

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR INFORMATION

**Title:** Corporate Plan Report: Theme 2

**Prepared by:** Fiona Newcombe, Head of Natural Resources

### **Purpose**

To inform the Board of our work to achieve the second strategic theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08, and to describe our plans for future activity.

### **Recommendations**

- That the Board note the progress and plans for achieving the second theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08.

### **Executive Summary**

The second theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 reads:

“To promote sustainable resource, land and water management; and to protect and enhance our wildlife and landscapes”

The work to date has concentrated on three main areas:

- Early priorities such as the long-term strategic work on integrated land management,
- The delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Land Based Businesses Training Project and the Moorland project; and
- The development of the Park Plan and Local Plan.

Action has been implemented to increase the CNPA’s capacity to deliver Theme 2 of the Corporate Plan. A key area for further attention is to continue building relationships with stakeholders.

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## CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 2

### Background

1. This is the fourth monthly report on the five strategic themes within the CNPA's Corporate Plan for 2005-08. This paper concerns the second theme:

“To promote sustainable resource, land and water management; and to protect and enhance our wildlife and landscapes”
2. There are many public agencies, non-governmental organisations, businesses and individuals already engaged in delivering this theme. Defining the role of the CNPA in relation to all these stakeholders is essential for delivering this theme. We are not here to duplicate or replace the activities of others, but to add value, particularly through integrating and co-ordinating activity. Much of this work is long-term and shows little immediate visible results. Much activity is being identified and developed through engaging with partners while drawing up the National Park Plan.
3. To balance this, we are also undertaking a number of highly visible projects, such as the Land Based Businesses Training Project. The visible outputs will increase as the strategies are developed and the Park Plan completed.
4. The CNPA resources to deliver Theme 2 have been considered carefully, and a programme of recruitment carried out over the last few months. From late summer, we will have increased capacity to deliver on land management and natural heritage objectives, including landscape. Key priorities for development by the new staff will be the natural heritage strategy and the sustainable resource strategy.
5. Delivery of the second Corporate Plan theme is primarily the responsibility of the CNPA's Natural Resources Group (NRG), although other groups also make important contributions. This report, however, focuses only upon the work of NRG and has been structured around the key outputs of integrated land management and projects.

### Integrated Land Management

6. The first stage for developing public sector support for land managers to meet the 4 aims of the CNP, was to understand what should be the outcomes of such support. This meant identifying what we want to see on the ground as a result of public support. Essentially, this is about developing a 'shopping list' for public sector support. Four seminars were held with land managers and other stakeholders, and the results identified a wide range of public goods, including wildlife and floodplain management, the provision of local economic and social infrastructure, stable and cohesive communities and the culture and traditions of the area.
7. One of the key points to emerge was that the special qualities were not uniquely to be found in one aspect of land use or land management but in the way the tapestry of land use and management practices had created a 'rich mosaic' of moorland, mountain, farmland, forest and woodland, and water. It was this mix of land use and the way

that it has been managed (often in traditional, extensive, family and mixed patterns) that provided the basis for the Park and for the delivery of a range of knock-on benefits.

8. The next stage of the work is to identify how the public benefits identified are currently being supported, and to work with stakeholders to fill the gaps. A paper will be brought to Board in September 2005.

### **Land Management Contracts**

9. Land management contracts (LMCs) were identified as a key mechanism for delivering integrated land management. The Scottish Executive is currently planning the rollout of LMCs for 2007. Issues they are considering include:
  - a) measures specifically aimed at National Parks;
  - b) how to build in regional flexibility;
  - c) mechanisms for the identification of objectives;
  - d) how to integrate existing policies; and
  - e) opportunities for local stakeholder input.
10. We have agreed to work closely with the Scottish Executive to identify opportunities to implement LMCs in the Cairngorms National Park. A scoping paper will be completed, with input from Board, by the end of June.

### **Catchment Management**

11. Work continues with partners on Catchment Management Plans (CMPs), with recent efforts directed towards the Esk CMP. A scoping study is currently being carried out and will likely report in the autumn, when partners will come together to discuss actions and funding needed to progress the plan. Considerations will be made for opportunities to integrated catchment management planning with the integrated land management work, and other strategies such as the natural heritage strategy.

### **Fire Protection**

12. The Park Authority has temporarily supported Badenoch and Strathspey Rural Fire Protection Group through its provision of a secretariat. Support for Fire Protection Groups across the Park is currently being considered.

