

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DECISION

**Title:** **Communications and Engagement Programme**

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### Purpose

To set out our approach to Communications and Engagement in the Park and gain agreement on the proposed way forward.

### Recommendations

That the Board agree the main elements of our approach to communications and engagement in the Park:

- a) Three outcomes (the difference we are trying to make):
  - i. increased awareness of the Park
  - ii. a sense of “closeness”
  - iii. a sense of ownership and responsibility
- b) Three themes about the Park:
  - i. The Cairngorms National Park is a special place that needs special care
  - ii. The Cairngorms National Park supports a thriving economy and vibrant local communities
  - iii. The Cairngorms National Park is a place to enjoy and get involved
- c) Development of a network of Champions to act as communication partners
- d) Programme of Work:
  - i. Digital communications (online tool kit, website and social media)
  - ii. Stakeholder engagement and events plan (Forward Look 2012)
  - iii. Campaigns Programme
  - iv. Strengthening our Communities
  - v. Volunteering Initiative
- e) The role of Board members

### Executive Summary

This paper brings together the communications and engagement work carried out across the organisation and sets out a co-ordinated approach for the next 3-5 years. The overall objective is to raise the profile of the Park and create a connection and commitment to the Park with identified audiences so they actively support the Park and benefit from doing so.

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## COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME FOR DECISION

### Introduction

1. From the start the CNPA ethos has been to work with and through others as the most sustainable approach to manage the Park in the longer term. We have therefore worked hard to develop strong and positive relationships with key delivery partners, which have resulted in much of the National Park Plan being successfully delivered. In addition, we have good evidence that a strong identity and good level of awareness of the Park has been established through the Park brand and our work on raising awareness and understanding of the Park. (see Annex I – survey evidence)
2. Despite this progress there are still some misunderstandings about what the National Park is for, what opportunities it offers and the role the CNPA play in managing the Park. There are ongoing planning issues within the Park, missed opportunities to demonstrate and promote how the National Park has benefited people's quality of life and a reluctance by some partners to embrace the National Park as a means to help them deliver their objectives.

### Background

3. The Cairngorms National Park is less than 10 years old but already has a strong identity and a good level of general awareness. There has been a considerable degree of interest in our approach to managing the Park, with a strong emphasis on communications and engagement, from elsewhere in the UK and internationally. The main elements of our approach are summarised below.
4. **The Park brand** has played a critical role in achieving this new identity for the Park and continues to do so, particularly as the Brand identity is available for use by anyone who meets its criteria and displays the brand values. Further development of the use of the brand identity and its values will help to reinforce what the Park stands for and enhance the visitor experience and quality of life for those who live and work in the Park.
5. Earlier this year the CNPA was awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism for a second time. It recognises best practice and the development of the **Sustainable Tourism Strategy**, prepared in partnership with the private sector, helped to prompt the formation of the Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) in 2010. Since then the CBP has prepared a marketing strategy which brings together the efforts of its members and public sector partners so that a more co-ordinated approach to promoting the park as a visitor destination is achieved.

6. In addition, the work around **Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park** as one of the current National Park Plan priorities for action has established a strong sense of place through our work on signage, visitor information, the interpretation guidance 'Sharing the Stories of the Cairngorms National Park', ranger services, the John Muir Award and junior ranger project. The education work (undertaken in partnership with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, nine Local Authorities, Scottish Natural Heritage and Education Scotland) has been highly influential.
7. Finally, the **Corporate Communications Strategy** has concentrated on our delivery partners including public sector bodies, land managers, local businesses, local communities and key decision makers and influencers such as MSPs, NGOs and the media. Much of this work has been tailored to meet our partners' needs to support the delivery of the National Park Plan and establish a shared sense of responsibility for the Park. This has resulted in some success but to meet our aspirations set out in the next National Park Plan we will need to make an emotional connection to inspire others about the opportunities the National Park and its work can bring to them as individuals or organisations through the delivery of our shared objectives.

## **Proposed Way Forward**

### **Strategic Outcomes, Themes and Audiences**

8. Given the current economic climate and our limited available resources, if we are to meet our long term ambitions as set out in the Draft National Park Plan we must secure the support, involvement and above all enthusiasm of others. We have made some progress towards gaining this support and commitment but if we want to make a 'step change' we need to develop and modify our approach. We need to focus more significantly on building strong relationships by engaging with people emotionally to win the 'hearts and minds' of our partners and those with an interest in the Park so they see and promote the Park as a national asset that delivers economic, environmental and social benefits. (see Annex 2 – for main elements of the Strategy and how it will be implemented)
9. In order to achieve this it is proposed that we should focus our future communications and engagement efforts on achieving three main outcomes:
  - a) Increased awareness of the Park;
  - b) A sense of 'closeness' (win hearts and minds) with identified audiences;
  - c) A sense of responsibility and ownership to make a contribution to the Park.
10. Following the informal Board discussion in September 2011 and further discussions both internally and externally it is clear that we need to develop a simplified set of

messages to help inspire people about the Park. We propose we use 3 clear themes about the Park:

