old Logging Way are all included.
- d) **Glenmore** – Forestry Commission Scotland is redeveloping their visitor management plan including options for reciting & reopening the Allt Mor Trail that leads to CairnGorm Ski Centre. A successful Expression of Interest has been made to Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund to build a multiuse path linking Loch Morlich Beach car park with the Hayfield car park; final determination in Oct 2018. Further work is required on implementation of the Strategy overall to ensure that key development proposals are well-integrated and the public can contribute effectively.
- e) **Volunteering** – To date 14 volunteer rangers have been trained and are supporting the work of six partner ranger services.

- f) **Education and Inclusion**
- The Leader funded Europarc Youth Manifesto gathering attracted 34 participants (10 from Finland) to Glenmore with 12 young people from UK returning to Finland in June. The Youth Manifesto will be shared with delegates to Europarc Annual Conference in Aviemore in September.
 - Three junior ranger training weeks have been run by schools supported by CNPA, rangers and other partners, with two more scheduled for the year.
 - Backbone is organising an Outdoor Festival for All at Balmaha on Saturday 23rd June to celebrate the end of their current work. They are inviting 150 people from Black & Minority Ethnic communities to experience, learn about and enjoy all that National Parks and other protracted areas have to offer.
 - Cairngorms Outreach advisory group is being restructured to make it more accessible and encourage a wider membership. Meetings of the 'refreshed' group will be twice yearly.
- g) **Information and Interpretation** – The Tomintoul Museum and Visitor Centre was opened at Easter. Work continues on the Ballater Visitor Information Centre now scheduled to be opened in September 2018. Work will commence on signage and interpretation on Speyside Way as the extension nears completion. Work supporting Badenoch Great Place and Capercaille projects is underway. Significantly revised versions of Place Names and Hill Tracks leaflets have been produced and distributed. The later in partnership with and celebrating the work of, Scotways and Mountains and People Project. Sponsorship has been retained for the 'tear-off map' and this will be widely circulated again this year. The Visitor Leaflet is being revised and reprinted to replace declining stocks of 2016 version.
- h) **Snow Roads Scenic Route** – Four local authorities have agreed brown, CNP branded, tourist signage, funded by CNPA, and this has been installed along the Perth and Kinross section of the route with the rest due to be in place in June. Further work is required with Transport Scotland contractors on signage on A95 at Grantown-on-Spey. New interpretation at Still, Tomintoul will be installed by July. Cairngorms Business Partnership has developed a new brand for the route and a new - business sponsored - leaflet, and will launch the visitor experience work at their summer conference at Mar Lodge on 26th June.

Rural Development:

- a) **Local Development Plan 2020** – Responses to Main Issues Report consultation have been analysed and Planning Committee will consider them at 30 June 2018 Meeting.
- b) **Planning casework** – 2018 continues to see call-in of significant planning applications and use of processing agreements to manage determination timescales. Notable applications that have been called in include recently include an extension of the Ptarmigan Restaurant on Cairngorm and extension of a quarry at Dalwhinnie. An application for the new Aviemore Health Care facility is expected soon and there have been initial pre-application discussions on proposals for a new distillery near Grantown-on-Spey.

