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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DECISION

**Title:** Landscape Framework Update

**Prepared by:** Frances Thin, Landscape Adviser

### **Purpose**

To provide an update on the Landscape Framework and propose a project brief (appendix I).

### **Recommendations**

That the board

- a) Note the update
- b) Endorse and approve the project brief
- c) Endorse the formation of the Board Steering Group (Sue Walker, Duncan Bryden, Eleanor MacIntosh, Lucy grant)

### **Executive Summary**

This paper provides an update on the Landscape Framework. It explains the strategic context, introduces the model that is being developed, and describes the key building blocks. The draft Project Brief is referred to in this paper and is tabled as appendix I.

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## LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK UPDATE – FOR DECISION

### Introduction to the Landscape Framework

1. **What is it for?** Ultimately the purpose of the Landscape Framework is about conserving and enhancing the special qualities and addressing the range of values that different people attach to the National park. The Landscape Framework will allow us to look at a part of the park, or the whole park, and using areas that make sense geographically and culturally, plan for change.
2. **What is it?** The CNP Landscape Framework will be a spatial tool used to address complex issues at a variety of scales. The basic structure of the Framework will be provided by the landscape character assessment (LCA) as this incorporates both geographical influences and an understanding of place. GIS will be an essential aspect of the Framework.
3. **What is it not?** The Landscape Framework is not a specific site-based set of proposals such as one might find attached to a planning application, nor is it about managing ecological processes at a habitat scale.
4. **How will it be used?** It will be used by CNPA in our planning and development work, it is the missing layer in the work we do. It will allow us, and others, to be more strategic, coherent and integrated in our approach to issues such as renewable energy generation, woodland expansion and other programmes such as land management support.

### Background and Policy Context

#### *Supporting the Scottish Government's Strategic Priorities*

5. The first and primary aim of the National parks in Scotland is to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area. The concept of landscape encompasses both natural and cultural heritage, and being about people as well as place, it offers a great opportunity to contribute to all 4 aims and make an important and positive contribution to the economic, cultural and social well-being of Scotland.
6. The Landscape Framework will be developed within the existing legislation and administrative systems. It will fulfil the requirements of the European Landscape Convention (2006) by encouraging the active participation of stakeholders to:
  - a) improve current landscape practice
  - b) fulfil the objectives to raise awareness
  - c) identify and assess landscapes and landscape change
  - d) set landscape quality objectives
  - e) implement landscape policies.
7. Improving the natural environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it, is one of the Scottish Government's strategic objectives. Consistent with this is a clear move towards the management of land for a range of public benefit objectives, the well being of an area and the maintenance and creation of high quality places. The Landscape Framework fits comfortably within this context.

### ***Delivering the Park Plan and Corporate Plan***

8. The Landscape Framework will contribute to all the Park Plan Strategic Objectives for Landscape, built and cultural heritage but most significantly to
  - a) Maintaining and enhancing the distinctive landscapes across the park
  - b) Raising awareness and understanding of the influences of natural processes, land management and culture on the landscape character.
  
9. The corporate plan describes the Landscape Framework as an achievement that will mean that future planning and management decisions can be proactive and integrated across the park's area. This is a key tool to address the potential conflicts and tensions inherent in managing a variety of natural and cultural resources to achieve sustainable growth within the park.

