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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title: Entry Point Signage For The Cairngorms National Park**

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to report on the progress made since the Board last considered this issue in July 2004, and to seek agreement on the next steps for the further development of the project.

### **Recommendations**

That the Board:

- Note the developmental work that has been undertaken on this project since July 2004 and that the current cost estimate for the design and installation of the entry point markers alone has been revised downwards to £908k (including VAT);
- Authorise funding for the design and installation of temporary signs at the six principal entry points to the National Park;
- That the Board authorise funding to commission landscape/design consultants to undertake essential developmental work:
  - undertake detailed survey of the six principal entry point sites and to design appropriate landscape settings;
  - provide a generic design for the remaining entry point markers with guide prices;
  - undertake further developmental design work to ensure that all engineering, design and management specifications for the production of the markers are complete in time for the installation programme.
- Note that development of a strategic approach to road signage will be an early priority for the new Visitor Information and Interpretation Officer who will start work in early 2005.

### **Executive Summary**

This paper is based on the principles that were agreed by the Board in July 2004 to guide future work on the Entry Point Marker project. The paper summarises the developmental work that has been undertaken since that time and reports on the investigations that have been made into external funding opportunities.

Due to the extended period of time that it will take to draw together the funding package and all necessary permissions, it is recommended that temporary signage be installed at the six principal entry points for the Park so that this is in place by summer 2005.

The next stages for the development of the granite markers and associated works are outlined. The linkages that require to be made between this project and other work are summarised.

## ENTRY POINT SIGNAGE FOR THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

### Background

1. In July 2004 the Board considered the work that had been undertaken to date and agreed the following general principles to guide completion of the Project:
  - a) Entry point markers should be developed, in association with landscaping and other works, to provide a positive experience for people arriving at the Park, encapsulating the area's essential character and as far as possible evoking the Park's fundamental values of quality, welcome, integrity, respect, protection and progress.
  - b) Entry point markers of an appropriate design should be provided at 31 sites. Of these, 22 sites are on public roads; two sites are on the Speyside Way Long Distance Route; two sites are on the National Cycle Network route along the A9 corridor and five sites are at mainline railway stations.
  - c) The precise location of the entry point markers should be as close as possible to, but not necessarily on, the Park boundary so as to allow the best possible outcome in terms of sense of arrival to the Park, road safety and negotiations with land-owners.
  - d) High profile sites would benefit from a significant degree of landscaping and associated works to promote an appropriate sense of identity. Low profile sites require only minimal additional intervention.
  - e) Road and path entry point markers should be read by traffic passing in one direction only and no provision should be made for signs indicating exit from the Park.
  - f) Signs should generally include a visual identity relating to the Park and a minimum number of words but, if they include the name of the National Park, it must be in both English and Gaelic.
  - g) Where possible, entry point markers at key sites should be linked to the provision of visitor information close to, or shortly after passing, the entry point markers. The purpose of this information is to provide orientation for visitors, encouraging them to stay in and explore the Park.
  - h) The development on an effective maintenance regime is an integral part of the project
  - i) The choice of materials to be used and the financial management of the project should not expose the CNPA to a high level of risk
2. Members also agreed that:
  - the high quality signs (granite slab signs) are the most desirable design option for entry point markers and that CNPA staff should now, as a matter of priority, investigate external funding opportunities with partners; and
  - opportunities for provision of visitor information should be investigated with potential funding partners.

## Progress Report

3. Since July, a considerable amount of further developmental work has been undertaken by the Project Team and partner organisations. Progress has been summarised under each heading as follows:
  - Materials for entry point markers and the process of installation;
  - Discussion with Landscape Consultants
  - Refinement of entry point marker locations; and
  - Investigation of the funding package.

### *Materials for entry point markers and the process of installation*

4. The availability and use of Scottish stone has been investigated with emphasis on granite quarries in and around the Park's periphery and within the wider Grampian area. There are currently no sources of large-scale dimensional stone within the Cairngorms National Park, although there is the possibility of re-opening a dimensional face at Alvie quarry, near Aviemore.
5. Following further design work, if granite with very particular characteristics is required, it is possible that this would have to be sourced from other parts of Scotland. For example, for the rectangular rear sign panel, a uniformly dark or light coloured material would be required to create a strong contrast with the lettering. Some flexibility will also be required in terms of the panel size, colour, markings, jointing and so on because these characteristics cannot be confidently predicted in advance of actual stone blocks being sourced from the quarry. The required stone working expertise and facilities are rare within the UK, although one company, Fyfe Glenrock, based in Aberdeenshire is a potential contractor that could undertake the stone supply, working and installation for this project.
6. The use of a kiln-formed glass element in the Park entry point markers had been considered. Although this would provide a visually stunning contrast to the granite of the mountain-shaped panels, the use of glass carries a number of risks associated with producing such large-scale slabs. It was concluded that the significant design benefits of using kiln-formed glass as an element of the entry signs are outweighed by the substantial additional costs and risks associated with its use. This option has therefore been rejected.
7. It was decided to commission a full-sized mock-up of the granite signs, to assess the form, colour, size, arrangement and positioning of signs at an appropriate stage. Cost estimates have been obtained from three sign producers based in the Highlands including construction, storage and delivery. The mock-up sign can be made at relatively short notice and will be commissioned at the appropriate stage.

