
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: The Role of Training in the Delivery of the National Park Plan

**Prepared by: Claire Ross, Education and Inclusion Manager
Murray Ferguson, Head of Visitor Services and Recreation**

Purpose

This paper considers how the National Park Authority (CNPA) should take forward its role in the development of training within the Park, building on the significant success of both the Land Based Business Training Project (LBBTP) and Cairngorms Awareness and Pride (CAP) Projects. It is proposed that there are several key areas of activity where the CNPA should now focus its efforts and a number of principles that underline how CNPA should develop this area of work.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) **Approve the key training themes identified in Table I as the basis for further developmental work with partners leading to the preparation of funding applications;**
- b) **Approve the guiding principles identified in para 15 to provide a steer to staff in taking forwards the training agenda within the Park.**

Executive Summary

The very visible success of LBBT and CAP Projects has been a great asset in putting the emerging Cairngorms National Park and the Park Authority on the map and in delivering the National Park Plan. Looking forwards, and on the back of the most recent evaluation of the projects (Hecla/Roberts 2009), it is important to review the current role of the CNPA and how it ensures that there is appropriate skills development and learning to help achieve short and long term objectives in creating a first class National Park. LBBT and CAP Projects have served several functions above and beyond providing just training: Developing positive relationships with Land Based Businesses, creating a platform for getting important messages about the special management needs of the Park across and inspiring people about the special place they work and live in. This paper reviews what areas of training are required in the Park, considers audiences and how best to advance the preparation of appropriate project proposals.

THE ROLE OF TRAINING IN DELIVERY OF THE NATIONAL PARK PLAN – FOR DECISION

Introduction

- I. The National Park Authority has led the development of two significant training projects within the Park in the last five years:
 - a) The Land Based Business Training (LBBT) Project – has two main aims, firstly to support land based businesses (i.e. any business that involves the use and/or management of land in the National Park) to grow and operate more

sustainably. Secondly, to enable those businesses to contribute more effectively to the delivery of the statutory aims of the National Park.

- b) The Cairngorms Awareness and Pride (CAP) Project – was piloted after identification of a market gap: there was nobody offering training for the broader community which delivered the Park’s aims (Board Paper 2005). The project encourages beneficiaries to learn about the Park and help deliver its aims.
2. Both projects have been evaluated and reviewed on several occasions, most recently in June 2009. The projects have both been a significant success. LBBT Project has supported training for 3,410 people from in and around the National Park between 2004 and 2008 at a cost of around £950k with CNPA contributing approximately 45% of the costs. The split of spend between East and West, is approximately 43% East and 57% West. In 2007 and 2008 the CAP project provided training to 544 people in total at a cost of £53,888 (excluding staff costs). Again the Park Authority contribution was approximately 45%.
3. A paper was taken to the Finance Committee (May 2008) to confirm the CNPA’s contribution in principle for the current funding cycle. It was highlighted that the projects will come to significant change in the nature of their external funding within the next year and it is therefore timely to take stock of how CNPA should move forwards in this important area of activity. At this stage it is not necessary to take firm decisions about the future of the projects but a broad steer is required about the most appropriate role to be played by CNPA in skills and training activity. If the recommendations are accepted further proposals will be submitted to the Finance Committee in due course.
4. In this paper the term “training” is used to mean the development of skills, confidence and learning in others. It is important to note that significant work has been done on the CNPA’s role in regard to the formal education sector (Cairngorms in the curriculum) and an ongoing work plan is currently being delivered.

The Role of CNPA in Delivering Training in the National Park

5. Training in all its different forms is a key mechanism in achieving 15 of the National Strategic Outcomes in the Scottish Government’s Performance Framework, specifically:
 - “We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people” (Outcome 2)
 - “We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation” (Outcome 3)
 - “We have strong resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others” (Outcome 11)
6. Within the National Park the provision of training has been a key area of activity which helps encourage and equip people with the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to contribute in effectively delivering the Vision set out in the National Park

Plan. Training is relevant to all seven priorities for action in the Park Plan but especially to the three below:

- a) **Integrated Public Support for Land Management.** More coordinated advice and training to assist support of public benefits. Advice and information networks to provide good practice and support management.
- b) **Making Tourism and Business more Sustainable.** Creating effective mechanisms for two-way communication with business stakeholders.
- c) **Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park.** Specifically training on the special qualities of the Park for residents and for those working with visitors.

