

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Point of Entry Marker Project

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update the Board on progress made on Phase 1 of the Point of Entry Marker Project since June 2006, and to approve expenditure on Phase 2, which comprises installation of markers and upgrading of lay-bys on the four Trunk Roads.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Notes the work undertaken to date on Phase 1 of the Point of Entry Marker Project, installing 21 permanent granite markers and upgrading two lay-bys/car parks;
- b) Notes that it is estimated that an additional £12,000 is required to complete Phase 1 and delegates authority to the Finance Committee to approve the final additional funding required;
- c) Approves expenditure of £289,000 to implement the installation of four permanent granite markers on the trunk roads and environmental improvements at Kinloch Laggan (including provision of interpretation) and Mains of Dalvey. Detailed options for the upgrade of Drumochter lay-by will be presented to the Board in Spring 2007;
- d) Delegates authority to the Finance Committee for decisions relating to changes in expenditure and appointment of contracts for the above elements of Phase 2 of the Point of Entry Marker Project.

Executive Summary

This paper summarises the work undertaken on Phase 1 of the Point of Entry Marker Project since June 2006 when the Board were last formally updated. Actual expenditure incurred is compared with the cost estimates presented to the Board in September 2005. Cost estimates for Phase 2, the work on four trunk road sites, are presented and approval is sought for the expenditure. Assuming the necessary approvals are granted, installation of permanent markers and other work will start on the trunk roads in spring 2007.

POINT OF ENTRY MARKER PROJECT – FOR DECISION

Background

1. The development of entry point markers for the National Park was identified as one of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's (CNPA) early priorities. The work was initially developed through the Gateways and Information Working Group that operated between November 2003 and May 2004. Since July 2004 the project has been the subject of six Board papers that have provided information on progress and/or requested authority to proceed with the next stage of the project.
2. In the spring of 2005 permanent markers were installed at the five railway stations using the new brand image for the National Park. Interim metal signs were erected at ten of the busiest road entrances to the National Park.
3. In September 2005 the Board approved expenditure by the CNPA of £328,000 to implement Phase 1 of the project which comprised the installation of 21 permanent markers on non-trunk roads and long distance routes and the upgrade of associated lay-bys and car parks at Huntly's Cave (near Grantown) and Dinnet. The Board also approved in principle Phase 2 of the project which comprised the installation of permanent granite markers and associated works at four trunk road sites. The detailed approval of expenditure was to be subject to a further Board paper.
4. In June 2006 the Board were formally updated on progress, at which time all the contractors had been appointed and most sites agreed but no markers had been installed. Board members have also received a number of other updates on progress with the project as a matter of routine.

Progress Report on Installation of Markers (Phase 1)

5. Nineteen of the 21 permanent markers have now been installed and the contract for work on Phase 1 is nearing completion. One land manager was initially unwilling to enter into a management agreement allowing the installation of two markers. However, agreement in principle has now been reached and staff are confident that the two remaining markers can be installed this financial year.
6. The majority of the installation work has gone smoothly and to the standard that meets the aims of the project. However, it has been necessary to undertake some additional works at some sites, for example:
 - a) Additional work has been undertaken to improve the visibility of the markers through some additional landscaping, infrastructure improvements and removal of a very small number of trees;
 - b) One smaller marker was re-positioned to ensure it had a profile that was appropriate to the landscape setting; and
 - c) In certain light conditions the visibility of one of the larger markers can be rather poor due to reflections of the sky by the polished black granite. Work

is ongoing to determine how frequently and in what light conditions this occurs. We are also testing the effectiveness of works to make the granite less reflective – a process that can be applied to the marker *in situ*. We are confident that the problem can be resolved and any lessons learned will be applied to Phase 2.

7. During implementation two opportunities arose to undertake additional works to improve the entry experience to the Park. These works clearly fitted with the aims of the project and were agreed with land managers:-
 - a) Re-pointing of the car park wall at Dinnet as part of the wider landscaping scheme which provided a much improved car park that will act as a focus for visitor information.
 - b) Reshaping the verge south of Huntly's Cave (near Grantown) to prevent roadside parking and encourage use of the upgraded lay-by by climbers for the nearby crag.