### **Local Biodiversity Action Plan**

13. The LBAP is currently being delivered through two main mechanisms: projects and Partner Delivery Plans. Partner Delivery Plans are being delivered by all agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders involved in the LBAP. They set out how each partner is delivering the LBAP, and identify areas for collaborative working.
14. The current LBAP projects include:
  - a) the non-native fish project;
  - b) the development of a follow-on project to the upland grain initiative, which concluded this Spring;

- c) a swift nest survey which is aimed at communities across the whole Park and asks people to record where swifts nest. The initiative is also raising awareness of swift-friendly building design or building renovation, and encourages people to put up swift nest boxes to create more homes for swifts; and
  - d) support for Butterfly Conservation Scotland's 'Butterflies and Moths in the Cairngorms mean business.'
15. To help secure further projects, a LBAP grants scheme is being developed. It will be a LBAP partnership grant scheme, supported and overseen by the LBAP. The CNPA will provide administrative support through the integrated grant scheme, as described in Paper 1. Criteria and support for funding projects are still under discussion, but the scheme is expected to have a focus on enabling communities to develop the LBAP. It is planned to have the LBAP grant scheme up and running by late summer.
16. A key priority for the future delivery of the LBAP is by working with communities. This is being developed through engagement with The Association of Cairngorms Community Councils, the John Muir Award and Ranger services. The LBAP grant scheme will help support the delivery of this priority. A number of activities are expected to be generated from this work.
17. Monitoring the delivery of the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan is a further key challenge for the next few months. This will help co-ordinate the Partner Delivery Plans, identify priorities for action, and areas for review. It is also a requirement for the national 2005 reporting round on the UK Biodiversity Action Plans.

### **Land Based Businesses Training Project**

18. An update on the Land Based Businesses Training project was brought to Board in May 2005. Following on from the discussion held, we are now developing a long-term vision for the project, and plan to bring to Board a three year business plan in January 2006.
19. In addition to supporting a range of training courses, the following public benefits courses are being organised:
- a) Tick Control and Heather Management - 25 May 2005.
  - b) Handling the media and advanced communications skills for land managers - August 2005.
  - c) Wildlife and the Law - 19 and 19 October.
  - d) SOAC and Communication Skills - 2 November.
  - e) Disability Awareness - 4 and 11 November.
  - f) Wildfire Management for Supervisors - 21 and 22 November.
  - g) Scenario Based Access Training - 6 and 7 December.

### **Moorland Project**

20. The Cairngorms Moorlands Project is continuing to develop the two demonstration moors at Blairfindy and Balnaboth; and run a programme of visits and interpretation.

21. We have conducted a mid-term review of the Project and are currently working up options for building on the achievements of the project to date. We are particularly keen to link this work to the implementation of the Interpretation Framework, the LBAP, and the development of integrated land management. We aim to bring a full paper to the Board in September.

### **Freshwater Pearl Mussel Reintroduction**

22. Phase I of the freshwater pearl mussel reintroduction project is complete. Three formerly occupied sites have been surveyed for suitability. Initial work has also been undertaken to ensure that local estates, fishery interests, tenant farmers etc are supportive of the project. The practical stage of reintroducing the mussels themselves to their former haunts requires licensing and so, the report has been presented to SNH and UK BAP Steering Group to consider. Work has also been undertaken to ensure the next stage of the work can be funded (primarily through Leader + and SNH) when licensing is approved.

### **Development Control**

23. A key tool for conserving and enhancing the natural heritage is the planning system. Advice and information has been made to Board, staff, individuals and external partners on a range of natural resource issues. Most effort has been focused on input to the Local Plan and planning casework determinations.
24. 'A *Biodiversity Guidance Note for the Householder*' has been produced. This leaflet highlights how people who are planning work on their house or garden can protect and enhance wildlife on their property and where they can go for further advice. It will be launched in late June or early July 2005 and will be sent out with all planning applications thus ensuring that we will influence every planning application in the Park.

### **Greening the CNPA**

25. An environmental audit has been carried out at both offices. The purpose of the audit was to identify opportunities for improved resource efficiency, potential cost savings and to highlight areas for further investigation. Work has now begun to develop the environmental management systems for the CNPA. We will report to the Audit Committee by September 2005.

**Fiona Newcombe**

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**fionanewcombe@cairngorms.co.uk**