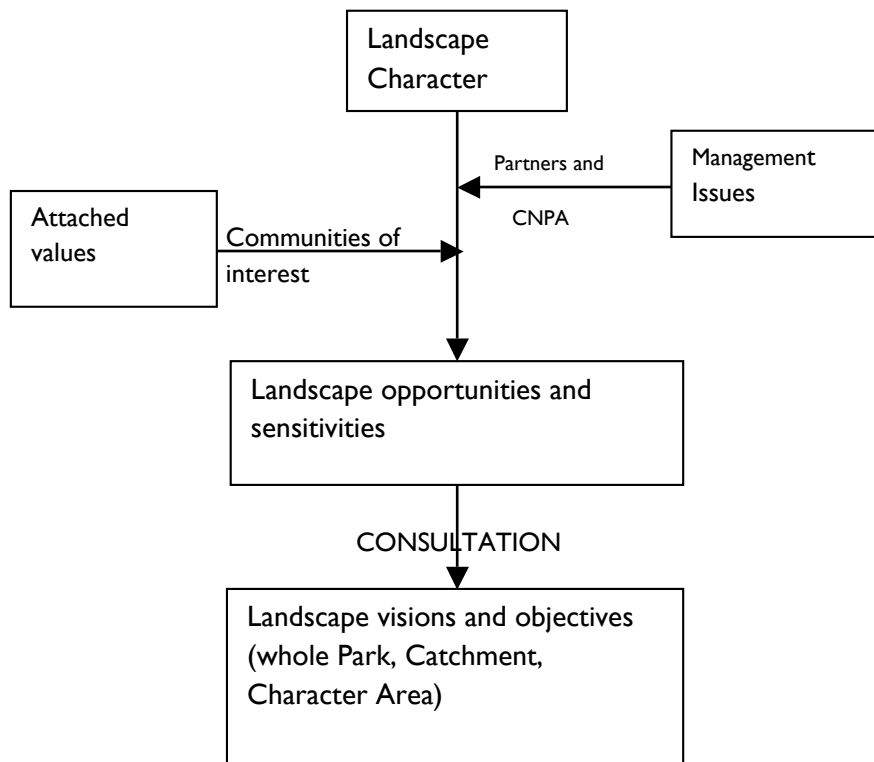
### **The Model**

10. In response to this strategic context the model that is being developed for the Landscape Framework will;
  - a) Consider all landscapes in the park, NSAs and elsewhere. It will be local landscape character-led and land management-driven.
  - b) Consider both the natural and cultural components of the landscape
  - c) Seek to deliver a tool that facilitates the practical integration of a range of expectations and outcomes for any given area of land in the park.
  - d) Provide a tool that supports decision-making relating to settlements, as well as the park's countryside areas. The quality of settlements in the park influences the experience of the wider landscape and the experience of the majority of people who live in the park.
  - e) Recognise that landscapes evolve. The Landscape Framework will respond to issues such as climate change, economics and demographics with the aim of facilitating positive landscape change whilst maintaining and enhancing its distinctive character. Specifically the Landscape Framework will be helpful in addressing some of the major challenges presented by current and future climate change mitigation, including an increase in the area of woodland, the balance between moorland and forest, flood storage and renewable energy developments.
  - f) Raise awareness and respect the range of values that people have for their landscapes.
  - g) Be inclusive in its approaches to engagement, consultation and communication.
  - h) Provide material to support evidence-based landscape policies, as objectives and actions within the Park Plan and as general and area-based policies in the Local Plan.
  - i) Provide source material for CNP strategies on land use, interpretation etc  
The LF will identify those areas where the landscape is sensitive to a particular land use change or where there are opportunities for landscape enhancement through land use change. Landscape sensitivity/opportunity will be established according to the positive or negative effects on the special qualities of the park and the landscape character of the area. The LCA identifies the landscape characteristics and landscape experience of individual landscape character areas. These could form the basis for interpretation of the local area, or using the Landscape Framework one could look at selected

characteristics across the whole park identifying areas where for example prehistoric land use and settlement, or glacial deposits, are readily experienced in the landscape.

### A Flexible Framework (see diagram)

11. The Landscape Framework will have 3 key building blocks; landscape character, land management issues, and the values that people attach to their landscapes. These three building blocks can be considered as 'the landscape of an area and what makes it distinctive', 'the requirements of, and pressures on, the land' and 'some of the public benefits gained' from that bit of the park.
12. Each building block will have several different components and employ a range of processes to pull these together.



### Landscape Character

13. Landscape character gives the basic structure using the landscape character areas. These areas can be grouped or organised in a variety of ways to ensure compatibility of data/information and a scale that is appropriate to practical action in whatever context.

### Management Issues

14. Much of the character of a landscape is determined by how that landscape is, and has been, managed over time. To understand how a landscape may change in the future

means understanding something of the past land use but also the strategies, issues and policies that will influence future land management. This will include climate change and in particular climate change mitigation, the national land use strategy, SRDP, biodiversity programmes and projects. Informed by discussions with land managers, colleagues and partners, the output from this element will be a distilling out of the possible landscape consequences for a range of management issues.

## **Community Values**

15. The information we collect as part of this building block will give us an insight into how people value the landscapes of the park, and where possible what they value and where. We do not have the resources to undertake a statistically valid park-wide piece of research but we do have the opportunity to 'piggy back' on (and contribute to) the Park Plan consultation process, and the resource to design and undertake some engagement with key groups across the park. We will also be able to trawl existing sources (community needs assessments, visitor surveys etc) for relevant information.