- a) The Cairngorms National Park is a special place that needs special care;
  - b) The Cairngorms National Park supports a thriving economy and vibrant local communities;
  - c) The Cairngorms National Park is a place to enjoy and get involved.
11. These reflect the 3 strategic objectives currently emerging in the next National Park Plan so that they can reinforce the outcomes of the Park Plan while delivering a consistent message about the National Park itself. It is important to remember that the 3 ‘themes’ are not the actual words/messages that we or others should use when communicating with particular audiences. Rather they are the impressions we want to leave with our target audiences about the Park using whatever language is most appropriate and engaging for the audience we are dealing with.
12. Our ultimate target audiences – those who we wish to reach to create a heightened level of awareness, closeness and responsibility remain the same:
- a) Visitors/potential visitors and people who enjoy the Park;
  - b) Residents and local businesses which make up our local communities;
  - c) Land managers in the Park;
  - d) Delivery partners including public sector partners, Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) and Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT);
  - e) Politicians, decision makers and influencers/opinion formers.
13. If we are to effectively engage with these audiences we must speak directly to people’s desires and interests. The vision and outcomes for the future set out in our next National Park Plan must illustrate what this will actually mean in terms of people’s quality of life so that people are inspired by a vision for a better way of life than we have just now.

### ***Implementation – Champions, Mechanisms, Guidance and Support***

14. To support this approach we will need to develop a variety of mechanisms which includes the establishment of ‘Cairngorms Champions’ who will help us reach the above audiences. Initially these ‘champions’ will be CNPA Board and staff members, Cairngorms National Park rangers, community liaison officers and community council representatives and some key delivery partners such as the CBP and COAT. By working through ‘champions’ we will benefit from the power of third-party endorsement, will reach new audiences through trusted and respected individuals and can create a greater voice for the Park through a wide range of passionate supporters.

**Digital Communications**

15. We are currently developing an online communications tool kit which will provide easy access to a range of support materials (presentations, photos, leaflets and stands), information, advice and guidance which should make communicating about the Park easier, consistent and more effective. The online tool kit will consist of a generic area accessible to anyone where useful information is regularly updated. In addition there will be areas on the website which have restricted access; a Park Rangers Forum, a Forum for local community representatives and a Board Forum for exclusive use by Board and staff. Materials and content for the tool kit is currently being developed with our communication partners and is expected to go live on our website by end March 2012. Once available it should make it easy for people to share their ideas and experiences and encourage them to 'talk up' and enthuse about the Park using consistent and high quality materials and information.
16. We will also continue to develop our website so that information about the Park is fresh and up to date and easy to access. We are working closely with the CBP to ensure our website supports and is supported by the VisitCairngorms.com website.
17. A social media plan is being prepared which will allow us to gradually build up the Park's profile on social media through a Park twitter account, professional twitter accounts relating to a topic of interest and twitter and Face Book accounts for various projects such as the wildcat project and junior rangers initiative. We are also creating a series of blogs. The Chief Executive blog will look at some of the more complex/controversial Park issues and David Green's and Brian Wood's newspaper columns will also be used as blogs on our website. Training in social media for Board members will be held during the first quarter of the year which will explain the approach we are taking, how we will monitor and engage with existing social media networks and what board members can do to help raise our profile through this medium. This will allow us to extend our reach particularly with the younger and harder to reach audiences.

**Stakeholder/Community Engagement and Events**

18. There are a number of people who have a strong interest and are actively involved in the Cairngorms National Park. It is important that we build constructive relationships with them so that they can support our work, particularly those who are identified delivery partners for the National Park Plan. A stakeholder engagement programme creates opportunities for us to engage with these people so that we can understand each other and work effectively together. This includes CNP discussion forums, ward forums and community council meetings, CNPA-led consultations, Ministerial visits and briefings and other events and media opportunities. (see Annex 3 - Forward Look for 2012)

### Campaigns

19. To help increase the sense of closeness and involvement of people in the Park we propose developing a small number of campaigns, to be delivered with our external partners, over the next few years. For example, as the Olympic Torch will travel through the Park in 2012 it is an ideal opportunity to inspire people to become more active. We are in discussion with partners about the development of an **Active Cairngorms** campaign to encourage more people to get active and enjoy the Park. This targeted initiative will improve people's health, boost business in local communities and provide people with a positive experience and emotional connection with the Park.
20. The year of Natural Scotland in 2013 provides us with the opportunity to promote the special qualities of the Park. **Celebrating Nature** is already an annual event delivered in partnership with Park rangers, Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage and others. It is proposed that a higher profile is given to this event in 2013 so that we can show case our conservation work including future initiatives identified in the National Park Plan such as the Futurescapes project, Woodland and Wetland expansion work and our Local Biodiversity Action Plan highlighting what benefits this will bring to improve people's lives along with opportunities for people to get involved and help make a difference. To give us time to get these initiatives off the ground it is proposed that this is launched in the Spring of 2013 with the support of our key delivery partners including Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the National Trust for Scotland and other estate and land managers in the Park.
21. Other campaigns such as **Park Aware** which is targeted at businesses and led by the CBP will be developed during 2012.

