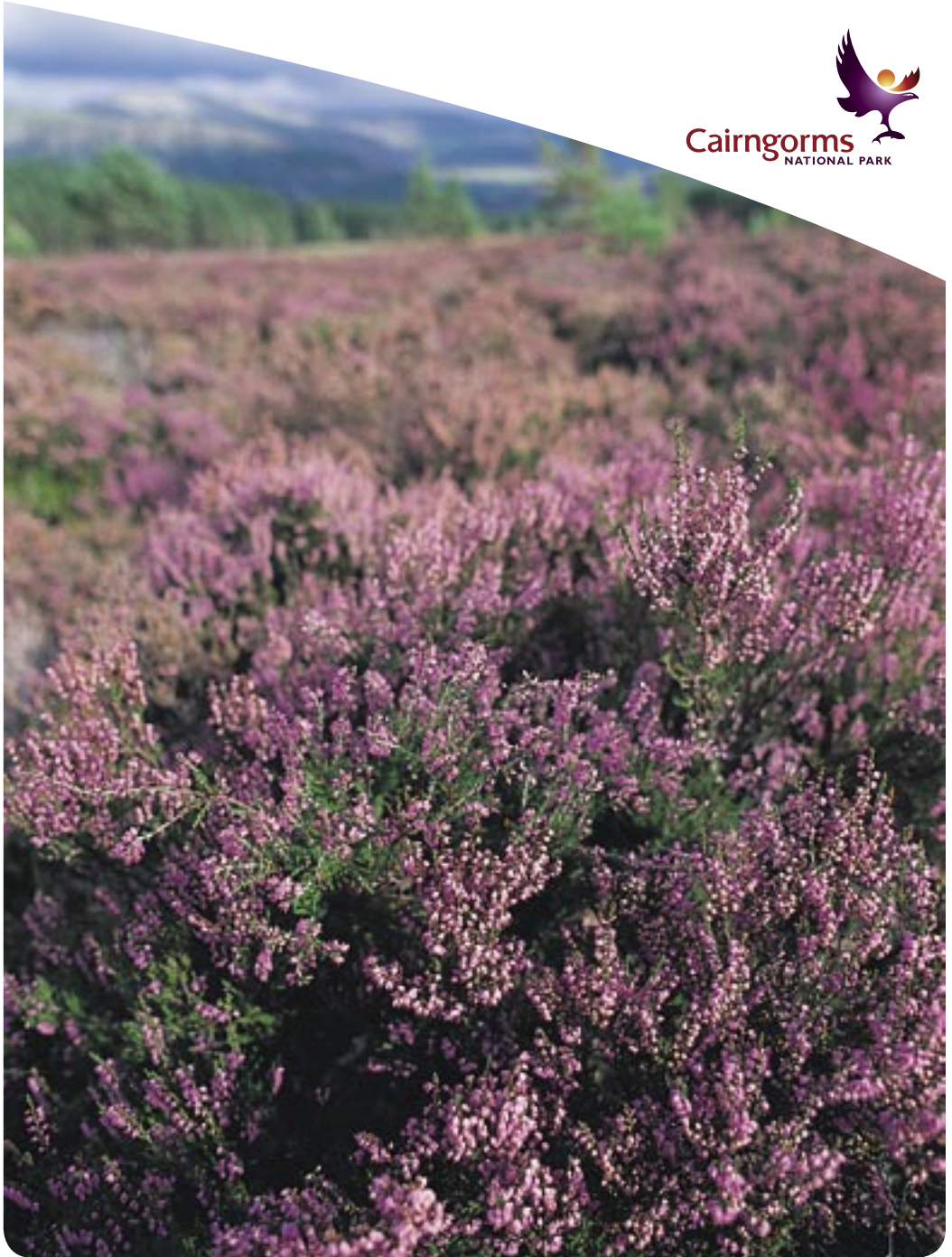


Tourism and the Cairngorms National Park

// Update 2006



Cairngorms
NATIONAL PARK



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One Year on...

Since finalising the Sustainable Tourism Strategy last March, the Cairngorms National Park became the first UK National Park to be awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas in July 2006.

What is Sustainable Tourism?

At it's simplest, Sustainable Tourism is the careful management of tourism so that the impact of tourism on the environment, the visitors, local people and on the economy, benefits all - both at the present time and also in the future.

One year into the action plan, this booklet gives a snapshot of some of the work to date under the 9 priorities for action that have been identified. If you are interested in finding out more, please ask for a copy of the full Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, or go to www.cairngorms.co.uk



ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT & CONSERVATION

To maintain a high quality environment in the Cairngorms, encouraging sound environmental management practices and support for conservation by all those involved in tourism.

• GOING GREEN

53 businesses have attended free seminars on the Green Tourism Business Scheme over the past 3 months and 75% of the businesses have received the award so far. On-site assessments, free joining fees and first year memberships were also on offer (funded by VisitScotland) and this has resulted in the number of GTBS accredited businesses increasing by over 100% since August 2005. Quality-assured tourism businesses who are GTBS accredited or who agree to sign up to the GTBS within 12 months are eligible to use the Cairngorms brand for marketing purposes.