### *Discussion with Landscape Consultants*

8. The project was discussed in detail with a number of landscape consultants, with the hope that a single brief could be produced to cover both the initial detailed design work and the project implementation. However, the view was that accurate costings for the implementation phase would not be possible without clarification of the scale of funding that would be forthcoming and of the timescale for implementation. As a result, the preferred way forward is to separate the further developmental work

required from the project implementation. The next stages in the development of the project are covered in paragraph 24 onwards.

*Refinement of entry point marker locations*

9. Members of the NPA Project Team visited each of the six principal entry points to gain a better understanding of the various issues at each site. A summary of findings is provided at Annex 1. Consultation with partners has enabled a revision of the estimated costs of the Entry Signs Project part of the project from the original Scoping Report (see below), and the specification of works required at each site has also been reviewed.

*Investigation of the funding package*

10. In the July Board Paper the cost of installing the granite/glass markers with minimal landscaping was estimated as £998k (including VAT). These figures have now been revised downwards to £908k (including VAT) due to:
  - clarification that granite was preferred material and not glass
  - changes to scale of works anticipated at some sites
  - refinement of project development costs.
11. The provision of associated lay-bys and visitor information points at the 6 high profile entry points was estimated in the Board Paper at a further £1.4million plus VAT. It is now considered that a significant downward review of these estimates will be feasible following further investigation of the options available at each site and consultation with key partners.
12. The following agencies and organisations have been formally contacted with a view to contributing financially to the project:
  - Moray Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise
  - Scottish Enterprise Grampian
  - Scottish Enterprise Tayside
  - Highland Council
  - Moray Council
13. A funding application had been made to the East of Scotland European Partnership (ESEP) but this had to be withdrawn because a timeframe for obtaining planning consent could not be precisely determined. However, an application to ESEP will be made for the next round in March 2005. Following discussions with the managing agency (HIPP) for the Highlands and Islands Objective 1 Transitional Programme an application for funding has been invited for the February 2005 round of bids.
14. Initial discussions have also been held with the Scottish Executive, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Rees Jeffreys' Road Fund, BEAR, and the Community Environmental Renewal Scheme (which uses money from aggregates extraction) and applications for funding (or in kind funding) to these bodies will be made in 2005 once certain project details (specifically information/interpretation and lay-by costs) are more clearly defined.

15. For the entry point markers alone, applications have been made to funding partners for a total sum of £645k. We are confident that the external element of the funding package for the entry point element of the project will be found, based on the assumption that £150k per annum will be contributed by CNPA over the two year period required for installation.
16. The potential of external funding of the visitor information element has been progressed but still requires further investigation as the project planning continues. This will be pursued with the partners listed above along with any other funding opportunities.
17. It is important to note that further site visits and consideration of funding availability will allow continued cost refinement as the project progresses.

### **Recommendation**

18. **That Board members note the developmental work that has been undertaken on this project since July 2004 and that the current cost estimate for the design and installation of the entry point markers alone has been revised downwards to £908k (including VAT).**

### **Design and Installation of Temporary Signs at Principal Entry Points**

19. In the light of the developmental work described above, and particularly the complexity of pulling together the necessary funding package and permissions, it has become clear that it will be impossible to install the entry point markers at the principal entry points in time for the next tourist season. In view of the importance of marking the presence of the Park on the ground, cost estimates have been obtained for simple metal signs at the six highest profile entry points, listed at Annex 1.
20. Estimates for the cost of the design work, sign manufacture and installation are around £15,000 (including VAT). Once the design work is finalised, the signs could be installed within a period of three months.
21. The advantages of installing temporary signs are:
  - Signs are easily and quickly installed and could be in place for the beginning of the summer tourist season
  - The timetable for installation would fit well with incorporation of the Cairngorms brand
  - Due to the relatively low cost, the NPA could pay for the project without seeking funding partners
  - This project would be viewed as developmental work and will not affect the funding applications for the permanent granite markers
  - Temporary signage at the principal entry points will allow greater flexibility in the phasing of the installation programme for the permanent granite markers.