### Strengthening Communities

22. Our work with local communities over the last five years has focused on community consultation. We now have (with a few exceptions) a clear idea of what the priorities are for the communities in the National Park. Going forward the focus will be much more on delivering projects and addressing the main issues that have come out of the consultations in a more targeted fashion. We propose to do this in several ways:

#### **Planning, Development and Housing Issues:**

23. Coming through loud and clear from all the community engagement work is a frustration on the part of the communities around Planning (management, policy development and enforcement) and housing. As part of the CNPA Service Improvement Plan we are looking to deliver several actions to improve communications and relationships around these areas:

- a) We will identify a planning contact person for each of the Community Councils /Associations within the National Park;
- b) Create a forum for these planning contacts in order to clarify particular issues e.g. developer contributions, affordable housing, etc.;
- c) Create a developers forum to better support them in preparing high quality planning applications;
- d) We will pilot a planning awareness session with schools within the National Park to inform young people of the complexities of the system.

**Community Enterprise Project (Highland):**

24. This project builds on the work in Badenoch and Strathspey (Our Community a Way Forward and the complementary community support and development project). It will help communities to help themselves through a comprehensive learning and training programme over 36 months, aimed at developing the skills of the Community and Voluntary sector enabling the area's community organisations to become more sustainable, skilled and coordinated with other partners. The training will focus on three main themes: developing qualities of good community leadership in the area (confident, skilled, strategic and informed), identifying the projects that need/can be developed by communities (business planning) to improve local economies and teaching practical skills in generating income locally. The lead partner in the project is Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS).

**Supporting Development Trusts and Community Companies (Aberdeenshire, Highland, Perth and Kinross and Moray):**

25. Tomintoul and Glenlivet are looking at the potential of creating a Development Trust/Community Company to take forward the actions coming out of the economic regeneration study. We are also working closely with development trusts in Aberdeenshire in particular Ballater Royal Deeside that employs the Deeside Donside Development Manager and Perth and Kinross (Glenshee).

**Volunteering Initiative**

26. As part of the next National Park Plan an area of work that is expected to be developed is an initiative which brings together a range of partners from all sectors to promote and co-ordinate volunteering opportunities as a means of building a stronger connection with the Park and a mechanism that allows people to get involved in caring for the special qualities. This is work that will need to be developed once the consultation process has been completed and the National Park Plan finalised in agreement with our delivery partners.

**Role of Board Members**

27. Board members play a critical role in helping to build positive and strong relationships with our target audiences – particularly within our local communities

and with influencers and opinion formers. Our stakeholder engagement plan identifies which Board members are able to support particular events or activities and through the communication tool kit and other support it is hoped the Board will be able to take a more proactive role in promoting the Park and addressing issues raised with identified audiences.

28. In addition it is proposed that a small group of Board members and representatives from key partner organisations meet periodically and advise on implementation and development of the Communications and Engagement Programme. This proposal requires further consideration and will be influenced by the development of the next National Park Plan and its delivery mechanisms and will be brought back to the Board in due course.

## **Implications**

### ***Financial Implications***

29. This programme of work will be part of the next Corporate Plan 2012-2015 for the CNPA. Funding, where possible, will also be levered in through campaigns and programmes of work which will be delivered in partnership with Local Authorities, SEARs (Scottish Environment and Rural Services), COAT and the CBP.

### ***Presentational Implications***

30. The emphasis of the Communications and Engagement Programme is to raise the profile of the Park and secure greater involvement of partner organisations and individuals through greater use of the Brand identity, working with communication champions and use of various mechanisms. This will mean that the profile of the CNPA may be less prominent but an engagement programme focused on the key influencers and decision makers will ensure our role is understood and appreciated.

### ***Implications for Stakeholders***

31. This approach will increase the involvement of identified stakeholders who can play a particular role in raising the profile of the Park and can benefit from being involved.

## **Next Steps**

32. The next Corporate Plan will incorporate this Communications and Engagement Programme of work allocating appropriate resources to deliver the identified outcomes and will be presented to the Board for final approval in March 2012.
33. Prepare a resources package to continue community support and development across the Park (2012-2015) - specifically: Voluntary Action Badenoch Strathspey Action project (Highland and Perth and Kinross/Blair Atholl), Deeside Donside Development Project (Aberdeenshire, Angus Glens and Perth and Kinross/Glenshee)

plus a development worker for Moray (Tomintoul and Glenlivet) details to come back to the finance committee in February.

34. The next National Park Plan will refer to the partnership initiatives identified in this programme of work to gain support and commitment from partner organisations. Further discussion about the delivery of the Communications and Engagement programme and how this will fit with existing/new advisory and delivery groups will be brought back to the Board with a recommended way forward.
35. The online communications tool kit along with Board online forum will be launched along with appropriate training for Board members by March 2012.

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