It is also important to note that training has also been delivered on the emerging Low Carbon/climate change themes, both raising awareness and exploring practical solutions.

7. The training activity helps achieve the strategic objectives in the Park Plan (under Learning and Understanding) as summarised in **Annex I**. A focus on training has also facilitated some very positive engagement with the land management and business communities in a way that meets their immediate and medium term needs, providing people living and working within the National Park with some significant advantages. Training is also an important lever of change for CNPA with these groups and this is especially important when so much of the Park is privately owned and managed. The training projects also complement very effectively CNPA's other work with land-based businesses and communities, for example the work done to ease access to funding through the Scotland Rural Development Programme.
8. The evaluation of the two projects, undertaken in 2009 by Hecla/ Roberts, concluded that they:
".....have been successful in generating a wide range of local impacts across the Cairngorms National Park in terms of skills and learning, networking and capacity building".
9. The Report draws particular attention to the very significant degree of industry engagement developed by the projects and reflects positively on their purpose-built design to address the strategic priority actions with the Park Plan. Contributions from private businesses have been substantial, thus reducing the impact on private funding. A summary of conclusions for the Report is attached at **Annex 2**.
10. However, looking to the future of CNPA's work on training, the Helca/Roberts Report also recommends:
 - a) Ensuring there is a training framework that helps to deliver the main priorities within the Park Plan;
 - b) Linking the training work that the CNPA supports more effectively to relevant national and regional skills development and training strategies;
 - c) Creating closer working relationships with main public sector partners involved in skills development and training delivery;
 - d) Developing a more structured and integrated programme of training (a more modular approach for certain areas of training, potential accreditation); and
 - e) Developing a more rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating any training projects (with more emphasis on gauging longer term impacts).

11. In addition, the Hecla/Roberts report proposed four options on future development of CNPA's role in training. Three of these options can be rejected for the reasons described below:
 - a) Maintain the status quo – rejected as it is not capable of being sustained by CNPA due to the high cost and likely changes to match funding;
 - b) Withdraw completely from a training role – rejected for poor strategic fit with organisational priorities and lack of available alternatives, particularly to influence the land management community; and
 - c) Adopt a reduced role in training, focused solely on public benefits courses and linked most significantly to the strategic priority of Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park – rejected for too narrow a focus and lack of engagement with priority communities.

12. The remaining option was to develop a new role in training, with CNPA leading the development of a more strategic approach that supports training development in delivering the main actions within the Park Plan. This new approach should be based on a wider, more active skills development and training partnership, linking individuals, organisations and training across the Park to deliver training more effectively and in the context of a National Park.

13. In order to assist consideration of the way forwards a staff workshop was convened in October 2009 to help identify those areas of activity where an emphasis on the development of skills or learning through training would be particularly important to deliver the National Park Plan. In discussion with staff and some Board members four broad training themes emerged, as described in **Table I**.

14. In considering these themes CNPA staff and external partners with a training remit feel that the CNPA should have a key role in ensuring that there is quality training related to the strategic objectives and actions within the current and future Park Plans. Many also felt that the CNPA should not support financially much in the way of generic training (e.g. ICT, administration, first aid, etc.) that might be better delivered through other channels (e.g. Business Gateway, Learning Centres, etc.).

Guiding principles

15. In developing the project proposals it would also be useful for the Board to agree a number of guiding principles that will be used to shape the development of future proposals. The following principles have been developed on the basis of the Hecla/Roberts Report and on discussions with staff, some Board members and external agencies:
 - a) CNPA should focus on adding value to the training activity provided by others linking it more clearly to the priorities for action within the Park Plan and the special management needs of the National Park;
 - b) CNPA's role should generally focus on acting as a broker for training, bringing together appropriate expertise and beneficiaries and signposting and promoting training events delivered by others (that contribute to the aims of the National Park) rather than trying to provide training directly.

