
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE PROJECT

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Purpose

To review the five year, £6.4m, Mountains & People Project at the half way point and agree how to maintain the ongoing outputs of the project beyond 2020.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) **Note the successful outputs of the Mountains and People project to date:**
- b) **Agree that for the second half of the project we need to:**
 - i. **Support the remaining two & half years of Mountains & People Project**
 - ii. **Develop a sustainable way to maintain the paths**
 - iii. **Integrate project volunteering into Volunteer Cairngorms**
 - iv. **Integrate project education into wider work supported by CNPA & partners**

Executive Summary

The five year Mountains and People project within both National Parks in Scotland is to enhance and protect the wild and special qualities of the mountains. This work includes significant upgrades to key mountain paths, and the involvement & commitment of people through training, volunteering and learning. This paper shows that at the half way point the project is 'on target' to deliver the full plan. It also recommends developing ways in which the work delivered is maintained and supported beyond the life of the project.

MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE PROJECT - DECISION

Strategic Context

1. This project was started in June 2015 to deliver National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) 2012 – 17 action 12c. Scotland's National Parks Mountain Paths Restoration Project:
 - a) Improve mountain paths in both the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Parks to reduce the visual scars of erosion as well as future erosion on some of Scotland's most famous and spectacular mountains.
 - b) Secure long-term funding for upkeep of the paths in future.
2. Visitor survey data indicates that annually a quarter of a million visitors enjoy mountain paths each year in Cairngorms National Park.
3. Within the Cairngorms this project can be seen as the follow-on to Cairngorms Mountain Heritage project that delivered significant improvements to mountain paths in the northern area of the National Park supporting the first National Park Partnership Plan 2007-12.

Project Development

4. Mountains and People is a five year Heritage Lottery Fund UK supported project with the overall aim of involving the people of Scotland in the enhancement and protection of the wild and special qualities of the mountains within Scotland's National Parks.
5. The project is led by Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) and supported by four principle partners; CNPA, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA), Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).
6. The project consists of key strands summarised as follows:
 - a) Mountain path improvement
 - b) Training
 - c) Volunteering
 - d) Education & Visitor Participation
7. These paper summaries the work delivered to date at the 'half way point' of the project and recommends work required to ensure that improvements are sustained.

Project Delivery

8. Annex I Mountains & People Mid Project Evaluation Report details work to date. Outputs in the Cairngorms are summarised below:

Mountain Path Improvement

9. The pre-project partner consultation identified some 53km of mountain paths in the Cairngorms that most required upgrade in the following areas; Aberdeenshire (Lochnagar & Glen Tanar), Angus Glens, Blair Atholl and Drumochter. These were areas not covered by Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project.

10. To date some 25.2km (47.5%) has been upgraded using one of three general approaches; hand build (33%), light touch (26%) and machine build (41%). OATS agree with the land manager works undertaken along with 10 years of path maintenance. Planning consent is obtained if required.
11. It is interesting to note that the works include popular and well known paths in the Cairngorms; Mount Keen (the most easterly Munro in Scotland), Lochnagar, Driessh & Mayer in Angus and Beinn a' Ghlo at the southern entrance to the National Park along the A9. Improving the Beinn a' Ghlo path will not only make mountain access better but will significantly improve the views at this key entry point; for decades the ever widening path has been a very visible 'scar on the landscape'.
12. In a project of this scale delivered in difficult work conditions it is not surprising to have some challenges. To date two areas are problematic in Cairngorms but both are considered able to be resolvable:
 - a) Broad Cairn path has not been constructed to the correct standard and remedial work will be undertaken this summer.
 - b) Agreement has yet to be reached with the land manager & SNH at Balsporran (north of Drumochter) where currently vehicle access is used on the lower ground path. It is likely that this lower section will be left unchanged and improvements will be 'hand build' on the higher paths.
13. Nevertheless, overall the path improvement work is to a high standard and on schedule to be completed by the end of the project.

