
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

**Title: CAIRNGORMS OUTDOOR ACCESS TRUST – DRAFT
BUSINESS PLAN 2011 - 2015**

Prepared by: Bob Grant, Senior Outdoor Access Officer

Purpose

This paper details the progress that has been made in delivering access related work by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust over the last 3 years and seeks approval in principle of a contribution towards the next four year Business Plan.

Recommendations

That the Board

- a) Notes the programme of works that have been delivered to date and the very significant leverage obtained from CNPA investment (around 1: 3 in this financial year but up to 1:9 on certain projects);
- b) Approves funding for detailed elements in the four-year Business Plan; and
- c) Notes that approval of the CNPA contribution to the Business Plan will be brought to the Board once future financial allocations have been determined.

Executive Summary

The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) is now in its third year of operation and has increased both total funding support and the number of funding sources contributing to a broad range of works in the National Park. The Trust is now preparing a four-year Business Plan which will run from 2011 to 2015. At present there is some uncertainty over CNPA funding allocations from Government. It is anticipated that clarity on allocations will be available in the early new year at which time the Board's approval will be sought for a contribution towards the four year Business Plan. There are, however, elements of the Business Plan that need to be considered at this stage in order to secure third party funding, deliver objectives previously agreed by the Board, and ensure work can progress on some priority infrastructure improvements in early 2011.

CAIRNGORMS OUTDOOR ACCESS TRUST – DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2011 – 2015 - FOR DECISION

Background

1. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust came into effect in April 2008 and was created to deliver a wide range of access related benefits. The current Business Plan has seen work delivered on the following topics: path networks around communities, mountain paths, strategic routes, walking to health, associated visitor infrastructure and promotion marketing and development. The Trust has a Board of Directors, two of whom are nominated by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. They are Cllr. Dave Fallows and David Cameron. Cllr. Marcus Humphrey, who is also a Director, is a nominee of Aberdeenshire Council.

Progress to Date

2. **Community paths** - In the current financial year community paths have been completed in Braemar, Street of Kincardine, Carrbridge and the path from Kingussie to Newtonmore via Loch Gynack although a bridge remains to be replaced at the Newtonmore end of this path. Path agreements / permissions have now been secured which will enable work to commence this year on the paths between Dinnet and Glen Tanar, Cambus o' May to Dalmochie, Ballater golf course path, link path to the river in Strathdon, Dulnain Bridge riverside path, Heronry Trail in Boat of Garten and Insh to Inshriach forest path. Good quality paths provide a valuable resource to enable communities enjoy quiet recreation with associated health, business and sustainable transport benefits.
3. **Mountain paths** – COAT has successfully bid for and secured funding totalling £2 million pounds for a four-year Mountain Heritage Project. Contracts are currently being let on the first tranche of work which will see repairs to the following paths: Phase I on the Windy Ridge path on Cairngorm, top of Lurchers / Lochan ridge to Ben MacDui path, phase I Bynack More, Lairig an Laoigh and a section on the west end of the Lairig Ghru. Repair of these mountain paths will make a key contribution to the outdoor infrastructure of the Park, with associated benefits supporting local business, and restores damaged landscapes, helping to protect sensitive habitats in the core montane area of the Park. CNPA Finance Committee has already approved a £50,000 contribution to this project in each of the four years which amounts to a 10% contribution to the overall costs. The funding leverage for CNPA for this project alone is therefore at 1:9, or £1.8m secured on the basis of a £200,000 investment.
4. **Strategic routes** - The Trust has now taken on the maintenance of the Speyside Way within the National Park on behalf of CNPA and is currently assessing the route to advise on where improvements could be made to increase accessibility. Previously this work was managed by Moray Council on behalf of the three Access Authorities. At that time the CNPA contribution towards the management and maintenance of the route was in the order of £70,000 per annum. As a result of a wider package of changes agreed by the Board, the cost of routine maintenance of this route through COAT is now around £15,000 in the current financial year. The Trust also has an agreement with Aberdeenshire Council over the Deeside Way and leads on both maintenance and construction of new sections. Strategic routes provide opportunities

for longer journeys, offer potential for local business promotion and contribute significantly to reducing reliance on vehicles.

5. **Walking to Health** – health walk groups are operating in the following communities: Ballater, Strathdon, Grantown, Nethybridge, Aviemore, Carrbridge, Kingussie and Newtonmore. There are also specific groups for new mums, healthy minds, Alzheimer Nordic walk group and a cancer support group. In addition, joint work has taken place with the Glen Tanar Ranger Service delivering a volunteer-led walk and Strathdon Medical Practice has established a Diabetes group.
6. **Visitor infrastructure** – A new information board has been installed at the Spittal of Glen Muick, and replacements are planned in both Braemar and Ballater this financial year. The replacements will build on the new panel developed in Nethy Bridge and will include the Cairngorms National Park brand.
7. **Marketing, development and promotion** – Work on the new community path leaflet for Ballater has been delayed pending inclusion of the Cambus o' May to Dalmochie path. As agreement has now been secured on that path, the leaflet can be taken forward as will the revised community leaflet for Braemar and the revamped information boards. Leaflets will be developed using the CNPA template for community path leaflets. A similar leaflet for Kingussie is now ready to go to print. Work on an all-abilities path leaflet for Deeside is in progress and scheduled to be completed this year. Communication staff within CNPA continue to assist COAT with press releases and other related articles and all work undertaken by COAT is Cairngorms National Park branded, as is their website.

