

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR INFORMATION

**Title:** OPERATIONAL PLAN 2005/06 YEAR-END UPDATE

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#### **Purpose**

To present a review of progress on the 2005/06 Operational Plan.

#### **Recommendation**

The Board is requested to note the progress made on 2005/06 Operational Plan actions over the course of the year, and in particular that:

- a) Progress on 16 of 20 goals remains broadly in line with intentions set out in the Operational Plan.
- b) Two of the five goals highlighted in previous reports as at increased risk to delivery of intended outcomes have now been brought back into line with plans.
- c) Delivery on all Priority 1 goals is now in line with Operational Plans.
- d) Four goals are now each been identified as affected by some changes to the timetable and/or intended delivery plans, which pose some risk to delivery of intended outcomes.
- e) Overall, year-end review of the 2005/06 Operational Plan continues to present generally successful work and resource investment in delivering operational and, ultimately, corporate plan objectives.

#### **Executive Summary**

The Operational Plan sets out a range of actions, and milestones associated with these actions, which contribute over the course of 2005/06 to the ultimate delivery of the 20 Corporate Plan goals over the next few years. The Management Team's review of the 2005/06 Operational Plan has sought to identify whether planned activities remain broadly on target in terms of timetable and delivery of intended outcomes, or whether, for any reason, there is any risk of actions not being delivered within target timescales.

The Management Team has adopted a "traffic light" system of categorising progress, with each action classes as green, amber or red depending on the level of risk attached to delivery of intended outcomes.

The monitoring process has highlighted that two of five goals previously assessed with an increased risk of non-delivery (amber) have now been brought back into line with plans over the final quarter of 2005/06. The review indicates that progress on 16 of 20 goals is broadly in line with intentions set out in the Operational Plan. Progress on four goals is now classed as amber as a consequence of delays in a number of associated activities. Officers will continue to seek to bring those actions back on track where possible as we move into the second year of the three-year Corporate Plan period.

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## OPERATIONAL PLAN 2005/06 YEAR-END UPDATE

### Background

1. The Operational Plan for 2005/06 was presented to the Board for information at its meeting in April. This plan stems from the Corporate Plan for 2005/06 to 2007/08, approved by the Board in February.
2. The Corporate Plan sets out 20 goals identifying the outcomes to which the Authority will direct its resources over the three years to 2008. The goals will not all be completed over the course of the current three year corporate planning period: progress will be made on all goals over this time and further direction will be given by the National Park Plan. Of the 20 goals, 7 have been identified as taking priority given that they are statutory duties and/or in most cases will provide the strategic framework which will guide activities within the Park for the next 10 years or so.
3. The Operational Plan sets out a range of actions, and milestones associated with these actions, which contribute over the course of 2005/06 to the ultimate delivery of the 20 Corporate Plan goals over the next few years.
4. The Management Team has now undertaken a fourth review of the operational plan for 2005/06, considering progress made against the plan over the course of the year and achievements in the year. This review has sought to identify whether planned activities remain broadly on target in terms of timetable and delivery of intended outcomes, or whether, for any reason, there is any risk of actions not being delivered within target timescales.
5. The results of the previous reviews were reported to the Board at its meetings on 1 July, 7 October, and 13 January 2006. This paper follows broadly the same format.

### 2005/06 Operational Plan Review Process

6. In reviewing the status of delivery of operational plan actions, the Management Team have used a three way system of categorisation:
  - a) Green: action being delivered broadly in line with timetable and intended milestones/outcomes envisaged in operational plan.
  - b) Amber: there are some changes to the timetable and/or intended delivery plans which pose some risk to delivery of intended outcomes.
  - c) Red: changes to timetable and/or delivery plans pose a significant risk to delivery of intended outcomes.
7. With the year in question now completed, the Operational Plan review considers the extent to which intended activities have been undertaken over the course of the year, and intended milestones achieved. Additionally, the opportunity has also been taken



**Decisions within reporting period**

	No. notified	No. called in	No. determined	No. approved	No. refused	Av. Determination time (days)
1Oct-31 Dec 05	106	18 (17% of notif.)	33	19 (58% of det.)	14	188
1 Jan- 31 Mar 06	107	13 (12% of notif.)	17	12 (70% of det.)	5	233

13. One other goal assessed as amber at the end of the third quarter - good quality outdoor access infrastructure in place and maintained – is also now considered to be broadly back on track and therefore assessed as green at the end of the year. The change in this area over the final quarter relates primarily to progress made on agreeing contributions to infrastructure projects.
14. Four Priority 2 areas where some increased risk to achievement of intended outcomes remains are considered below.
15. **Wide range of opportunities to experience the special qualities of the Park in a sustainable manner is available to all (Priority 2).** While good progress is being made across a range of actions contributing to this goal, it remains highlighted as amber as a result of delays in some areas persisting to the end of the year. The comments in the Annex to this paper indicate that some delay has arisen in developing a visitor information website, developing publications on recreation opportunities, supporting third party interpretation projects and developing plans for road signage within the Park.
16. **Good communication and consultation by land managers on objective setting for public benefits (Priority 2).** Comments under this goal highlight a refocusing of activities within the second half of 2005/06, reflecting the current level of staff resources available. Budget proposals approved by the Finance Committee in December provide for additional staff resource in this area to be recruited for 2006/07. Progress has been made in some areas over the fourth quarter, with a programme of meetings for the Integrated Land Management Forum established and a Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group set up.
17. **Stronger and more diverse economic opportunities within the CNP area (Priority 2).** While the majority of activities within this goal remain on target, it is now highlighted as amber as a result of delays in some strands of work. These delays are not serious, and have mostly been instigated deliberately to ensure that various strands of activity are fully integrated. The timescale for developing a Youth Apprenticeship Scheme has been extended into 2006/07 to tie in with development of Learning and Inclusion Plans and the Park Plan, while the development of food marketing strategies has been delayed due to availability of staff resources. A review meeting to consider progress

of the Chamber of Commerce against its development plan is scheduled for later in May.