Training

14. The project recruited 12 people to undertake courses in Environmental Conservation at Scottish Vocational Qualification Level 2 combined in Cairngorms along with the 'Discover' John Muir Award. This work is complete with the last 'graduation' in December 2017 in Balmoral.
15. All 12 trainees achieved SVQ Level 2, with eight progressing to path work and the remaining four all in related industries or training. One has been inspired to undertake path building in New Zealand and another to take a degree in countryside management.
16. This element of the project in the Cairngorms is complete but we are still involved to a small extent with the Loch Lomond trainees in introducing them to the Cairngorms and the similarities and differences between the roles of the two park authorities.

Volunteering

17. There are two elements to this work; conservation volunteering and 'adopt a path'
18. To date 31 volunteering days have been organised in Cairngorms giving 1415.5hrs of 'work' which equates to 236 days. The target for the rest of the project in Cairngorms is increased to 320 days with demand in place to ensure it will be achieved. There will

be a focus on the people living within 1 hr of the park; Inverness, Moray, Aberdeen, Dundee and Perth.

19. The adopt a path scheme encourages volunteers to walk upgraded paths, undertake any very minor repairs while walking the path, and report more significant works required. In Cairngorms there are 13 newly adopted paths, a further six still available (soon to be filled) and a further seven coming online next year

Education

20. The main education elements of the project are scheduled for the second half of the project so there is little to report other than the project is partnering with the work of CNPA so that it supports existing education work.

Finance

21. Project management costs incurred by OATS have been greater than expected. There are a number of reasons for this including more time than estimated on planning, communications, partnership management, and more time spent on site management. This additional time will be required throughout the project to completion, and more time in particular will be required to completing the charitable trust and corporate fundraising required. Contingency is available, and a request can be placed with HLF to draw down some of the contingency to cover such costs.
22. The four public partners including CNPA have committed financial support for the full five years, as have OATS. Nevertheless, the project needs to generate £260,000 funds from public charities of which £152,000 is secured (58.5%), and £200,000 from the private sector of which £11,795 is secured (5.9%). Therefore, it is likely that the public funding will need to increase to cover the gap in projected private sector input. See para. 23.
23. The British Mountaineering Council 'Make One Million' campaign launched in October 2016 and is due to run for a year. Beinn A'Ghlo and Ben Vane (Loch Lomond) are the Scottish paths within the appeal, with a target of £100k being sought to support Mountains and People. To date some 20% of the national total has been raised.

Discussion

24. The mid project review clearly demonstrates that this challenging project has delivered a range of outcomes around the Cairngorms not least the upgrade and improvement of 25km of well used high profile mountain paths.
25. The work is also effectively developing a path volunteering scheme delivering alongside Volunteer Cairngorms work. Education work will increase in the second half of the project, again linked to wider work in the National Park.
26. OATS as a corporate entity is underwriting the current gap in corporate funding for the project at present and therefore managing this strategic project and corporate risk. There is confidence that additional funds from public charities will 'bridge any gap' but this risk will be regularly assessed as the project continues.

27. OATS is committed to maintaining the path network for a decade but as in previous projects will benefit from ongoing support from CNPA.

Recommendations

28. **That the Board:**
- a) **Note the successful outputs of the Mountains and People project to date.**
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Implications

29. The HLF bid commits CNPA to £55,000 per annum for one more year 2019/20. In order to maintain the path network CNPA will continue to support OATS in delivering path maintenance for the 10 years committed, and develop sustainable maintenance beyond that period.

Success Measures

30. The key measure is that the project will deliver outputs agreed with Heritage Lottery fund that include:
- a) 52 km of mountain path upgraded in Cairngorms
 - b) 20 mountain paths monitored and 'adopted' in Cairngorms
 - c) 600 days of volunteering in Cairngorms
31. In addition it is important that the paths and human interest in protecting them, and the area they travel through are maintained.

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May 2018

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