Communication

8. The Community Councils have received regular project updates both individually and through the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils. In addition a detailed project update was presented to the ViSIT Forum in September. Feedback from a wide range of representatives at this meeting was positive.
9. Local papers around the National Park have provided coverage about the project as it has progressed and most of the stories have been positive. Two articles have appeared in the CNPA publication "Park Life" informing residents of the commencement and end of Phase 1. In addition, the Pride and Passion tourism initiative reported positively on the project through its e-bulletin. A number of stories and events relating to the National Park are starting to use photographs of the markers to present a visual image Park. The journal Scottish Mountaineer has agreed to publish an article informing climbers of the change in car parking arrangements at Huntly's Cave.

Project Budget

10. While Phase 1 of the project is nearing completion, it should be noted that not all works are finished and not all grant claims have been submitted. Therefore figures for both expenditure and income have yet to be finalised. Table 1 indicates the current estimates of total expenditure and income compared to those approved by the Board in September 2005.

Table 1: Comparison of Estimated Income and Expenditure at Sept 05 and at Nov 06

Income	Sept 2005 estimate (£)	Nov 2006 estimate (£)	% Variance
Scottish Enterprise Grampian	30,000	30,000	
European Objective 2	94,000	89,000	
HI Enterprise IEH	25,000	25,000	
Moray Council	15,000	15,000	
Rees Jeffries Road Fund	30,000	10,000	
Highland Council		13,000	
TOTAL INCOME	194,000	182,000	-6.2
Expenditure			
Marker Production	257,000	184,000	
Works Contract	162,000	198,000	
Design & Project Management	40,000	55,000	
Land Management, Legal & Planning	33,000	53,000	
Interpretation	30,000	32,000	
TOTAL INCOME	522,000	522,000	0
CNPA Funding	328,000	340,000	+3.7

11. Project income is lower than anticipated in September 2006 because at that time we had not heard the outcome of an application to the Rees Jeffries Road Fund. The subsequent offer was lower than that requested. Some of the deficit was replaced by a contribution in kind from Highland Council toward the works at Huntly's Cave. The funds from European Regional Development Fund are likely to be slightly lower than originally anticipated because the total expenditure in Aberdeenshire and Moray is lower than predicted. The European funding accounts for 35% of total expenditure in these areas.
12. Despite some changes to the project since September 2005, the expenditure remains on budget. Allowing for the reduced income we estimate that an additional £12,000 is required to complete Phase 1 and appropriate recommendation is made below.
13. While it was essential to split the project into two discrete phases for both management and financial reasons, the Board should note that it proved unrealistic to completely separate all Phase 2 expenditure from Phase 1. Two items that span both phases are the sourcing and extraction of the granite, and the design of interpretation. Neither of these items could have been taken forward on its own for each phase without a significant increase in overall costs. In addition, it would have been poor risk management to construct the markers for Phase 1 without ensuring that there was enough granite of the same high quality to complete Phase 2. Therefore it should be noted that £27,500 expenditure, not shown in Table 1, has

already been contractually committed and has been allocated against Phase 2 (and is included in Tables 2 and 3).

Interpretation

14. Aaron Lawton Associates were appointed through a competitive process to develop Park-wide interpretation that could be used at three points of entry, specifically Dinnet, Laggan and Drumochter. They have recommended that panoramic maps are the most effective way of providing the visitor with a large amount easily understood information about the special qualities of National Park without resorting to lots of text. Panoramic maps have the additional advantage that they can also be used in other applications in visitor centres, websites and print material not directly associated with the points of entry. Following advice from the ViSIT Forum and approval by the Finance Committee, Heinz Vielkind has been contracted to paint panoramic views of the National Park from the east and south west and these maps will be used in the interpretation installations at Dinnet, Laggan and Drumochter.
15. We have also taken the opportunity to commission additional views that will not initially be used at the points of entry but will provide Park-wide coverage for use in other applications across the National Park. Undertaking this additional work now is considerably more efficient and cost effective than doing it separately at a later date. Approval was granted for this additional work by the Finance Committee.