- c) Where there is a gap existing provision (particularly in the identified themes in **Table I**) the CNPA should take a proactive lead role in ensuring the appropriate skills development and training is delivered.
- d) There should continue to be significant emphasis in the development of skills and learning on the needs of the land-based businesses in the Park.
- e) CNPA should take steps to develop more effective relationships with public sector agencies involved in training provision: to make best use of resources, minimise duplication and identify gaps in the skills market more effectively.
- f) CNPA should ensure all training is readily available to the groups that can make most impact in delivering actions within the Park Plan, and that proper support measures are put in place to minimise any barriers to uptake (timing, childcare, location, etc.)
- g) CNPA should try to ensure that all training taking place in the National Park is placed in the context of the National Park and that opportunities to deliver key messages about the significance of the Park are highlighted.
- h) Training events should be designed to maximise other more intangible benefits that have proved invaluable in the past: (e.g. networking opportunities, bringing diverse and sometimes conflicting groups together to work on specific challenges, creating ambassadors for the National Park, etc.).

Recommendation:

16. That the Board:

- a) **Approve the key training themes identified in Table I as the basis for further developmental work with partners leading to the preparation of funding applications;**
- b) **Approve the guiding principles identified in paragraph 15 to provide a steer to staff in taking forward the training agenda within the Park.**

Table I: Key training themes and audiences for future activity

Key Training Theme	Scope	Key Audiences
I. Sustainability and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Promote adaptation for climate change e.g. new woodlands, habitat connectivity, flood management. b) Waste Management: e.g. composting and recycling. c) Energy efficiency and renewable energy generation e.g. energy mapping and insulation projects. d) Renewable energy e.g. support for supply side accreditation training. e) Low carbon land management. e.g. "Farming for a Better Climate", renewables and wood fuel. f) Promoting sustainable travel e.g. through path networks and community-based transport schemes g) Improvement of environmental performance for businesses. h) Local food and drink production and allotments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Land based businesses b) Businesses (tourism and non tourism) c) Communities within the Park (geographical, of interest and identity i.e. young people)
2. A Special Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The special qualities of the National Park and their land management requirements e.g. biodiversity, cultural heritage etc. b) Connecting people with place: e.g. the natural environment, iconic wildlife and the cultural heritage. c) Linking businesses, land managers and communities together around the identity of the Park and its special qualities. Developing appropriate leadership and management skills to do that. d) Identifying future research needs and sharing research results with practitioners [potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Land based businesses b) Businesses (tourism and non tourism) c) Communities within the Park (geographical ,of interest and identity)

	link to the Knowledge Transfer Partnership currently being led by UHI CMS]	
3. Respect the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Programmes of activity for people interacting with visitors and recreational users to the Park to encourage messages of appropriate and responsible behaviour in relation to land management activities and environmental interests b) Scottish Outdoor Access Code, Leave no trace, etc c) Getting the best out of the Planning system in the Park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) land-based businesses, activity providers and countryside managers b) communities within the Park
4. Park Aware programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The development of a “Park Aware” programme is already being developed by the Cairngorms Business Partnership, funded by CNPA and others. b) The intention is to pull together the business-focused work on how to maximise the benefits of being part of the National Park. This will review past work such as the Cairngorms Connections courses and customer care training provided for the tourism industry and develop fresh proposals. c) Once available these proposals could form part of future training project to be delivered by and for businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Land based businesses b) Businesses (tourism and non tourism) c) Communities within the Park (geographical, of interest and identity i.e. young people)

Delivering Sustainability

17. Training can significantly enhance moves towards sustainability. The proposed key training themes in Table I focus very much on offering sustainable solutions to audiences that can make the most impact on the environment (e.g. land managers, local businesses and residents). Focusing on business development supports the aspiration for a vibrant, sustainable economy sensitive to the unique qualities of the National Park.

Delivering a Park for All

18. It is important to ensure that barriers to training are removed where possible. The CNPA has a commitment to provide training in accessible venues and to cater for specific attendee requirements. The HECLA/Roberts Report has underlined the importance of providing training opportunities for young people as a key element of maintaining flourishing communities and economy in the future.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

19. A more joined-up partnership approach to training in the Cairngorms National Park means a more streamlined targeting of resources, and less duplication of effort. Focusing on a narrower range of training opportunities in more depth, to a more focussed range of audiences should deliver more impact in the long term.

Implications

Financial Implications

20. If the above recommendations are accepted the Training Manager and Education and Inclusion Manager will develop a range of funding options to the Finance Committee. Potential funding sources include: various European funding streams including Leonardo and the North West Europe programme. Other alternatives include, SRDP and Leader. To date CNPA commitment to the project has been approximately £80,000 per annum. It is anticipated that any commitment to future training might be of a similar level.

