

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CEO REPORT

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Purpose

- I. To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Conservation:

- a) **Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework** – Funding has been confirmed from Cairngorms LEADER and a bid has been submitted to HLF for the five year project which aims to ensure the long-term survival of Capercaillie.
- b) **Cairngorms Forest Strategy** – Work is ongoing on developing this document. The consultation document will come to the Board in December with the public consultation in January 2018.
- c) **East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership** – The Partnership is due to meet again in November. This will mainly be around clarifying the programme of activity over the next 12 – 18 months.
- d) **Peatland restoration** – 4 grant applications have been submitted to Peatland Action covering 418 ha of peatland restoration at a cost of £710,000. Work should start on those sites in October. A further four applications are in the pipeline. We hope to also apply to Peatland Action for additional staff support to allow more projects to proceed.
- e) **Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership** – The Discovery Centre office space is now ready to accommodate TGLP staff. The team of five staff are working hard on a very wide range of projects.
- f) **Wildlife Crime** - Negotiations are continuing on the new Special Constables in the National Park with a specific role of detecting and combating wildlife crime. The ‘Civtech challenge’ is also progressing well with advanced satellite tracking technology being developed to aid crime detection
- g) **A9 dualling** – Landscape and Ecology advice to minimising the impacts and maximising any benefits of the A9 dualling project has recently focused on the potential for enhancing native forest habitat networks.

Visitor Experience:

- a) **Long Distance Routes** – The planning application for Speyside way Extension from Ardgael to Inshriach has been approved. One kilometre of existing path on the extension on Forestry Commission land at Iveruglass near Insh has been upgraded. Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) is taking forward design and planning consent for Deeside Way Extension from Braemar to Invercauld Bridge. Planning application will be re-submitted this autumn.
- b) **Mountains and People** – Repairs to mountain paths are progressing well with 37% (15.2 Km) of the work scheduled for the Cairngorms now complete. The volunteering work delivered by the project is coordinating well with the work being delivered by CNPA and partner ranger services.
- c) **Active Cairngorms** – CNPA has secured funding to work with NHS, Hitrans, Sustrans, Highland Council and partners to look at options for improving non vehicle access through Aviemore.
- d) **Cairngorm and Glenmore** – a visitor experience partner meeting is scheduled for mid-September to agree how to take forward the programme agreed in autumn 2016 and this will be linked to work with Active Aviemore. An application is being developed to submit to Leader for funding to study how visitors to Cairngorm and Glenmore use public transport and how this might be improved.
- e) **Volunteering** – Eight volunteer rangers have been recruited following two public information meetings at Boat of Garten and Braemar in June. They are currently undergoing training and will be ready to start supported activity in October. A third public meeting will take place in Blair Atholl in January followed by the training of a further eight volunteers.
- f) **Education and Inclusion** – Some 2970 people have completed a John Muir Award this year with Grantown Grammar School presenting, and celebrating, their 1,000th award this summer. Seventy eight young people have completed a five day Junior Ranger programme. The second Backbone ‘Outdoor Festival for All’ in the Cairngorms will be held at Atholl Estate on 24th September aimed at attracting some 250 new visitors from Black & Minority Ethnic and Hard to Reach groups.
- g) **Information and Interpretation** – Work continues on the rebuild of Ballater Station Visitor Information Centre and the refurbishment of Tomintoul Museum. As part of the Year of History, Heritage and Archeology we are supporting the Association of Heritage Interpreters and Interpret Europe Conference in Inverness during first week in October.
- h) **Snow Roads Scenic Route** - Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) has appointed Jen Green as two year part time project officer to take forward the Scottish Enterprise funded Destination Development Project for Snow Roads. The project has undertaken visitor research looking at what visitors want to experience along the route and we are also meeting with the four local authorities to look at signage on the route. The Snow Roads has been shortlisted for a Scottish Government Quality in Planning Award 2017 with results scheduled for November.