Recommendation

16. **It is recommended that the Board:**
 - a) **notes the work undertaken in Phase 1 of the Point of Entry Marker Project, installing 21 permanent granite markers and upgrading two lay-bys/car parks; and**
 - b) **notes that it is estimated that an additional £12,000 is required to complete Phase 1 and delegates authority to the Finance Committee to approve the final additional funding required.**

Phase 2: The Four Trunk Road Sites

17. The four trunk road entrances to the National Park comprise the A9 (at Drumochter and the Slochd), A86 (at Kinloch Laggan) and A95 (at Mains of Dalvey). Vehicle numbers on these roads account for some 60% of the daily total entering the National Park, clearly indicating the importance of these entrances. However, very early in the development of the project we became aware that in order to work effectively at these sites we needed to develop sound partnerships with Transport Scotland and land managers. This required more time than the other sites and so the project was split into two phases with the more complex sites in the latter phase.

18. In September 2005 when seeking approval in principle from the Board we presented total outline costs for Phase 2 of up to £830,000. The estimated contribution from the CNPA at that time was up to £500,000, depending on the scale of the project and the degree of financial commitment from other partners.
19. As a result of the further scoping work that has been undertaken and discussion with partners we are now of the view that the work required on the four sites comprises:-
 - a) A9 Slochd – installation of granite marker (there is no associated lay-by in which to locate National Park information);
 - b) A95 Mains of Dalvey – installation of granite marker and reinstatement of the unsightly hard standing area to grass verge;
 - c) A86 Kinloch Laggan – installation of granite marker, installation of Park-wide interpretation in adjacent car park managed by Forestry Commission Scotland and upgrading of car park; and
 - d) A9 Drumochter – installation of granite marker, installation of Park-wide interpretation, upgrading of adjacent lay-by and rationalisation of existing signs.
20. Table 2 provides cost estimates for the works and shows estimates of income sources. We have concentrated our efforts on securing partnership funding at Drumochter, Kinloch Laggan and Mains of Dalvey where the project marks the National Park boundary and provides visitor information and environmental improvements.
21. Drumochter is both the highest profile entrance and the site that provides the greatest challenges and opportunities. The costs presented in Table 2 for lay-by works at Drumochter are indicative for a bespoke design. The site has not been surveyed in detail and we are unable, at this time, to present detailed design options and costs.

Table 2: Estimated Expenditure and Income for Phase 2

Works	Expenditure (1)	Funder	Income
Drumochter			
Install marker and interpretation	£140,000	CNPA	£250,000
Upgrade Lay-by	£365,000	Transport Scotland (3) Rees Jeffries Road Fund (2) Enterprise Company (2) Highland 2007 (2)	£165,000 £30,000 £30,000 £30,000
Slochd			
Install marker.	£53,000	CNPA	£53,000
Mains of Dalvey			
Install marker	£53,000	CNPA	£53,000
Reinstatement of waste ground close to marker (lorry park)	£15,000	Transport Scotland (3)	£15,000
Kinloch Laggan			
Installation of Marker and interpretation	£73,000	CNPA FCS (3)	£73,000 £10,000
Upgrade Car Park	£28,000	Transport Scotland (3)	£18,000
Total	£727,000		£727,000

Notes:

1. Costs include VAT for comparison although where works are undertaken by partners, VAT may not be payable.
 2. Grant applications submitted.
 3. *Estimated* value of works undertaken by partner.
22. We have only been able to reach this stage because of the partnership support from Transport Scotland who are providing assistance at Drumochter through ongoing survey and design work undertaken via their agent, 'Scotland Transerve'. Forestry Commission Scotland has also been supportive in helping with the proposed developments at Kinloch Laggan.
23. The upgrade of the lay-by at Drumochter fits clearly within the original aim of the project, which was "...to create a strong and positive sense of arrival in a place cared for by visitors, local people and authorities." Nevertheless, we feel that without more detail and an options appraisal it is not competent to make a decision about the lay-by element of the Drumochter site at this time.
24. Work on the three other sites can take place independently of any works at the Drumochter lay-by, and therefore our recommendation in this paper covers these sites and the installation of the marker alone at Drumochter.
25. We anticipate being able to present a detailed options appraisals for the Drumochter lay-by to the Board in Spring 2007. However, should this be delayed for any reason it will be feasible to install the granite marker at Drumochter independently of the lay-by works. This would not incur additional costs because it could be a discrete contract. We do not consider that this would prejudice partnership funding at

