
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DISCUSSION

Title: CAIRNGORM AND GLENMORE STRATEGY

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Purpose

To discuss the consultation responses for the Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy and the direction for completion of the strategy.

Recommendations

- a) **The Board is asked to consider the consultation report and discuss the proposed direction for the strategy.**

CAIRNGORM AND GLENMORE STRATEGY – FOR DISCUSSION

Strategic Context

1. The current National Park Partnership Plan sets out a focus on the future strategy for this area of the Park. The Cairngorm and Glenmore Partnership was formed in 2014 comprising CNPA, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Forest Enterprise Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Highland Council. The purpose of the Partnership is to co-ordinate future management of the land in public ownership at Cairngorm and Glenmore, and a long term strategy is the first step in developing a more co-ordinated approach. CNPA is leading development of the strategy on behalf of the Partnership.

Public Consultation on Draft Strategy

2. The public consultation ran from 1st December 2015 to 8th March 2016. The consultation report is attached at Annex I. In summary there were 60 formal responses (17 organisations and 43 individuals), 50 people attended a community drop-in event in Aviemore, 35 people attended a Cairngorms Business Partnership consultation event and we received 28 completed visitor questionnaires from on-site businesses.
3. We have held follow up meetings to discuss the consultation results with on-site businesses (10th May) and NGOs (9th June).

Key themes from consultation

4. Overall the consultation responses:
 - a) Endorse the need to have a clear and co-ordinated strategy for this area;
 - b) Reinforce the central challenge of improving facilities and visitor experience whilst maintaining the distinctive feel of the area;
 - c) Encourage the partnership to set a bold long term direction – especially in relation to transport;
 - d) Ask us to articulate more clearly how the conservation and visitor goals for this area are actively managed and reconciled;
 - e) Ask us to be clearer in setting out what changes we want to see on the ground.
5. There are divergent views expressed on:
 - a) Whether we should encourage or discourage more people coming to this area;
 - b) Reducing facilities or investing in expanded provision;
 - c) Whether the conservation and visitor objectives can be reconciled.

6. There is a consistent level of support demonstrated for:
 - a) Improving public transport and car parking;
 - b) Increasing ranger service provision and better co-ordination of visitor management and promoting responsible behaviour;
 - c) Improving the path network;
 - d) Improving the facilities and public space, particularly signage and littering;
 - e) Improving outdoor learning opportunities

Direction for completing the strategy

7. The Cairngorm and Glenmore Partnership have agreed to complete the strategy for approval in September. In addition to addressing the detailed points of the consultation responses as set out in the attached report, the partnership are intending to produce a short high level strategy that:
 - a) Maintains the vision and four key themes set out in the draft (conservation, visitor experience, rural development, outdoor learning);
 - b) Sets more clearly the wider context of the National Park Partnership Plan and associated strategies – particularly Cairngorms Nature, Active Cairngorms, Economic Strategy and the Capercaillie Framework;
 - c) Sets out more clearly the parameters including designated sites and conservation value, and the commercial lease of the Cairngorm Mountain area;
 - d) Articulates a bolder long term vision (10 years +) and identifies specific short term actions;
 - e) Is more explicit about how nature conservation and visitor pressures are reconciled and actively managed.

8. Over and above the proposals in the consultation draft the partnership board has agreed three key areas to be addressed in the strategy:
 - i. Work to simplify and integrate the management of this area between HIE and FES;
 - ii. Moving to a single ranger service operating across the area – currently Natural Retreats and FES run separate ranger services and overall there is a need to increase the number of rangers as well as co-ordination;
 - iii. Make a shift in transport access so that in 10 years' time the primary means of access to Cairngorm and Glenmore is by public/non-car transport. There is considerable support in the consultation for setting out a bold direction for change in transport, but the practicality of delivering this is very challenging.

Any transport solution needs to be fully integrated with Aviemore and wider communities in the Strath. It is therefore a much bigger proposition than one just affecting the land holdings or on-site businesses, and would need wide buy-in from both businesses and public agency partners.

In the short term actions are likely to include making better use of existing car parks with no new provision, restricting on-road parking and minor improvements to public transport.

Next Steps

9. We will complete the strategy for approval by each partner in September, including consideration at the CNPA Board on 30th September.
10. The three 'action plans' which set out more detail about site specific improvements will be completed by respective partners using the consultation responses. FES is revising the Glenmore Visitor Improvement Plan to prepare an action plan that will be published alongside the strategy. HIE is now finalising the management plan for the Cairngorm Estate and Natural Retreats are continuing to develop their masterplan for Cairngorm Mountain.

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