22. The disadvantages of installing temporary signs are:
- The benefits of the high quality entry point markers, and the sense of arrival to the Park, will be absent for two to three years and visitors will not know that the interim signs are ‘temporary’;
  - The management of this project although reasonably straightforward will take some additional staff time, which will impact on the progress of the permanent marker project; and
  - Once funding is in place for the permanent granite markers, there may be a mix of permanent and temporary signage around the boundary until all granite markers are in place.
23. Board members should note that if the temporary signs were to be installed as described above, no signs would be placed within the Angus or Moray Council areas. Advice has been sought from the appropriate Board Members from these local authorities and both have advised that there would be no strong demand for temporary signage at these locations provided that good progress was made to put the permanent markers in place.
24. If the temporary signs are to be installed, appropriate publicity would be required to make clear that the signs are intended to be temporary and that the permanent markers should be in place within 3 years.

### **Recommendation**

25. **That the Board authorise funding (£15,000 including VAT) for the design and installation of temporary signs at the six principal entry points to the National Park.**

### **Next stages in development of the Project**

26. There are a number of actions that are required over the next three months to maintain momentum in the development of this project. They include both the commissioning of consultants for specialist advice and continued preparatory work by the Point of Entry Project Team. The steps required and timetable are summarised in Annex 2.

#### *Landscape/ Design Consultants*

27. Landscape/design consultants require to be commissioned to produce detailed landscape specifications of the entry points and, where appropriate, associated visitor information provision at the six key entry points. This will include a topographic survey of each site and preparation of cost estimates.
28. The marker itself also requires further developmental design work to ensure that all engineering, design and management specifications for the production of the markers are complete in time for the installation programme. This will include the incorporation of the Cairngorms brand development work into the markers and the

development of a category C marker for smaller roads, footpaths and at rail stations. This work should be complete by the end of March 2005.

29. This work is essential developmental work that is a precursor to implementation of the project. Separation of this work from project implementation will allow the Board to take a firm decision in March 2005 about the budget that is to be set for this project. The project will then be managed to fit within this budget, thereby reducing the element of financial risk.

#### *Review of Sites and Consultation*

30. Further site visits are planned to resolve issues on the precise location of the markers at the key entry points. This will feed into the work by the landscape/design consultants.
31. For the remaining sites (categories B and C), consultation with respective landowners, and community councils and associations is a priority action. Site visits to each point of entry may be required for clarification of exact location of the marker.

#### *Meeting to clarify Planning Process*

32. It is intended to convene a meeting of representatives from each local authority planning department with Park Authority planners to clarify the planning process for the granite markers.
33. The next critical stage for the Project in terms of Board involvement will be in March 2005 when a paper will be brought reporting on progress and seeking approval for commitment of funds for implementation.

#### **Recommendation**

34. **That the Board authorise funding (£55,000 including VAT) to commission landscape/design consultants to undertake essential developmental work:**
  - **undertake detailed survey of the six principal entry point sites and design appropriate landscape settings;**
  - **provide a generic design for the remaining entry point markers with guide prices;**
  - **undertake further developmental design work to ensure that all engineering, design and management specifications for the production of the markers are complete in time for the installation programme.**

#### **Links to Interpretation Strategy and Road Signage**

35. In seeing the project through to implementation it will be essential to integrate the visitor information elements to the work that was undertaken by Sam Ham and which will be written up as the Interpretation Strategy for the Park. This work is in hand and should come back to the Board in first Quarter of 2005.

36. In addition, questions have been raised by partner organisations about our plans for pre-arrival signage (directing people to the National Park), and to brown tourist signs or directional signage within the Park. This has been reinforced recently by an initiative within the Angus Council area. Currently, brown tourist signs are proposed on the A90 at Kirriemuir and Keithock which will provide an indication of the direction to the Cairngorms National Park for summer 2005. The required follow-on signage from these trunk road signs has been developed as a package, and input from the Authority will be required in due course. In the meantime, the incorporation of the Cairngorms brand logo on a brown tourist sign is being investigated.
37. These various elements require linking together, so that the Authority has a clear strategy for providing visitors with the means to get to where they want to go within the Park area. Current staff resources mean that this area of work cannot be taken forward in the short term. However, a new Visitor Information and Interpretation Officer will be recruited shortly and this will be a priority item for them once they start work.

