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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DECISION

**Title: CAIRNGORMS FOREST STRATEGY**

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### **Purpose**

This paper requests approval to undertake a formal consultation on the draft Cairngorms Forest Strategy.

### **Recommendations**

**That the Board agree to a 6 week consultation on the Cairngorms Forest Strategy starting in mid-February 2018.**

### **Executive Summary**

The Board are provided with a draft of the Cairngorms Forest Strategy prepared for public consultation (Annex I).

The strategy will replace the Cairngorms Forest and Woodland Framework, produced in 2007 and will fill the gap left by the Local Authority Forest Strategies which no longer cover the National Park Area.

The Strategy fully supports and builds upon the National Park Partnership Plan and a wide range of other existing national policies outlined in the draft. The Strategy is the key document providing direction on future forest management and the restoration of woodlands in the Cairngorms National Park over the next two decades. It looks to the very long term with a 20 year and a 100 year vision.

One of the key issues the strategy addresses is how we wish to see woodland creation develop in the National Park, but it is much more than that. It seeks to develop a sense of optimism and great potential for forestry and strengthen the forest culture in the National Park. It is essential that the strategy provides CNPA, land managers and others with the necessary guidance to ensure that woodlands and forests meet the standards worthy of a National Park.

The timing of the consultation on the draft Strategy is designed to precede the consultation on the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan due to take place from April 2018.

## CAIRNGORMS FOREST STRATEGY - FOR DECISION

### Strategic Context

1. The Strategy fully supports and builds upon the National Park Partnership Plan and a wide range of other existing national policies outlined in the draft. It helps to deliver the woodland creation and management goals in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, the health and well-being goals in Active Cairngorms, and the employment and business aspirations in the Cairngorms Economic Strategy. It also supports the landscape-scale management objectives of Catchment Management Plans around the park. It is fully integrated with the Cairngorms Deer framework and current deer management policy in the NPPP.

### Summary of Work to Date

2. The review of the Cairngorms Forest and Woodland Framework and first phase of consultation on the drafting of the new strategy began at a public meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017. The meeting was attended by 50 people and provided useful feedback on many aspects.
3. In the intervening period we have concentrated on developing a woodland creation funding target map with Forestry Commission Scotland. In order to encourage uptake and to help meet woodland creation targets, the map takes a broad approach, maximising the amount of targeted land, rather than narrowing right down. We continue to emphasise that there are still sensitive areas within the targeted areas that should not be planted, but current mapping techniques are not precise enough to capture them all.
4. In October the Board were shown the target map and the draft strategic Objectives. Discussion with the board led to the next stage of drafting which was to provide more specific policy guidance on eg how we balance the interests of woodland creation alongside moorland management and agriculture. This has resulted in a fairly unique forest strategy in that it provides an integrated approach to landuse strategy.
5. Alongside the consultation draft, we are drafting a Habitats Regulations Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment. These drafts may have to be edited, depending on feedback from the Board today. The current drafts are available on request.

### Resource Implications

6. At this stage the document is text and maps only, but in the final publication the intention is for the strategy to contain images and case studies that will clearly illustrate the guidance provided in the text.
7. Conservation and communications staff will be engaged in collating and reporting on consultation responses, preparing the final draft and the HRA and SEA.

## **Recommendation**

8. That the Board agree to a 6 week consultation on the Cairngorms Forest Strategy starting in mid-February 2018.

## **Next Steps**

9. Following consultation we will present a full strategy to the Board for approval in September 2018.

## **Will Boyd-Wallis**

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