Funding to date

8. The CNPA contribution and overall budget secured for the first 3 financial years is shown in Table I below. The CNPA Board encouraged COAT to develop funding streams other than those provided by the Authority and conditioned £30,000 and £35,000 elements of funding in 2009/10 and 2010/11 respectively to successful match funding from partners. This has been achieved.

Table I

Financial year	CNPA contribution	CNPA % of total budget	Total budget secured
2008/09	150,000	44%	340,000
2009/10	180,000	34.5%	521,500
2010/11	185,000	24%	773,500
Total	515,000	31.5%	1,635,000

9. The Trust has been very successful in securing external funding in each of the three financial years with CNPA's contribution being less than a quarter of the overall funding package in the current financial year.
10. **The Board is asked to note the programme of works that have been delivered to date and the very significant leverage obtained from CNPA investment.**

2011 – 15 Business Plan

11. With the first three years of work nearing completion and a sound track- record on delivery, COAT are now looking to develop a longer term Business Plan. A four-year plan will provide greater flexibility in both delivery and reassurance to communities and stakeholders that priority works will be delivered. Early discussions have taken place with COAT colleagues to ensure key works that have arisen from the Core Paths Plan and fit for purpose assessment will be included in the Business Plan. The outline Business Plan is shown in **Annex I**.
12. At this stage however, there is considerable uncertainty about how much CNPA can afford to devote to access work and that uncertainty will remain until the consequences of the UK Comprehensive Spending Review are known and how they are reflected through Scottish Government budget proposals. For these reasons it is not possible, at this stage, to seek a commitment from Board on the full funding package. To facilitate some degree of forward planning while the CNPA works on forward budgets, the Board are requested to consider approving commitment of funding to support the Trust's work on Speyside Way management, and hence secure the considerable efficiency savings in these operations. The Board is also asked to consider delegating approval to Finance Committee for contributions to projects of up to £35,000 in 2011/12 to support project design and delivery early in 2011/12. The detail of funding being sought is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Activity	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
Speyside Way routine maintenance	15,000	16,000	17,000	18,000	66,000
Community paths projects	35,000	-	-		35,000
Mountain Heritage Paths Project*	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	200,000
Total	100,000	66,000	67,000	68,000	301,000

* Already approved by Finance Committee

13. **The Board is asked to approve funding for the detailed elements in the four-year Business Plan.**
14. It is likely that CNPA will have the necessary financial information to determine budgets for the next financial year towards the end of this or early next year. CNPA will therefore be better placed to determine the affordability of funding for the four year Business Plan early next year and at that stage a paper will be presented to the Board for detailed approval of remaining elements of funding beyond those set out in Table 2.
15. **The Board is asked to note that approval of the CNPA contribution to the remaining elements of the Business Plan beyond those set out in Table 2 will**

be brought to the Board once future financial allocations to the Authority have been determined by Scottish Government.

Policy Context

16. There is a very close fit with the proposed business plan and 'Developing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access' – The relevant Priority for Action within the National Park Plan. At a Scottish level, the development of improved access around and between communities and the development of health walks contribute directly to targets relating to improve the nation's health and wellbeing. Repair works on upland paths will contribute to the protection of wild land qualities in the National Park which is contained within the 'Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes' Priority for Action.

Delivering Sustainability

17. Providing better quality paths that are useable by a broader range of people will assist in encouraging sustainable transport and reduction in the use of fossil fuels.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

18. The Board has recognised that a Trust, operating at arms length from the Park Authority, provides the best model for being flexible and able to quickly react to changing needs. The Trust is well placed to attract external funding and the first three years of operation has shown this to be the case with leverage now being greater than 1 in 4.

Financial Implications

19. The financial implications are detailed in paragraphs 10 to 12 and **Annex I**. The Director of Corporate Services and Finance Committee is closely monitoring the level of forward financial commitments entered into by CNPA, with a target of limiting such commitments to no more than 30% of the current year Operational Plan budget (around £540,000). The level of commitment proposed here can be accommodated within these parameters.

Presentational Implications

20. The outline Business Plan will continue to excite communities by seeing real delivery on the ground of long sought after improvements to local networks. There are presentational benefits to the Trust by demonstrating delivery and to the Park Authority and funding partners in working towards common goals for the good of both residents and visitors to the National Park. With ever constraining funding available within public bodies the Trust offers a real opportunity for funders to achieve best value from their limited resources.

Implications for stakeholders

21. The delivery of the business plan will meet the needs of a number of stakeholders including funding partners and communities.

Next Steps

22. A detailed funding contribution for the four year Business Plan will be sought from the Board once there is clarity over the CNPA budget allocation.

Bob Grant

August 2010

bobgrant@ Cairngorms.co.uk