Presentational Implications

21. Some concern has been expressed over “raised expectations” in relation to training support across the Park and there is a need to manage this in a way that does not lessen the impact of the achievements generated to this point by the previous success of the training projects. This relates in particular to more generic training that the training projects have previously supported e.g. ICT, first aid, etc. Good communications about changes in provision with existing beneficiaries of the projects, particularly land managers is essential.

Next steps

22. The next steps are:

- a) Convene a meeting with skills development and training partners to start to build better relations and to coordinate who delivers what and how.
- b) Put together a funding strategy based on the themes in Table I and the Guiding Principles outlined in the paper.

- c) Take detailed project proposal to the Finance Committee.

Claire Ross
Murray Ferguson

claireross@cairngorms.co.uk
murrayferguson@cairngorms.co.uk

Annex I: Strategic Objectives in the National Park Plan (under Learning and Understanding) in which training activity has a particularly strong role to play

a) Increase the awareness and understanding of the Park's special qualities and the management needed to sustain and enhance them.

Understanding the special qualities and management needs of the Park is vital to the enjoyment, sustainable development and long-term future of it. While much is known about some special qualities, there are many gaps in our collective knowledge. Increasing awareness of the management needs across sectors will help the integrated approach needed to deliver the vision of the Park.

b) Seek and share experience and knowledge from the management of other areas in Scotland and the world.

There is a wide range of experience in managing protected areas around the world and managing other rural areas in Scotland. Many other areas face similar challenges to the park and everyone involved in it should continually look to identify good practice. They should also learn from experience elsewhere to inform management tailored to the particular circumstances of the park. The transfer of experience to and from the Par is vital in informing Scottish and international debate about resource management, land-use and rural development.

g) Ensure that the Park is a place where both scientific and traditional forms of knowledge about the land and its management are valued and put to good use in the long-term future.

There is a significant amount of scientific data on certain aspects of the Cairngorms and there is a wealth of knowledge amongst those that have lived and worked in the area. It is important that future management draws on the full range of the knowledge using the best available information from scientific study and formal monitoring together with the experience of people that have lived and worked in the area.

h) Increase the mutual understanding and trust amongst people interested in the Park through exchange of ideas, perspectives and knowledge.

The successful management of the Park in the long-term relies on a mutual understanding of the needs and priorities of different interests and a trust between them in sharing information and working together to resolve potentially conflicting objectives. Communication and exchange of ideas, different perspectives and individual knowledge is the key to developing this understanding and trust and to ensuring that future management is based on well informed and constructive debate. This will require amongst other things the formation of appropriate inter-disciplinary groups and skilled facilitation.

i) Ensure that people across Scotland are aware of the Cairngorms National Park and understand why it is worth investing in.

The Park is a national asset and information about the Park, its management and the opportunities for enjoying it should be widely available to everyone in Scotland and beyond. The park has many important natural and cultural heritage qualities and it is important to develop understanding at a national level of its value, international status and management needs, in turn the management of the Park should be informed by national perspectives.

Annex 2: Summary conclusions* from the Evaluation Report by Hecla Consulting and David Roberts Associates, June 2009

8.2 **The key conclusion from this evaluation is that the LBBT and CAP initiatives have been successful in generating a wide range of local impacts across the Cairngorms National Park area in terms of skills and learning, networking and capacity building.**

8.3 There has been a positive response from beneficiaries of each initiative across the Park and from partners on the outputs that have been achieved so far. In addition, the outputs generated by both initiatives have been achieved in a cost-effective manner and with value for money in the use of CNPA resources evident across a range of parameters.

8.4 This conclusion is based on our analysis of the evidence reviewed during the course of this evaluation, a survey of LBBT and CAP beneficiaries and from consultations with a number of principal stakeholders.

In particular, it reflects:

8.5 *The Rationale for both Initiatives*

8.5.1 Prior evaluation evidence in particular from participants, shows that:

- The training initiatives have addressed the needs of the target audience, and are well managed and delivered which have resulted in positive effects on those involved.
- The overall effectiveness and efficiency of LLBT and CAP including the effectiveness of management delivery is well recognised by participants and other stakeholders.
- The need and importance for setting LLBT and CAP onto a stronger, longer term and more strategic footing is recognised and agreed as the way forward in the reviewed documentation.