Rural Development:

- a) **Planning Service** – Significant work undertaken preparing for Main Issues Report consultation for the next Local Development Plan, including discussion with the Planning Representatives Network and the Developers Forum. Significant planning casework with a number of affordable housing developments in construction or in planning process.
- b) **Tourism Action Plan** – The Action Plan has been submitted for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and outcome is awaited following Europarc verifiers visit in May – feedback is expected early October. Meetings held with new Regional Director for VisitScotland, Chris Taylor and new CEO of VisitAberdeenshire, Chris Foy.
- c) **Marketing Strategy** - The focus with VisitScotland is be promoting the Snow Roads Scenic Route in 2017.
- d) **Community-led development** – new Community Support Manager, Liz Henderson recruited and due to start late September. The CNPA Convener welcomed delegates from all over Scotland who attended the HIE national conference on Strengthening Communities in Aviemore.
- e) **Badenoch Great Place project** – funding bid for a three year project submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund on behalf of a partnership to develop Badenoch as a stronger visitor destination with new visitor experiences and economic opportunities, all based on the area’s heritage assets and proximity to A9.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) Meetings were held with Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Alexander Burnett MSP, Edward Mountain MSP and Graeme Dey MSP. The CEO and Convenor also met with the new Councillors in Badenoch and Strathspey.
- b) The CEO attended the Environment and Economy Leaders Group, Scottish Leaders Forum, NDPB CEO Forum and UKNP CEO’s meetings.
- c) The Convenor and CEO met with James Stuart and Gordon Watson of LLTTNPA. The LLTTNPA Board will be visiting Cairngorms on 2/3 November.
- d) The CEO met with stakeholders including, Chris Foy, VisitAberdeenshire, Sandy Kennedy, Entrepreneurial Scotland, Roger Knight, Spey Fisheries Board, NTS, Police Scotland, SSE and Landmark.
- e) Peter Mayhew will start on 16th October as the new Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience.

Communications:

- a) **Cairngorms Nature Campaign** - Ian Sikora is working on next year’s Cairngorms Nature Big Weekend (12th & 13th May 2018) with a strong focus on gaining greater buy-in and support from local communities, businesses and our existing partners - sponsorship opportunities are also being explored. Cairngorms Young presenter

competition, run in partnership with RSPB and Speyside Wildlife, has received considerable publicity and webpage 'hits' and closes at the end of October. CNPA attended the 2017 Grantown Show in partnership with NFUS and this year's winner of the [Cairngorms Farm Awards was announced](#). CNPA submitted 3 entries for the 2017 RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards, two have been shortlisted – Ruthven Farm and the Junior Rangers project - the final winners will be announced in November.

- b) **Active Cairngorms** – '[Wee Walks Week](#) 2017' took place on 16-23 September aimed at encouraging locals and visitors to enjoy a short walk in the Park. Publicity through traditional and social media has resulted in a lot of website traffic which aims to achieve a target of 560 participants.
- c) **Make It Yours campaign** – The MIY presentation has reached 26 organisations and 218 visitor facing staff and after the summer further presentations will be arranged. To date 146 Brand Charter holders have applied to use the Park brand including the Grantown Museum who are selling branded merchandise which helps to raise funds for the Cairngorms Trust.
- d) **Corporate Communications** - A new [Cairngorms National Park Facebook](#) account was launched in August aimed at people who live in and enjoy the Park and supports the VisitCairngorms Facebook page aimed at visitors. Annual Review 2016/17 has been prepared for submission to Ministers and a Gaelic Language Plan progress report is available on our website. A draft Gaelic Language Plan has been prepared and will go out for consultation for six weeks from October 2017.
- e) **Europarc Conference 2018** – [Europarc Conference 2018](#) will take place in the Cairngorms National Park. It is expected to attract around 300 delegates and subject to support funding from Event Scotland a Youth Festival to be run alongside the conference will attract a further 250 people under the age of 26.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Office Extension Project** – Demolition took place in July without much disruption. Foundations are now complete and the footprint of the new building is visible. The next major piece of work will be the delivery of the CLT (Cross Laminated Timber) panels which will form the building frame in mid-October. Completion is still anticipated to be July 2018.
- b) **Staffing update** – Hamish Trench (Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience); David Allan (Planning Technician); Emma Butler (Landscape Officer) and Emma Grant (Business Administration Apprentice) have resigned. Pete Mayhew has been appointed to the Director post, and will be starting on 16th October. The Planning Technician post has been revised, and is being replaced with a Planning Graduate post which has now been recruited. We are also currently recruiting a Landscape Officer post as well as an Admin Support Officer. Anna Fleming was appointed to the Learning and Inclusion Officer post and joined us on 7th August. Liz Henderson was appointed to the Community Support Manager post and joined us on 25th September.
- c) **Youth Employment** – We have recently launched our Youth Employment Strategy, which involves the following: -