- c) **Tourism Action Plan** – Partners are currently being consulted on potential changes to 2019/20 visitor survey that will be tendered later this year and start in May 2019. The tender is in partnership with LL&TNPA. Within the Cairngorms 2500 visitors will be interviewed across the National Park over a 12 month period. First half, summer, results are anticipated in Dec 2019.
- d) **Housing Delivery** – The first phase of council housing at Beachen Court, Grantown-on-Spey is due to be handed over to Highland Council soon and delivery of further phases is expected soon. Dulnain Bridge community have established a project team and development trust to look at options for community-led affordable housing. Its first public meeting will be on 20 June.
- f) **A9 Dualling project** – Staff have been asked to comment on the draft Environmental Statement for Dalraddy to Slochd section and Draft Orders are expected after the summer. Discussions have taken place a local level about the effect of proposed works on Aviemore community and the paths and the provision for Non-motorised users especially between Aviemore and Carrbridge.
- e) **Community-led development** – Ballater has established a new Community Action Team to oversee progress with actions in their new Community Action Plan (CAP) that is due to be launched in June. Boat of Garten held their Big Conversation to review their CAP on 27 April with 70+ attendees. Kingussie’s Big Conversation takes place on 14 June. Kingussie’s Am Fagadh project have appointed architects and have ambitious plans for a £3.8 million regeneration and development scheme. In Grantown-on-Spey, the Inverallan 2020 group have submitted an HLF bid to support their £1.2 Million project to redevelop Inverallan Church into a multi-purpose community space.
- f) **Badenoch Great Place project** – Project Officer Oliver O’Grady is now in place, employed by Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey in Kingussie. Project Board due to consider activity Plan at next meeting. Launch event scheduled for 17 June at Highland Folk Park.
- g) **ERDF Fund for Natural and Cultural Heritage** – Discussions have taken place with partner organisations about potential use of a new fund that is expected to be launched later this year to be administered by SNH for Highland and Moray Council areas. Current timetable indicates applications to be submitted in early 2019 and all works to be completed by 2022.
- h) **Cairngorms Archive Trust** - The Trust has now been established as a SCIO and is recruiting members. Work is planned to document and collate material from private collection in parallel with negotiating agreement with Highlife Highland regarding storage. Anna Fleming, Education and Inclusion Officer contact point in CNPA.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) The CEO has met with a number of organisations including BSW Timber Group, Tulchan Estate, Scottish Land Commission, Cairngorms Landowners meeting, Glenmore/Cairngorm partners.

- b) The CEO has spoken at a number of events including Ramblers Scotland Conference, ILUC Conference, PAW Scotland Forensics Group and SCNP AGM.
- c) The CEO has also attended relevant Community Planning Boards in Highland & Moray and Cllr Latham attended the Aberdeenshire Board. The CEO also attended EELG and NDPB Forum meetings in Edinburgh.
- d) The CEO met with Dave Morris and Nick Kemp to discuss hill tracks, wild land and forestry, Tim Kirkwood CEO of Wildland Ltd and the Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust.
- e) The CEO met with the Convenor of Highland Council and the Convener, Vice-Convener and CEO met with the CEO and Chair of the CBP.
- f) A successful Board evening was held in Nethy Bridge which Brian Wood hosted and attended by Carolyn Caddick and Becky Badger + staff.

Communications:

- a) **Cairngorms Nature Campaign** – Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend was very successful with over 60 events being held across the Park. An estimated 1600 people took part with Braemar acting as a main focal point. A rural skills day organised by Forestry Enterprise Scotland resulted in over 200 young people learning about outdoor job opportunities in the Park and the ‘Rewilding Re-peopling’ discussion was sold out with 150+ attendees. [The School Arts Competition](#) resulted in hundreds of entries with 31 shortlisted entrants and their families enjoying a visit to Cairngorm Mountain where the final 3 winners were announced and children took part in a mask-making craft event. Feedback surveys are currently being collected and a full evaluation report will be prepared by the end of June to inform the future development of the BIG Weekend and how this can best be taken forward. Nominations for the Cairngorms Nature Farm Award 2018 are currently being sought and will be judged in time for the winner to be announced at the Grantown Show on 9th August. CNPA are the main sponsors of the show this year and we will continue with the Pride of the Park Awards for the ‘Best in Park’ entrants for the Cattle, Sheep, Horses and Domestic science categories.
- b) **Active Cairngorms** – ‘Tread Lightly’ campaign messages relating to [dogs and the lambing](#) and [bird nesting season](#) and fire risk warnings in the Park have been promoted during March – June resulting in 220 views on the website and a reach of 63K on Facebook with a 7.5% engagement rate and 73.8K reach on Twitter with a 1.8% engagement rate. The Active Aviemore consultation is ongoing with 14 messages sent out via social media reaching 26K accounts with an average engagement rate of 4.7%.
- c) **Make It Yours Campaign** – Some 243 visitor facing staff have now enjoyed the one hour ‘Make it Yours’ training that links the special qualities of the National Park with visitor wants and needs as determined by the 2015 visitor survey and partners ‘first hand’ experience. CNPA staff will continue to deliver this training across the National Park as required.
- d) **Corporate Communications** –CNPA’s Corporate Plan, Communications & Engagement Strategy and Gaelic Language Plan have all been approved and will be published on our website by the end of June. The Forestry Strategy consultation is now complete and a final plan will go to Board in September. Following an internal audit report on our Digital Communications a digital strategy has been prepared which will direct our future digital activities for both social media and

our website. During 2017 164, 274 users visited our website and our total social media audience was 27,650 making our total digital audience 191,924 during 2017.

