

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: SCOTLAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME –
COMMUNICATIONS AND SUPPORT IN THE
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

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Purpose

To seek approval for a programme of SRDP communications and support including the role of Land Management Support Officers.

Recommendations

- a) The Board is asked to approve the proposed SRDP communications and support programme including two fixed term Land Management Support Officer posts.
- b) In order to allow recruitment of the posts to proceed, the board is asked to approve the expenditure of £80,000 for the year 2008/09 to deliver the programme of communications and support proposed.

Executive Summary

The launch of the SRDP in early 2008 provides a significant opportunity to contribute to delivery of the National Park Plan, not only through supporting land-based businesses but through investing in the outcomes they can deliver. However, if the potential of this funding programme is to be realised in the Park, CNPA must take a proactive role in stimulating high quality applications and supporting land managers and others adapt to the new system.

A programme of communications and support is proposed, including the establishment of two fixed-term Land Management Support Officer posts. These posts add value to the national SRDP process, can significantly develop CNPA's relationship with land managers and offer a way to take a co-ordinated approach to Rural Development Contracts and LEADER in the Park.

SCOTLAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME – COMMUNICATIONS AND SUPPORT IN THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK - FOR DECISION

Background

1. The Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) 2008-13 is a significant shift in the way public funding is directed to land managers, rural businesses and communities. It is a £1.6 billion programme of economic, environmental and social measures designed to benefit rural Scotland, bringing together funding that was previously given through a range of separate schemes by government and its rural agencies. As such, it will be a significant part of the public investment in the National Park.
2. Paper 11 sets out more detail on the programme and the role CNPA has played to date in helping to shape its development. This paper considers the role that CNPA should play in adding value to the implementation of SRDP once the programme is launched in early 2008. There is a real opportunity for CNPA to take a proactive role in getting the most out of this programme of funding for the National Park, and at the same time developing relationships with land managers at a practical level.
3. This paper is brought to the board for decision ahead of the draft corporate plan in order that CNPA can take the opportunity of the programme's launch in early 2008 and maximise the potential benefits.

Opportunity for CNPA

4. SRDP, through Rural Development Contracts and LEADER in particular, is a key opportunity to contribute to many outcomes of the National Park Plan. However, the division of the National Park across three administrative regions for the programme (RPACs), the broad scope of the regional priorities, their competitive nature and the significant change in culture from the previous SRDP mean there is a risk that the national process may not deliver the full potential that SRDP offers for the Park.
5. This paper proposes that CNPA takes a proactive approach to getting best-value from the implementation of SRDP for the National Park. There is an opportunity for CNPA to add value over and above the national context by:
 - a) Promoting the opportunity to apply for RDCs and LEADER;
 - b) Helping land managers, businesses and communities to understand the options and processes;
 - c) Assisting land managers, businesses and communities target applications to best effect;
 - d) Actively encouraging high quality applications that will contribute to delivery of the National Park Plan.

6. To take advantage of this opportunity a programme of communications and support is proposed.

Communications

7. Communication is vital to helping land managers, other rural businesses and communities make the transition to the new system of support under SRDP. A national programme of awareness raising events organised by SGRPID has started to run, but there are relatively few meetings across the country.
8. In the National Park CNPA has taken the lead in setting up two additional meetings that replicate the format of the SGRPID events and form part of the national series. These are scheduled for:
 - a) Thursday 31st January 2008, Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
 - b) Thursday 7th February 2008, Glen Lui Hotel, BallaterTheir purpose is to provide information on the programme, details of how to apply and a chance for people to discuss the potential range of opportunities.
9. Further elements of the communications programme proposed are:
 - a) Community roadshow events around the Park giving more detailed information and discussion on opportunities of SRDP (co-ordinated with NFUS/SRPBA and others);
 - b) Relevant training facilitated by the Land-Based Business Training Programme;
 - c) Production of materials promoting the opportunities and giving a simple explanation of process;
 - d) Engagement with commercial advisors to encourage high quality applications maximising benefits to the Park;
 - e) Demonstration sites showing what can be achieved through SRDP.

Support for Land Managers

10. There is a need for practical support for land managers in particular to adjust to the new SRDP and for guidance on how to maximise the public benefits delivered. In particular, there is a role for CNPA to:
 - a) promote the opportunities of SRDP;
 - b) support land managers in identifying options and understanding the process for RDC and LEADER applications;
 - c) actively target and encourage applications that will make a significant contribution to delivering the National Park Plan.
11. In order to deliver this support the recruitment of two Land Management Support Officers on a fixed term three year contract is proposed. These posts will fill a gap in the provision of advice and support in the national SRDP process that could otherwise reduce the value of the SRDP in delivering the National Park Plan. Their role will be proactive through stimulating high quality applications that are targeted

at delivering public benefits on a landscape scale, and reactive through offering guidance to land managers considering an application.

12. They will work closely with case officers (from SGRPID/SNH/FCS) who will manage the RDC application process (but who are unable to provide advice to applicants) and the LEADER team. It is also envisaged that they will work closely with commercial advisors, on whom many land managers are likely to call for assistance with the technical preparation of applications.
13. CNPA is not a member of the core RPAC that will make decisions on applications, although it may be called upon to inform decisions. It is therefore able to provide support and advice to land managers in developing applications. However, CNPA will not assist directly in the completion of applications – that is the responsibility of land managers or their advisors. The diagram at Annex 1 shows the role of the Land Management Support Officers in the context of SRDP.