## **Landscape Sensitivities and Opportunities**

16. An analysis of the above landscape assets, issues and values will enable us to identify landscape sensitivities and opportunities. The process will be an iterative one, judgements will inevitably have to be made but these will always be accompanied by an explanation of criteria and assumptions. These will be presented at a park-wide, catchment or individual landscape character area scale.
17. By way of a fictional example; imagine a landscape character area where the determining characteristics are the open strath, meandering river and views to nearby hills, the evidence of early cultivation on side slopes and a prominent lodge set in a designed landscape. The community consultation and engagement exercises revealed that the public value the open views along the strath to the hills and see the lodge and its specimen trees as a local landmark. The area is currently in permanent pasture and is lightly grazed. Future management pressures in an area like this might be for increased riparian woodland planting, cropping, or wetland expansion. Of these three, the latter two options present opportunities that would work without adversely affecting the landscape character or its local importance.
18. The options that are most appropriate in any one LCA would of course be influenced by what is happening in adjoining areas, by strategic priorities for land management and other interests such as tourism. Considering an individual character area and its sensitivities and opportunities in the context of surrounding areas will be possible using GIS mapping techniques, and this will provide some of the basic documentation for discussion with partners and wider consultation.

## **Delivering Sustainability**

19. The Landscape Framework with its emphasis on the landscape resource, users and management, effectively straddles the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability. The process of delivering the Landscape Framework will engender a greater awareness and sense of collective ownership. The availability of the

framework will make for more sustainable decision-making for both CNPA and partners. For example by providing the evidence and support for high quality mitigation proposals in a situation where a development has significant social and economic benefits.

### ***Delivering a Park For All***

20. The process of building and delivering the Landscape Framework will raise the awareness, expectations and confidence of our partners and the public to have their say and to contribute themselves to the conservation and enhancement of the landscapes of the National Park.

### ***Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency***

21. Having the Landscape Framework in place will streamline some processes and facilitate integration and effective decision-making. For example we can be more strategic about landscape inputs to the local plan and casework advice, we can advise on the targeting of SRDP measures or on the development of new measures. It is also highly likely that the preparation of the framework will reveal opportunities, not just for the landscape conservation and enhancement, but also for associated development and marketing initiatives at both a local and strategic scale.

### ***Financial Implications***

22. Developing and producing the Landscape Framework will take time, resources and commitment from the CNPA and its key partners. A bid allocation is identified in next years financial plan to support the activities outlined in the draft project brief and project plan for the year 2010/11. This will principally cover for the out-sourcing of elements of the community engagement work. In addition Frances Thin will be spending a minimum of 2 days a week on this work and there will be substantial input required from other CNPA staff, particularly from HLM staff.

### ***Presentational Implications***

23. Building a Landscape Framework for the Park ensures that the CNPA is striving for joint up thinking in its processes and integration in its outcomes. It will allow the CNPA and partners to capitalise on the resources that the park has to offer and make it easier for people to value and enjoy the built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.
24. For example we will be able to identify those landscapes where historic land use and settlement play a key role in determining character, the landscapes people like to look at and those they like to be in, those areas of the park where the landscape character is dominated by woodland or a sense of wildness, where the views out are a critical part of the character within.
25. Using this kind of park-wide landscape knowledge we can focus our management efforts and those of others, reveal opportunities for education, interpretation, access and promotion and help more people to get more enjoyment from the park.

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

26. For our local authority and agency partners the notion of managing landscapes is not new but the degree of integration, discussion and consultation sought will require dedicated input. Good communication will be essential to facilitate productive

partnership working. For community stakeholders much of this will be new. There is a major challenge in designing and developing the engagement process to be inclusive but not too resource-intensive.

### **Key Questions for the Board**

27. The issues involved in the Landscape Framework are clearly complex. In the light of this it would be helpful if board members could consider;
- a) How we best communicate our intentions?
  - b) How we get the relevant communities of interest on board?

### **Next Steps**

28. The next steps are:
- a) as detailed in the project brief and project plan,
  - b) submit full project plan to Board Steering Group by end January 2010
  - c) return to the CNPA board with progress report in June 2010

### **Recommendations**

29. That the board:
- a) Note the update
  - b) Approve the project brief
  - c) Endorse and approve the project plan
  - d) Endorse the formation of the Board Steering Group (Sue Walker, Duncan Bryden, Eleanor MacIntosh, Lucy grant)

**Frances Thin**  
**January 2010**

francesthin@cairngorms.co.uk