
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: Park Plan Update

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the development of the Park Plan, State of the Park Report and associated work.

Recommendations

That the Board note the progress to date meeting the timetable for the Park Plan and State of the Park Report.

Executive Summary

The Draft State of the Park Report is now complete and from 1 July will be available to those who wish to comment on it. We will seek comments particularly from key data holders to ensure broad support and agreement for the report when it is published as a baseline for the Park Plan.

The draft vision and objectives have provided a useful starting point for our discussions with partners. We are receiving constructive feedback on these and broader issues from individual partners and through seminars on key topics. This feedback will assist in developing the vision to give it a more tangible expression in line with the Board's discussion in April, and in developing the objectives and actions further.

Development of the plan has now moved into detailed discussions on actions with partners. This is a key stage that will ensure that the plan is for the Park as a whole, not just for the Park Authority. These include a range of individual and seminar type meetings, tailored to organisations and topics. We will keep Members informed of discussions and ensure they are briefed on any complex or sensitive issues arising. Members may also be asked to participate in discussions with some partners.

PARK PLAN UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION

Background

1. At the Board meeting in April Members discussed the emerging vision and objectives for the Park Plan, together with the process for developing more detailed actions. The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the development of the Plan and timetable set out in July 2004 and the update given in Paper 3 of the Board meeting in January 2005.

Issues/Discussion

State of the Park Report

2. We have now completed the draft State of the Park Report which comprises a main report plus technical annexes. The main report contains chapters on each of natural, cultural, visitor and socio-economic resources, with an introductory chapter highlighting the interactions and cross-cutting themes. For each of the four resource chapters there is a technical annex containing the full set of data and information gathered together. Our intention is that the reports should be accessible and readable to a general reader interested in the Park, while those with particular interests or specialist knowledge can refer to the technical annexes.
3. We have worked closely with SNH in particular who have written the technical annex for the natural resources section, which will also be published separately as a book by SNH. This is the culmination of significant work by SNH over recent years on a Natural Heritage Review to draw together information on the natural heritage of the area and present a fresh analysis. We have therefore worked together to ensure that both the SNH publication, which will form the annex, and the report itself have the appropriate coverage and are consistent. SNH's publication has been written by specialists on each topic and the full manuscript has received positive feedback from a peer review.
4. We are now beginning an informal consultation on the State of the Park Report (including annexes). It will be available to those who wish to read or comment at this stage with a view to ensuring that our baseline information is as full and accurate as possible. The report will be available to anyone who wishes to see it, but we will actively seek comments from the key data providers. The consultation on the natural resources annex will be carried out jointly with SNH.
5. This informal consultation will run from now until the end of September, when we will draw together the comments received and make any amendments or additions as appropriate. This process will add value to the Report when it is published alongside the Draft Park Plan in March 2006, by ensuring that there is broad agreement on the baseline information.

Issues Papers

6. We have drawn together the issues papers into a package which will continue to be informed by discussions with partners on the objectives and actions for the Plan. These papers summarise the policy context and key issues, and therefore set out a logical 'audit -trail' of information that sets out the rationale behind the Plan's objectives.
7. They remain works in progress, and will continue to document the discussion of issues and objectives as we develop the plan more fully with partners. They will then be made available as background documents in support of the Draft Park Plan in March 2006.

Review of Public Investment

8. We will shortly receive a final report from our consultants on the research into public investment in the Park. This gives an initial analysis of the investment beyond core activities including the level and nature of spend, and as far as possible, what the outputs are.
9. The review obtained data from the key investors in the area and provides an insight into the main spenders and areas of spend. It is less clear in identifying the outputs, records of which vary considerably in their nature, and in some cases are not recorded.
10. Initial feedback from the consultants indicates difficulties in trying to obtain a clear picture of the public sector as a whole, as each organisation holds data in different forms, treats investment in different categories, and works to different geographical boundaries. The review will however provide us with a basis on which to build and add information to give a steadily clearer view of the co-ordination and effectiveness of investment in the Park.

Action Discussions

11. We have begun the process of meeting with partners to discuss and seek commitment to actions in the Plan. We have developed a programme of meetings with individual partners including the key public agencies and seminars with key groups, for example Scottish Environment Link, deer managers and housing interests. These discussions will continue until at least the end of September and are a crucial stage in developing a plan that lives up to being a partnership plan for the Park as a whole.
12. All CNPA groups are involved in these discussions with partners, which are being co-ordinated by the Strategic Policy Group. We anticipate that Members may be asked to assist with discussions with some partners where there are particularly complex or sensitive issues involved, or to move the agenda forward on some key areas.

Consultation

13. We have continued informal consultation with our partners in developing the State of the Park Report and Draft Park Plan. The publication of the emerging vision and

objectives in April has been a useful starting point for discussions and the feedback we are receiving helps to refine these. Close liaison with the Local Plan has also helped to refine the objectives and develop a clear relationship between the two. A number of seminars with stakeholders including housing, transport and cultural heritage have provided feedback on the objectives and started to develop actions around them.

14. We are working with each partner organisation to agree a programme for discussions that meets our timetable, and their internal reporting arrangements, to complete the Draft Plan.

Policy Context

15. The completion of the draft State of the Park Report and progress with development of the plan is consistent with the timetable set out in July 2004 for completing the Park Plan (Goal 2 of our Corporate Plan).

Delivering Sustainability

16. The Sustainability Appraisal of the plan is running in parallel with the development of the plan itself (see separate paper for update). This formalises and documents the process of integrating the four aims of the Park throughout the plan and allows us to demonstrate our consideration of sustainable development in the planning process. Sustainability will be highlighted as a guiding principle which runs through all sections of the plan.

Delivering A Park for All

17. We are aiming through the ongoing consultation and discussion process to engage all sectors in developing the plan. The principle of social inclusion will also be highlighted in the plan and run through all its sections.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

18. The current phase of action discussions will focus on co-ordinating the activities of a wider range of partners, particularly in the public sector, in order to improve economy, effectiveness and efficiency. This stage goes to the heart of delivering a more joined-up approach to managing the Park through the plan.

Implications

Financial Implications

19. There are no additional financial implications resulting from this paper.

Presentation Implications

20. This paper is a formal announcement that the draft State of the Park Report is available for comment until the end of September. Given the size of the report we will take a flexible approach to providing the relevant sections in an appropriate form to those who wish to comment. The full contents of the Report and background context will be available on our website, which will invite people to contact us to request the sections in which they are interested, or the full report. It will be available in electronic and paper form. We will also be targeting specific organisations with expertise for their comments.
21. There are a number of future representation issues that are being considered by the Park Plan/Local Plan Communications Group (convened in June). These include the publication format of the State of the Park Report and Draft Plans, consultation, and co-ordination with SNH on the launch of their Natural Heritage Review.

Implications for Stakeholders

22. The current phase of discussions to identify actions relies on involvement and commitment from a wider range of partners. This stage is key to delivering a plan that is for the Park as a whole, not just for the Park Authority.

Next Steps

23. Over the next 3 months the focus is on completing the action discussions with partners and drafting the Plan itself. As the action discussions progress, we will brief Members on any complex issues arising and may seek their involvement in discussions with partners.
24. On 21 October we intend to hold an informal seminar for Members on the Draft Park Plan, which will then be finalised for the Board Meeting in December.
25. The Draft Plan will be brought to the Board formally in December, following which the publication will be commissioned for public consultation starting in March 2006.

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