### **Recommendation**

38. **That the Board note that development of a strategic approach to road signage will be an early priority for the new Visitor Information and Interpretation Officer who will start work in early 2005.**

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## Annex 1: Revised categorisation of Entry Points and Notes from Project Team Site Visits

### Category A Entry Points: Principal entry points

Where the Park is entered on very busy 'A' roads, having a high volume of visitor traffic or particular strategic importance. The Park entry point will be designed to produce a very strong sense of arrival and provide for the immediate information needs of visitors. The installation will comprise a prominent entry sign located, where possible, at or near a parking area with visitor information.

Location and Route	Notes from site visits
<b>Drumochter</b> A9, Estimated vehicle usage: 7,060	This site is the primary entry point for visitors from the south, it is an opportunity to create a major sense of arrival and communicate a particularly high quality first impression of the National Park and the Highlands. A convenient lay-by exists at the boundary to locate the visitor information, but significant upgrading work will be required.
<b>Slochd Summit</b> A9, Estimated vehicle usage: 7,000	There is no obvious lay-by associated with this entry point. The existing lay-by at Slochd Summit is just as the dual carriage ends, and a granite marker of the size required for such a site is likely to be a significant distraction to drivers. Closer to the Carr-Bridge exit, upgrading of the road to 2 + 1 carriageway is planned, which does not allow lay-by provision alongside for safety reasons. Further consultation with the Scottish Executive is required for this entry point.
<b>Dinnet</b> A93, Recorded vehicle usage: 4,400	The best location for the permanent marker is the site currently occupied by a granite boulder with the inscription 'You are now in the Highlands'. There is no obvious lay-by for the provision of visitor information and it is suggested that upgrading the Village Hall car park with full visitor information and interpretation with the possible relocation of the boulder for easier access by visitors might be an option for consideration. It is suggested that a meeting be held with community representatives to discuss this site and the possible options. The temporary sign site could also be discussed.
<b>Advie</b> A95, Estimated vehicle usage: 1,880	This location can accommodate a permanent medium to large marker but again there is no close-by settlement in which to locate the information. A convenient lay-by already exists near the Park boundary, although this will require significant upgrading to bring it up to standard. Potential partnership working with the Scottish Executive is being investigated.
<b>Glen Shee</b> A93, Estimated vehicle usage: 1,100	The site with most potential for the permanent marker is the site currently occupied by the Aberdeenshire Council metal sign. There is no obvious associated lay-by and further consideration must be given to the best location for visitor information, and upgrading work.

<p><b>Kinloch Laggan</b> A86, Estimated vehicle usage: 934</p>	<p>The preferred location for the entry point marker is a short distance outside the Park boundary. There are no suitable lay-bys at the boundary and very few places locally where safe entrance and exit from the road is possible. Two sites where visitor information and associated upgrading and landscaping work, if required, might be provided are currently under consideration at Pattack Falls and the new Strathmashie Challenging Off Road Cycle Centre.</p>
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**Category B Entry Points: Medium profile entry points**

Quieter 'A' roads or busier 'B' roads.

Map Reference	Route	Location	Authority	Vehicles/Day
06	A939	Grantown-on-Spey	Highland	1,550 (recorded)
12	A97	Glenkindie	Aberdeenshire	1,000 (estimate)
05	B9007	Carr Bridge	Highland	540 (recorded)
11	B9008	Tomnavoulin	Moray	539 (recorded)
10	B9136	Glenlivet	Moray	235 (recorded)

**Category C Entry Points: Low profile entry points**

Quieter 'B' roads, unnamed roads, stations or paths.

Map Reference	Route	Location	Authority	Vehicles/Day
14	B9119	Ordie	Aberdeenshire	500 (estimate)
16	B976	Bridge o' Ess	Aberdeenshire	500 (estimate)
13		Rippachie	Aberdeenshire	300 (estimate)
07	B9102	Advie	Highland	250 (estimate)
21		Glen Isla	Angus	89 (estimate)
17 (formerly Cat. B)		Glen Esk	Angus	391 (recorded)
18		Glen Clova North	Angus	86 (estimate)
19 (formerly Cat B)	B955	Glen Clova South	Angus	285 (estimate)
03		Garva Bridge	Highland	75 (estimate)
20		Glen Prosen	Angus	48 (estimate)
09		Drumin	Moray	no data
23	No marker required - part of road upgrade	A9 Cycle route	Highland	no data
24	A9 Slochd	Cycle route	Highland	no data
25	Speyside Way	Advie	Highland	no data
26	Speyside Way	Glenlivet	Moray	no data
27	Rail station	Dalwhinnie	Highland	no data
28	Rail station	Newtonmore	Highland	no data
29	Rail station	Kingussie	Highland	no data
30	Rail station	Aviemore	Highland	no data
31	Rail station	Carr Bridge	Highland	no data