- e) **EUROPARC Conference 2018** – The [EUROPARC Conference website](#) and booking system went live in April and promotion with target audiences is underway. Bookings are expected to reach 300+ delegates including 100 youth delegates. Work to produce a Youth Manifesto is underway with a successful workshop in the Cairngorms held in May. A further workshop will take place in Finland before the final manifesto is prepared for launch at the EUROPARC Conference in September.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Office Extension Project** – is progressing well with the proposed Practical Completion date being 14th August. Although this date cannot be confirmed until closer to the time, the project plan for the staggered moves of staff into the new extension, and around the old building is being planned around this date. Redecoration of the old building will coincide with these moves, to make most of the opportunities of offices becoming temporarily vacant.
- b) **Staffing update**
- Jos Milner was recently appointed as the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership Officer, and is based in the Ballater office. Polly Freeman has also joined the Authority, job sharing in the TGLP Land Management Officer post with Lynn Cassells
 - We have amended the structure of the Conservation team, splitting it into the two strategic areas of Conservation and Land management. Will Boyd-Wallis will head up the Land Management side, and following an internal recruitment exercise, Andy Ford has been appointed to the Head of Conservation post.
 - Following Sam Wiaczek' resignation, the LEADER Manager post was reviewed and split into two part time posts of LEADER Manager and Trust Manager. Bridget Trussell was successfully appointed to the LEADER Manager post through the internal recruitment process, and we are close to appointing the new Trust Manager.
 - There is significant recruitment underway at the current time due to the award of grant funding for key projects, including the following posts: - Cairngorms Capercaillie Project (CCP) Project Manager; CCP Engagement Officer; CCP Community Ranger; Strategic Routes Development Officer; Peatland Action Project Officer.
 - Other posts are being recruited in response to existing staff moves – Helen Rees (Governance and Corporate Performance Manager) is emigrating and her post is being replaced by a Corporate Support Officer.
- c) **Youth Employment** – We are in the process of recruiting an ICT Technician Apprentice, and hope to have the apprentice in post by July. In addition, we are recruiting a Finance Support Officer Graduate Intern, to provide maternity cover for Amy Mackenzie. The Gaelic Intern, Ryan Dziadowiec joins us in June to deliver a 3-month Gaelic research project. The Foundation Apprentice, Stuart Winter, joins the Authority in August.
- d) **Organisational Development Strategy 2** – Is progressing well with the recent introduction of the staff intranet. We are also revising our project planning processes to ensure that they are streamlined, compliant and more suited to the needs of users.

Key staff are involved in work and training with SG's Improvement Service, and we are also supporting SG's Digital Champion Programme.

- e) **Shared Services** – From 1st April, the CNPA HR team has been providing the HR, Pension and Payroll service for the Scottish Land Commission, on a 5-year contract.
- f) **UKNP** – David Cameron has now drafted a charity constitution using a template approved by the Charity Regulator for England and Wales. For a charity operating across the UK, the charity must first be registered in England or Wales as the Scottish processes are not legally recognised under English law. This draft will be circulated to Chief Executives for final comment in the next week or so, with the aim of making application for a national entity achieving charitable status by October 2018. National Park Partnerships continue to pursue a number of leads for charitable donations with this timetable in mind.
- g) **LEADER** – The Cairngorms Local Action Group (CLAG) met on 23 May. Project awards and offers have now fully utilised all funds available for community led projects and economic development projects. Funds remain for farm diversification projects and also cooperation projects with activities happening in multiple Local Action Group areas. The CLAG agreed at its meeting to pursue a rural transport project with Kilkenny Action Group (Republic of Ireland) with the Cairngorms focus around the Aviemore and Glenmore area. This project may take up a substantial amount of remaining cooperation funds. The corporate and LEADER teams continue to manage a difficult regulatory environment and ongoing liaison with the Scottish Governments LEADER Delivery and Business Assurance teams.

Future dates for diary

- **Europarc Conference 18 – 21 September**

Grant Moir

June 2018

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