• TRAINING FOR CONSERVATION

The Land Based Business Training Project is jointly funded by the CNPA and the European Social Fund (ESF). It provides part-funding for training for land-based businesses (many of whom are involved in tourism) within or near to the Cairngorms National Park. In 2005 the project organised 20 public benefit courses for 407 people, with topics ranging from Wildfire Fighting to Wildlife & the Law.



• RAISING AWARENESS (AND MONEY!)

CairnGorm Mountain operate a voluntary £1 carbon tax for visitors arriving by car. The money is ring-fenced for environmental projects, but perhaps more importantly, they raise awareness of the environmental impact of travel by car and encourage visitors to explore public transport options. Visitors brave enough to arrive by bike even get a free ticket for the mountain railway.

WORKING TOGETHER

To ensure effective involvement by all stakeholders in the planning, development and management of tourism in the Cairngorms, and to maintain good communication between them.

• VISIT FORUM

This is the main way to keep in touch with tourism and visitor services development in the Park, (ViSiT stands for Visitor Services, Information and Tourism). Further details on the Forum is provided on the back page.

• CAIRNGORMS TOURISM CONFERENCE

A successful Tourism Conference was held last October 2005 with over 100 delegates attending at The Lecht. This years event will be held on Wednesday 1st November and any suggestions for topics for discussion are extremely welcome.

• AREA TOURISM PARTNERSHIPS

Following the reorganisation of VisitScotland, Area Tourism Partnerships (ATPs) have been established, covering the same geographical areas as VisitScotland's Network offices. The three ATPs that cover the Cairngorms National Park area to a greater or lesser extent are Highland, Aberdeen and Grampian and Angus and Dundee. ViSIT Forum members and Park staff are involved in each of the ATPs to ensure that the National Park is given full recognition and priority.

Andrew Kirk, a ViSIT Forum member has been nominated to represent the interests of Badenoch and Strathspey tourism business at the Highland ATP which meets four times a year. Andrew Kirk said "The Area Tourism Partnership will act as a channel for two-way communication between VisitScotland and local tourism interests. It is important that tourism operators know that they can contact me to take their issues forward."

Contact details for Andrew Kirk are available through the Park Authority.



MARKETING

To raise awareness of the Cairngorms as a premier, year round, rural tourism destination in the UK, recognising its outstanding natural heritage and National Park status.

• CAIRNGORMS BRAND

Launched last year the Cairngorms brand already features on signage and visitor information. The vision for the brand is that it becomes a "kite mark" for quality and positive environmental management standards, and each of the 40 businesses/groups or events that currently use it meet the agreed quality and environmental criteria. A booklet is available on the criteria and anyone interested should contact Ruathy Donald at the National Park offices.

• FUNDING SUPPORT FOR MARKETING

Since the launch of the Integrated Grants Programme in August 2005, at least 11 projects have been supported by the marketing and events strand of the scheme including support for the Big Breakfast & Porridge Fun Run in Carr Bridge, an Adaptive Snowsport Event and a Siberian Husky Parade in Aviemore.

• AVIEMORE BADENOCH STRATHSPEY & CAIRNGORMS MARKETING LTD

The Park Authority was one of a number of public sector organisations (including MBSE, Highland Council and VisitScotland) that provided funding to enable this private industry led group to maximise the marketing opportunities for the area. ABSC Ltd is now set to become a Destination Management Organisation taking on a wider remit beyond marketing, dedicated to the management, development and coordination of tourism within the Badenoch and Strathspey area.

INFORMATION & INTERPRETATION

To ensure that visitors to the Cairngorms are aware of the range of places to visit and things to do throughout the Park, and appreciate and respect its special qualities.

• VISITOR INFORMATION

The range of visitor information that visitors need is kept under constant review and the 2006/07 publications include:

- Cairngorms Welcome leaflet - general park information with large area map
- Cairngorms Visitor Guide produced in partnership with VisitScotland
- Cairngorms Explorer - public transport timetables with suggested walks and cycle rides
- Cairngorms Countryside Events guide - all Ranger Services events
- Park *i* - an independently produced 'what's on' guide to the Park area

• A SENSE OF PLACE

Tourist Information Centres throughout the Park have been fitted with branded display panels to give a sense of National Park identity, and wooden branded leaflet racks have been produced for display of CNP information leaflets etc.

• A SENSE OF ARRIVAL

The installation of granite entry point markers will begin in early summer and continue throughout 2006 on the non-trunk road sites. Permanent metal signs are already in place at the 5 railway stations within the Park.



• CAIRNGORMS CONNECTIONS

Cairngorms Connections training courses are held for anyone working in the frontline of tourism who wishes to increase their knowledge about the National Park. Fifty people attended 6 courses in 2005, and further courses are planned for 2006. At the same time an online version of the course has been commissioned. Anyone wishing to attend future courses should contact Heather Galbraith at the Park offices.