- i. We are currently supporting a 13 week Project Scotland volunteer placement, with a young person volunteering in the communications department.
 - ii. Emma Grant's appointment to a permanent Finance Assistant position with a local business is evidence of the success of the Apprenticeship scheme and we are seeking to support another apprentice next year.
 - iii. We have identified two internship projects, and are shortly to commence the recruitment exercise, aiming to have the interns in place by January.
 - iv. We have over the last 6 months supported two opportunities for university students to work shadow teams within the Authority.
 - v. We have over the last 6 months supported youth employability events in two local secondary schools.
 - vi. We have registered with the Highland Council to support senior phase school children with work experience placements.
- d) **Organisational Development Strategy 2** – ODS 2 is now well under way with a great deal of activity particularly on the Developing and Embracing Innovation workstream. Several “change ideas” have been approved and are now in the process of being implemented, with a few longer terms project around Internal Communications, Buy-in and Culture of Innovation being developed. The Best Companies survey will be launched though October and we hope to be able to access and analyse results in December which will feed into the evolving Organisational Development process.

Future dates for diary

- NPUK Conference – 25 to 27 October
- Draft Scottish Budget will be published on Thursday 14th December, three weeks after Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, delivers the UK Government's first Autumn Budget

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October 2017

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Board Member Update

Angela Douglas - The joint Highlands & Islands and Grampian Forestry Forums joint meeting and sites visits to the CNP 23-24 August. Will attended contributing constructively, clearly and effectively and Judith was also there. There was a lot of discussion around the 'Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill. We were hosted on site to look at Restoring Caledonian pinewoods and expanding woodlands in the National Park as well as timber production (Glenmore Forest - FES, Abernethy Forest - RSPB with Wildland Ltd contributing) and touched on Cairngorm Connect. We also went to Pityoulish Farm/Estate to learn of their woodland creation proposals.

Becky Badger - I attended the Nethy Bridge Community Council meeting on 7th September. The meeting focussed on the Emergency Plan for the village, Highland Council has asked all villages to consider producing an Emergency Plan, in Nethy Bridge they agreed to form a sub-group involving the School Headteacher, the major land owners, key businesses and the Community Council to take this forward. Other issues raised included mention of the Planning Committee's decision about An Camas Mor and attendance by National Park Officials at a meeting to discuss woodland creation at Muchrach Lodge.

Janet Hunter and I spent the weekend of the 26th/27th August cycling the snow road. We were blessed with almost perfect weather, wonderful hospitality provided by Geva Blackett on Saturday night in Braemar, and the spectacular scenery and terrain of the snow road. It was a pleasure to cycle the route and we loved every minute (though some of those hills did wipe the smiles from our faces momentarily!).



Eleanor Mackintosh – I attended the Scotland Conference Seminar on Priorities for Infrastructure and planning policy, delivering major projects and preparing for the future planning bill. The main points I came away with were;

- the Planning Bill is timetabled for a first reading in December
- 10yr LDPs (not yet known what the triggers will be for updating within 10yr period)
- NPF to be considerably beefed up
- a need for agreement on housing numbers at the outset of new LDPs
- not going to reconsider 3rd party rights of appeal
- greater use of local review bodies
- infrastructure funds to be set up governed by local authorities.
- compulsory training for planning committee members

Among their very first strands of work the Land Commission intend issuing guidance, best practice and recommendations on

- vacant and derelict land
- local land monopoly
- community involvement in land use management