18. **Good understanding and appreciation by young people of the CNP, and appreciation of its importance (Priority 2).** Progress on this goal, previously reported as “green” at the end of the third quarter, is also now highlighted as amber at the end of the year. This is a result of some delays in activities in this area to better tie in with development of the Park Plan. Again, these delays are not serious and are deliberate – ensuring integration of developments in this area tie in with wider activity.
19. All 16 other goals are, therefore, categorised as green and progressing broadly in line with the operational plan’s intentions.
20. It is important to bear in mind the overall context of this operational plan monitoring update, as seeking to reflect progress over the first of three years in delivering outcomes sought in the Corporate Plan. The detail of the Operational Plan review for 2005/06 indicates that there has been an improvement over the last quarter and that the great majority of the Authority’s planned activities for 2005/06 are on target at the end of the year.

### **Highlights of the Year**

21. As the current review of the Authority’s Operational Plan shows the position at the end of the 2005/06 year, it is appropriate to highlight a few of the Authority’s achievements over the course of the year, in particular with regard to the seven top priority areas agreed by the Board in the Authority’s Corporate Plan:
  - a) The Local Outdoor Access Forum has been established and is functioning well, while the Authority now has procedures in place to uphold access rights.
  - b) Publication and launch of draft National Park Plan (NPP).
  - c) Publication of consultative draft of CNP Local Plan, and a second round of community consultation.
  - d) Housing Action Plan has formed the basis for the development of the Park Plan priority for housing, with the Board due to consider the strategic direction for housing in the Park later in May.
  - e) The State of the Park report has been published alongside the draft NPP, and Strategic Environmental Assessments completed for both NPP and Local Plan.
  - f) Internal and External Audit reviews have confirmed the Authority has appropriate governance and planning arrangements in place, while we continue to undertake almost all of the Authority’s business in public, at various locations in the Park.
  - g) Substantial clearance of the backlog of planning applications.

## Implications

### *Financial Implications*

22. The Finance Committee has monitored the use of financial allocations to progress operational plans as part of its overall budget monitoring activity throughout 2005/06. The Committee noted its concern at its meeting in December 2005 that expenditure levels on activities in the year were well below that budgeted for at that stage of the year. This concern was mirrored at the end of December by an increased number of goals highlighted in the third quarter review of the Operational Plan as at some heightened risk through slippage in activity and associated slippage in financial commitments.
23. The Committee also noted that its experience in monitoring 2004-05 expenditure, which also had a relatively similar expenditure position at this stage in the year, gave some confidence that expenditure levels can increase substantially towards the end of the financial year. This has again proven to be the case, with latest estimates indicating that expenditure on the Operational Plan elements had increased from £0.4m reported to the Committee at the start of December to £1.5m at the end of the financial year. This compares with a maximum budget of £1.6m for this aspect of the Authority's operations.
24. The Board's Finance Committee will consider the Authority's final expenditure for 2005/06 in more detail at its meeting later in May.

### *Presentational Implications*

25. Overall, this year-end review of the 2005/06 Operational Plan continues to present generally successful work and resource investment in delivering operational and, ultimately, corporate plan objectives. Evidence of officers continuing to address delays highlighted in previous reports is shown by delivery of two goals now back on target, following their being previously shown at an increased level of risk, and all Priority 1 areas of activity being delivered in accordance with plans.
26. Therefore, the Authority is able to report continued successful delivery of its Corporate Plan objectives over the first year of the three year plan, often involving working with and through others, maximising the effect of its relatively small limited resources by acting as a catalyst, a co-ordinator, and enabler.

### *Implications for Stakeholders*

27. In working with and through others in meeting the Authority's objectives to date, other stakeholders will also benefit from that process of co-ordination and joined-up activity. There is, therefore, some confidence that in delivering our operational plan for the year, the Authority will also be contributing to the wider delivery objectives for a range of stakeholders with an interest in the Cairngorms National Park area.

## Next Steps

28. The next Operational Plan review will cover the first quarter of 2006/07, and is expected to be presented to the Board in August. The status of delivery of 2005/06 activity set out in the current review, and consequent contribution made to achievement of overall Corporate Plan objectives, will continue to form the baseline for review of progress into the first quarter of 2006/07. Hence, those four goals reported here is being amber and at some increased risk of outcomes not being achieved, will remain at that status until progress indicates otherwise.
29. Having highlighted areas where delivery is at some risk, officers will continue to seek to bring those actions back on track where possible while continuing progress on the other, vast majority of areas, which are currently running to plan.
30. The outcome of the Authority's activities over the course of 2005/06 will be drawn together in the Annual Report for the year. The Head of Communications is taking the lead on this process and we will be bringing a draft of the Annual Report to the Board in due course.

**David Cameron**

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