QUALITY & WELCOME

To improve and maintain the quality of experience for all visitors, communities and those working within the tourism industry.

• PROMOTION OF TRAINING SCHEMES

Scottish Enterprise Grampian are offering a new portfolio of tourism training called '100k welcomes' to replace Welcome Host. Two Magical Mystery Tours were held within the Park area as part of the Pride and Passion initiative, www.prideandpassion.net or 0800 028888 for more details.

• CODE OF CONDUCT

VisitScotland have launched a Code of Conduct outlining general quality standards for businesses that previously did not have a quality assurance scheme. This means that businesses signing up to the scheme can access the products and services of VisitScotland, and will meet the quality criteria necessary to use the Cairngorms brand.

DISTINCTIVENESS & DISCOVERY

To develop and maintain a wide range of opportunities for visitors to experience and enjoy the special qualities, distinctiveness and natural and cultural heritage of the Cairngorms.



• PLACE NAMES OF THE CAIRNGORMS

The place names of the Cairngorms are often linked with the surrounding landscape and are a good starting point for exploring the cultural heritage of the area. A leaflet exploring the roots of the place names of the Cairngorms will be produced this summer.

• ADDING VALUE TO THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Wild Scotland held a training event at Ruthven Barracks at the end of March to demonstrate how a basic visitor experience at a heritage site can be converted into an enhanced experience by simple interpretive techniques and animation. The event was funded by ABSC Marketing.



ENTERPRISE & ECONOMY

To strengthen and maintain the viability of the tourism industry in the Cairngorms and the contribution that it makes to the local economy.



• A FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE

A priority for the Park Authority is to enable young people access better quality vocational training and realise better careers locally. Working with partners such as Careers Scotland, local schools & colleges, Sector Skills Councils and the Enterprise Network, provision is being tailored to the needs of businesses throughout the Park area.

• CAIRNGORMS ARTS & CRAFTS ASSOCIATION

There is tremendous interest from art and crafts producers, retailers and galleries throughout the Park area to promote and market their work in a more co-ordinated way. Along with council arts officers, the formation of an association, run for and by its members, is being encouraged to take advantage of the marketing opportunity that National Park status presents.



VISITOR MANAGEMENT

To encourage an optimum flow and spread of visitors across the Cairngorms and minimise social and environmental impact and congestion from visitors and traffic generated by tourism.

• CORE PATHS IN THE PARK

Paths in and around communities provide excellent opportunities for walking, cycling and, in some cases, horse riding. They also serve as functional routes to schools, shops, libraries and work. In the autumn the Park Authority will be embarking on an initial consultation with communities on what are the essential paths in their area. Park staff will be keen to hear the views of all interested in this topic and will be publicising consultation meetings between September and November this year.

• SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

Building on the success of the Cairngorms Explorer, research has been commissioned to look at how everyone can be helped to access public transport, and the possibilities of new services including a cross-park service are being explored.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

To involve local communities in the planning and development of tourism in the Cairngorms and to ensure that it improves and does not diminish their quality of life.

• PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The Cairngorms Local Plan, setting out detailed planning policies to guide development, including tourism development in the Park over the coming years, is currently being finalised. This is the result of extensive consultation, and all comments on the draft will be taken into account as the final Local Plan is produced.

• RESIDENTS VIEWPOINT

In summer 2005, the CNPA supported a post-graduate student who wished to research the views of Park residents on tourism using the village of Boat of Garten as a case study. The study found that 89% of residents were in favour of tourism in the village, but some concerns were expressed on traffic congestion, and the cost of living notably with regard to house prices.

MONITORING OUR WORK

The importance of monitoring the performance and impact of tourism within the Park area can not be underestimated, and the ViSIT Forum and Park staff have been working with Macaulay Institute on the selection of tourism indicators to see whether the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan is making a difference. Gathering data on, for example, visitor numbers, public transport use and water quality will allow us to monitor trends and identify potential negative effects before they affect the fantastic natural heritage that attracts visitors in the first place, and allow us to make better, more informed decisions in the future.

HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH

The ViSIT Forum

The Cairngorms ViSIT Forum was set up to advise the CNPA on all matters relating to visitor services, information provision and tourism. It is a mix of public sector representatives (including VisitScotland, Local Enterprise Companies and Scottish Natural Heritage) and members representing private business interests. It has around 60 members and meets 5 times a year. Members are encouraged to pass information on to other contacts in their area. A full list of forum members, along with meeting minutes and papers, is available on the CNPA website www.cairngorms.co.uk.

Staff Contacts

Several Park staff are associated with tourism. If you wish to contact a tourism issue, please call the main office in Grantown on 01479 873535 and you will be directed to the person most able to help.

Chris Taylor

Tourism and Economic Development Manager can be contacted on 01479 870505.

Heather Galbraith

Sustainable Tourism Officer can be contacted on 01479 870545.

Ruathy Donald

Tourism Marketing Officer can be contacted on 01479 870519.