Benefits and Risks of Proactive Approach

14. The benefits of taking this proactive approach include:
 - a) Greater likelihood of SRDP making a significant contribution to delivering the National Park Plan and the aims of the Park;
 - b) Land management support officers are a means to significantly develop CNPA's relationships with land managers in a practical and constructive way;
 - c) CNPA is recognised as being able to react quickly to an opportunity that adds value.
15. The risk of not taking the proactive approach proposed at this time is that CNPA will not be able to capitalise on the launch of the programme, land managers, businesses and communities will have less information on the opportunities and ultimately the benefits of SRDP for the Park are likely to be more diffuse.
16. A risk associated with taking a proactive approach is that some land managers may find their applications are not approved and funding will inevitably be restricted at some point through the programme. However, this can be addressed through managing expectations.

Consultation

17. The proposals in this paper have been discussed in principle with members of the relevant RPACS and representatives of NFUS and SRPBA. Within the CNPA, all relevant parts of the organisation including LEADER and the Land-Based Business Training Programme are engaged in a common approach. Further consultation with partners, particularly the Leader Action Group and RPAC members, will be an ongoing part of establishing the new posts and their relationships with others.

Policy Context

National Park Plan

18. The proposed programme of support and communication will facilitate delivery of many outcomes of the National Park Plan. In particular, the role of the Land Management Support Officers is a direct way in which CNPA can contribute to delivering the priority for action 'Integrating Public Support for Land Management'.

CNPA Corporate Plan

19. This paper has been brought in advance of the Corporate Plan for 08-11 in response to an opportunity that presents itself now. It is important that CNPA is in the best possible position to help land managers, rural businesses and communities make the most of the SRDP programme as soon as it is launched. There has been a significant build-up to the launch of the programme, not least due to a series of delays in timescale at the European level, so anticipation and expectation is high. The competitive nature of Rural Development Contracts in particular means that land managers will be looking to put together applications as soon as possible.
20. It is envisaged that the proposals will form a significant part of CNPA's contribution to delivering the outcomes under the National Park Plan Priority for Action 'Integrating Public Support for Land Management'. The support role identified here is one that other partners involved in SRDP will not fulfil and it is one that fits well with the ethos of CNPA facilitating and being a catalyst to make things happen.
21. The support role is also a direct way in which CNPA can develop relationships with land managers in a practical and constructive way, a corporate priority discussed during early consideration of the forthcoming corporate plan.
22. Against CNPA's current corporate plan, the approach is a direct contribution to goal 12: 'public benefits which can be delivered by land managers defined and supported through publicly funded schemes, advice and training'. As importantly, it facilitates contributions to many of the other goals through land management. In the national policy context, this approach adds value to the SRDP programme and is likely to be viewed as a pilot approach that could be transferred to other areas.

Delivering Sustainability

23. The proposals seek to ensure SRDP contributes to the sustainability of land-based businesses and the sustainable management of natural and cultural resources in the Park.

Delivering A Park for All

24. The approach offers a means to seek benefits for 'A Park for All' through outcomes delivered by SRDP.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

25. The proposals identify an opportunity to add value to the national context, take a co-ordinated approach to different strands of SRDP in the Park and seek best value from the public funds directed into the Park through SRDP.

Implications

Financial Implications

26. A budget of £80,000pa is identified in the draft operational plan for the proposed programme of communications and support. This is in the context of a package of work totalling approximately £200,000pa proposed to contribute to the outcomes under 'Integrating Public Support for Land Management'. This includes £70,000pa allocated to cover employment costs of two Land Management Support Officers and £10,000pa to cover communications events and materials. Opportunities for partnership funding will be explored, particularly through the LEADER programme, but the timescales means that this may not be possible, at least in year one.
27. The expenditure is proposed for a three year period, at the end of which the need for these posts will be reviewed. It is anticipated that by that stage the SRDP will be well established and there may be less need for active intervention, or the same function may be able to be delivered by others.

Presentational Implications

28. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the added value that CNPA can bring by identifying a need, responding quickly to the opportunity and putting in place practical measures that will help land managers, businesses and communities. As well as promoting the opportunities associated with SRDP, expectations also need to be managed. There are limited funds and applications to Rural Priorities are competitive – there are therefore no guarantees of success.

Implications for Stakeholders

29. Close liaison with key stakeholders including RPAC and Leader Group members, NFUS and SRPBA is intended to maximise the benefits of a co-ordinated approach. The proposed approach offers a key means to develop in a more practical way CNPA's relationship with land managers, as well as other businesses and communities that may benefit from SRDP.

Recommendations

30. **The Board is asked to approve the proposed SRDP communications and support programme including two fixed term Land Management Support Officer posts.**
31. **In order to allow recruitment of the posts to proceed, the board is asked to approve the expenditure of £80,000 for the year 2008/09 to deliver the programme of communications and support proposed.**

Next Steps

32. If approved, recruitment for the Land Management Support Officer posts will proceed. The communications programme is also ready to proceed following the two initial meetings scheduled at the end of January/start of February. Reporting on progress of SRDP implementation and CNPA's role will be brought to the Board in future updates of the corporate plan under the priority for action 'Integrating Public Support for Land Management'.

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