Drumochter as this is linked to environmental improvements and the provision of visitor information at the site associated with the upgrade of the lay-by.

26. Table 3 provides cost estimates for Phase 2, excluding upgrades to Drumochter lay-by and the installation of interpretation.

Table 3: Estimated Expenditure and Income for Phase 2 excluding Drumochter lay-by and associated interpretation.

Works	Expenditure (1)	Funder	Income
Drumochter			
Install marker (4)	£110,000	CNPA	£110,000
Slochd			
Install marker.	£53,000	CNPA	£53,000
Mains of Dalvey			
Install marker	£53,000	CNPA	£53,000
Reinstatement of waste ground close to marker (lorry park)	£15,000	Transport Scotland (3)	£15,000
Kinloch Laggan			
Installation of Marker and interpretation	£73,000	CNPA FCS (3)	£73,000 £10,000
Upgrade Car Park	£28,000	Transport Scotland (3)	£18,000
Total	£332,000		£332,000

Notes:

1. Costs include VAT for comparison although where works are undertaken by partners, VAT may not be payable.
 2. Grant applications submitted.
 3. *Estimated* value of works undertaken by partner.
 4. Includes work currently being undertaken on panoramic paintings.
27. Should any funds be available in financial year 06/07, work could be undertaken on the manufacture of the granite markers with installation then scheduled for spring/summer 2007.
28. It is anticipated that Phase 2 will be managed in a similar way to Phase 1 including the emphasis placed on regularly communicating developments to partners, land managers and communities.

Recommendation

29. It is recommended that the Board approve expenditure of £289,000 to implement the installation of four permanent granite markers on the trunk roads and environmental improvements at Kinloch Laggan (including provision of interpretation) and Mains of Dalvey. Detailed options for the upgrade of Drumochter lay-by will be presented to the Board in Spring 2007.

30. It is further recommended that the Board delegates decisions relating to changes in the expenditure and appointment of contracts for the above elements of Phase 2 of the Point of Entry Marker Project to the Finance Committee.

Policy Context

31. Phase 2 of this project forms a key part of the priority for action from the draft National Park Plan on "Raising Awareness and Understanding of the National Park". The project will also contribute towards the outcomes relating to the priority on "Making tourism and businesses more sustainable"

Delivering Sustainability

32. The project uses local materials and, as far as possible, locally based businesses in its implementation. It will contribute positively towards social objectives related to people's feelings about the National Park. The project has been designed to be long lasting and will require only minimal maintenance.

Delivering A Park for All

33. The project is highly visible to a large number of people passing the National Park boundary. There will be opportunities at appropriate places to get close to and touch the markers and they are already being used for photo opportunities and to demonstrate that the Park is a special place.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

34. The project has to date been delivered on budget and using competitive processes to obtain best value from contractors and suppliers. Initial feedback from visitors and from local residents has generally been positive.

Next steps

35. Following the completion Phase 2 we will take time to evaluate the impact of the project and look at opportunities for providing interpretation and/or environmental enhancement at entry points not covered in the first two phases. This work will form part of the Priority for Action on Awareness and Understanding of the National Park. These include: A939 Huntly's Cave (near Grantown), B9008 at Tomnavoulin, A93 at Glenshee and Garva Bridge where there are existing car parks associated with the permanent marker. We will also investigate opportunities associated with Slochd, Glen Clova and Glenkindie. While there are no car parks close to these entry points it will be worth considering opportunities for locating information at the next available stopping place.

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