

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: NATIONAL PARK PLAN: DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to seek Members' approval to the draft that will form the basis of the formal consultation next spring; and the length of the formal consultation.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- approve the draft as the basis for the formal consultation next spring; and
- agree that the formal consultation should last 14 weeks;

Executive Summary

Following extensive engagement with staff, the Board, and a wide range of stakeholders, we have developed the enclosed Draft Park Plan. This sets the strategic direction of the Park for the next 25 years, and suggests Priorities for Action over the next 5 years.

This draft is now ready for formal consultation as specified under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, and is presented for the Board's formal approval.

This draft will be the basis for a range of materials during the formal consultation next spring. We recommend that this last for 14 weeks, two weeks more than the statutory minimum.

NATIONAL PARK PLAN: DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION – FOR DECISION

Background

1. This paper is a significant milestone in the process towards an adopted National Park Plan as originally agreed by the Board in September 2003 and subsequently updated in July 2004. It presents the draft Park Plan which will form the basis of the statutory consultation next spring.
2. As reported to the Board in January, April and July of this year, this draft is the result of a very open process of discussion and development between staff, Board members and a wide range of external stakeholders. We have sought at every stage to seek and incorporate the views of others, both through Park Plan focused events and through activities focused on more specific topics, such as the Local Plan consultations. This has included a number of sessions with the Board itself, most specifically informal workshops in February, March and October of this year.

The Draft

3. The full text of the draft is contained at Annex 1. Once approved by the Board, it will form the basis for the consultation next spring. It is important to stress that this is only the basis for the consultation – we will be producing a range of visually attractive and engaging material tailored to specific audiences that help them to engage with the Plan. At the same time, we will also be publishing the State of the Park Report and the Strategic Environmental Assessment.
4. We have made a number of changes to the draft in light of the Board's feedback at the informal workshop last month. The most notable changes are in the opening chapters – to reflect the range of external forces influencing the Park – and in presentation of the Priorities for Action.
5. On the latter, we have refocused these around outputs rather than processes, and slightly reduced the number. The 7 within the draft are:
 - a. Conserving and Enhancing the Park's Biodiversity and Landscapes
 - b. Developing More Sustainable Deer Management
 - c. Supporting More Integrated Land Management
 - d. Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access
 - e. Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable
 - f. Making Business and Tourism More Sustainable
 - g. Developing Awareness and Understanding of the Park
6. It is important to note that whilst the vision and strategic objectives are presented for consultation in a near-complete state, development of the Priorities for Action will continue until the Park Plan is finalised in Autumn 2006. One of the key questions for the consultation is whether these are the right Priorities for the next 5 years and, if so, what differences would consultees like or expect to see in that timescale. They are therefore an initial agenda at this stage which will be developed in tandem with the

consultation and informed by it. They are likely to attract most interest and debate during the consultation.

- 7. The Board is recommended to approve the draft as the basis for the formal consultation next spring.**

The Formal Consultation

8. We have developed the Plan to date in a very open way, sharing drafts and discussions with a range of bodies and individuals. This has been immensely helpful in shaping the Plan and engaging stakeholders in their Park. The next stage is a formal consultation. This is required by section 12 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and is an opportunity for all parties to consider the entirety of the proposed plan.
9. Under section 12(1)b, the CNPA is required to determine the length of the formal consultation, which must be a minimum of 12 weeks. We recommend that a period of 14 weeks would be appropriate, provisionally running from 27th March to 30th June 2006. This should allow all consultees enough time to consider the draft without the consultation dragging on too long and losing its focus.
10. We are currently making the necessary arrangements with designers and printers, and preparing a detailed communications plan.
- 11. The Board is recommended to approve a formal consultation period lasting 14 weeks.**

State of the Park Report

12. The State of the Park Report draws together information on the resources of the Park, their current status, relative value and key trends affecting them. It will be published in March, alongside the Draft Park Plan as a baseline and set of background information. The data behind the report is contained in 4 technical annexes. These will be available through our website and SNH plans to separately publish the technical annex on the natural heritage.
13. From July to September this year, the draft report was available for comment and circulated to organisations and individuals with particular expertise or data for review. The responses from this review are currently being incorporated into the report to make it as comprehensive and accurate a baseline as possible for the Park Plan.
14. The report will form a baseline for future monitoring to inform a review of the State of the Park at five-year intervals, which in turn will inform review of the Park Plan.

Relationship with Other Plans and Policies

15. The CNPA and other bodies have already developed a whole suite of other plans, policies and strategies which impact on the Park. One of the roles of the Park Plan is

to bring these together into a unified and integrated whole, thereby providing the overarching strategic direction for the future management of the Park.

16. We will continue to need to develop more detailed programmes of work and policy guidance. The majority of these will be focused on the Priorities for Action once they are agreed.
17. One of the most important of these plans is the Local Plan. We have developed this in parallel the Park Plan, and will continue to do so, ensuring that the two are consistent.

Consultation

18. This paper is the result of extensive internal and external discussion since September 2003.

Policy Context

19. The completion of the Park Plan by the end of 2006 is one of the 7 priority goals within the Corporate Plan for 2005-08. It sets out the strategic direction for the Park for the next 25 years and suggests priority for action for the next 5 years.

Delivering Sustainability

20. Sustainable Development is one of the 5 Guiding Principles that have informed the development of the Plan and will guide its delivery. We are assessing the potential impact of the Plan through the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Assessment; and will highlight mitigating measures as appropriate.

Delivering a Park for All

21. This is a major theme running through the Park Plan, principally through the Guiding Principles of “Social Justice” and “People Participating in the Park”; and through a number of actions proposed under Section 8.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

22. One of the other Guiding Principles in the Plan is “Effective Governance”, making sure that the public sector works together to the same ends in the Park. The structure of the Plan, in particular the Priorities for Action, is designed to deliver economic, effective and efficient governance.

Implications

Financial Implications

23. There is currently £40,000 in the Operational Plan for 06/07, and £30,000 for 07/08, for publishing the Draft Park Plan, the State of the Park Report, other associated materials, and the cost of the consultation itself. We are currently seeking tenders for the design and publication work, and preparing a detailed communications programme.

Presentational Implications

24. The consultation on the Draft Park Plan will raise the profile of the Park and the Authority across Scotland. This is a good opportunity to communicate key messages about the Park to a national and local audience.

Implications for Stakeholders

25. The consultation is another opportunity for stakeholders to influence the future direction of the Park and priorities for the next 5 years.

Next Steps

26. Subject to the Board's agreement, the enclosed text will form the basis for the consultation next spring. We will inform Members of events surrounding the consultation, such as the launch and public meetings, when they have been arranged.
27. Once the consultation is complete, we expect to report back to the Board in September 06 and put a revised Final Plan for the Board's approval later in the autumn.

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