8.6 *Strategic fit*

8.6.1 The following is evident in terms of strategic fit:

- The activities supported through both initiatives have provided good strategic alignment with NPP priorities. They are valued by target audiences and there is some emerging evidence of strategic benefits accruing to the local business community from participation in both initiatives.
- The need to engage in a positive and proactive manner with the land management community is an essential strategic requirement for the CNPA and the LBBT initiative has been a valuable mechanism in achieving this and in generating a strong foundation for future developmental work in this area.

- Integrated support for land managers is a Park Plan priority and increasing the inter-action between stakeholder groups is valuable outcome that is unlikely to have been achieved in such an effective manner without the direct intervention of the LBBT and CAP initiatives.
- The shifting roles and responsibilities among public agencies, particularly in relation to the new skills and business support agenda bring with them the need for CNPA to consider how it might work differently and more within partnership arrangements in the future.
- Strategic dialogue between CNPA and its main public sector partners needs to be strengthened to enable a more ‘joined-up’ approach to be adopted in the future for the delivery of skills and training services across the Park area, particularly when resource constraints are emerging across the public sector in Scotland.

8.7 Cost effectiveness

8.7.1 The analysis of the available reporting data shows:

- Expenditures made on skills and training activities associated with the LBBT and CAP initiatives have been cost-effective in relation to training outcomes, particularly in relation to the direct expenditures incurred by CNPA.
- However, it is not wholly apparent at this stage whether these skills and training outcomes will have any longer term effects on business performance within the Park and on the overall skills profile of the economically active population resident within the area.

8.8 Assessment of impacts

8.8.1 The principal impacts include:

- The LBBT and CAP initiatives have contributed to significant progress towards NPP priorities notably integrating public support for land management and raising awareness and understanding of the Park.
- The level of success in terms of generating demand from businesses has exceeded the expectations of those involved from its inception. This progress has been achieved in an area – engaging with LBB’s and local communities to invest in life long learning - which is extremely challenging.
- Participation in both initiatives has generated a high degree of ‘goodwill’ for the CNPA and this will be an important factor in the configuration and management of future support and development programmes within the Park area.
- Social capital factors have been enhanced across the Park due to the activities undertaken through LBBT and CAP with a number of existing/new networks

strengthened/or established between businesses and individuals across all of the National Park area.

- The assessment of quantitative impact on business competitiveness and other factors such as the 'economic viability' of the local business base is not possible at this time. In some cases it is too early to judge: notably, the benefits of the investment on skills and training activity on business competitiveness and economic viability. In other cases it is impossible to measure quantitatively changes in business culture and overall attitudes to investing in people. However, over time such qualitative changes in attitude and approach to skills and learning will undoubtedly underpin a sustainable future for the people living and working in the Cairngorms National Park.
- On reflection the primary aim of LBBT to "*help land-based businesses in the National Park to become more economically viable through giving them training support...*" was over ambitious. In addition, the lack of sufficiently SMART objectives in relation to this particular aim has compounded the problem of measuring competitiveness factors in terms of this evaluation. Operationally, LBBT was essentially demand-led and this in reality required a pragmatic and flexible operational approach to performance measurement. However, it is likely that similar initiatives in the future based on a partnership approach will demand a more outcome focused performance measurement system that will provide alignment between aims, objectives and outcomes.
- The role of the CNPA has been appropriate and valued in the perspective of public sector stakeholders interested in the development and implementation of policy associated with skills and learning within the Park. At a time when the thrust of policy has been to encourage skills development and learning in their broadest senses, CNPA has helped set the foundation for a future skills agenda for the land based sector across all areas of the Park. This is a very positive outcome.

8.9 Skills and learning in the Park - Options for the future

- 8.9.1 A key part of this evaluation contract was to assess options for the future delivery of skills and learning support within the Park. From the evaluation results and the conclusions set out above there are a limited number of realistic and practical options by which CNPA can effectively engage in an effective and efficient manner with this sector of developmental support in the future. The next section sets out the detail of these available options.

*** Full copies of the report (54 pages) are available on request to Claire Ross**