

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CNPA's Approach to Community Engagement

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the CNPA's approach to community engagement and, following a review of our approach, to seek Board decisions on several related matters.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Considers the overall framework for community engagement and support
- b) Approves the principle of continued CNPA grant support to the Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC) tied to specific Park Plan deliverables and to them actively progressing the organisational improvement actions set out in their Business Plan (Option 3).
- c) Agrees to adopt the locally tailored version of the National Standards for Community Engagement to guide how the CNPA engages with communities.

Executive Summary

The CNPA recognises the vital role that communities play in delivering the aims of the Park. It is therefore important to place a strong emphasis on actively engaging with communities both within and out with the Park, as well as supporting communities to deliver the Park Plan. There are a variety of mechanisms through which the CNPA currently works, these having evolved over time.

Following a review of our approach to community engagement, we are seeking Board decisions in respect of adopting the case for future grant support to the AoCC and a locally tailored version of the National Standards for Community Engagement.

CNPA'S APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - FOR DECISION

Background

1. For the purpose of this Board paper the word 'communities' is used to relate to both geographically focused communities and communities of common interest or identity, e.g. crofters, the business community, people with disabilities, living on low income or young people. The focus on geographical communities relates to communities within the Park, while our work with communities of common interest or identity can relate to communities within and out with the Park.
2. In June 2004 the CNPA Board considered a paper entitled "*An interim Policy Framework for Community Development*" and endorsed this framework as a basis for discussion with other stakeholders. Subsequently the key elements of this framework fed through into the National Park Plan - rather than a separate Community Development Strategy, as had originally been proposed in the paper.
3. Other related papers that have been presented to the Board include '*The CNPA's Role in Community Planning*' (Nov 2006), '*Developing Links with Community Planning*' (June 2007), as well as a number of papers regarding grant support for communities (LEADER) and our equalities/Park for All work. These papers have updated the Board on the CNPA's increasingly "joined up" approach to community engagement and support and its role in Community Planning but have never shown how the different elements have fitted together.
4. The Association of Cairngorms Community Councils (now the Association of Cairngorms Communities) submitted a draft Business Plan to the CNPA Management Team in May 2008, as a first step to defining their future role and function. It was felt by the Management Team that it was important for the Board to consider the AoCC's proposal in the context of our overall approach community engagement so that we could ensure that the organisation was adding value to our community engagement activities rather than duplicating any effort.
5. A discussion paper reviewing the existing CNPA approach to community engagement was therefore prepared and comment was sought from the AoCC, Community Planning Partners and a small group of Board members. This paper reflects the comments received and subsequent discussion with Board members and the AoCC. Board members who have fed into this review include Eric Baird, Jaci Douglas, Lucy Grant, Eleanor Mackintosh, Anne MacLean and Richard Stroud.

Strategic Context

National Strategic Context

6. The new Scottish Government National Performance Framework underlines that effective approaches to community engagement and support will contribute to the 'Communities' National Outcome:

"We will have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others"

Of the three related indicators, the following is the most relevant:

"Increase the percentage of adults who rate their neighbourhood as a good place to live"

National Park Plan

7. The Park Plan contains references to communities throughout: in its guiding principles, long term objectives and priorities for action but of particular significance are the following:

Guiding Principle No.3 – "People Participating in the Park- A National Park for People" (page 33)

People within and outside the Park should be actively involved in shaping the National Park and its management, building their capacity to do so and encouraging active citizenship. This can be encouraged by:

- a) Operating in an open, transparent and accessible environment where people can easily find any relevant information;
- b) Keeping people with an interest in the Park informed of progress made against the plan and opportunities to get involved;
- c) Developing mechanisms which allow local communities and communities of interest to influence and engage in the decision making process and management of the Park;
- d) Working with young people, people disabilities and those on low incomes. to engage them in shaping the future of the Park;
- e) Supporting local communities to encourage their active involvement in the management of the Park.

Strategic Objectives for Sustainable Communities (page 67)

- d) Strengthen the capacity of local communities and encourage community development building on existing networks, expertise and experience.

Communities should be supported in building their confidence, skills, knowledge and resources to encourage development and activity within communities and effective engagement in shaping the National Park and public policy. Communities should be supported in developing effective community councils, associations and enterprises.

- e) Promote community involvement and more inclusive representation in the management of the National Park.

Local communities should be able to inform and participate in the management of the National Park and be well-informed about its management. Communities should be able to understand the role of public bodies and how they can contribute to and influence their work. Public bodies should have an understanding of the needs and issues at a community level and of how to engage effectively with communities.

Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable Priority for Action (page 108)

Outcome No. vii. Communities will feel that quality of life is improving and that they are able to influence the direction of economic growth within the Park.

Corporate Plan

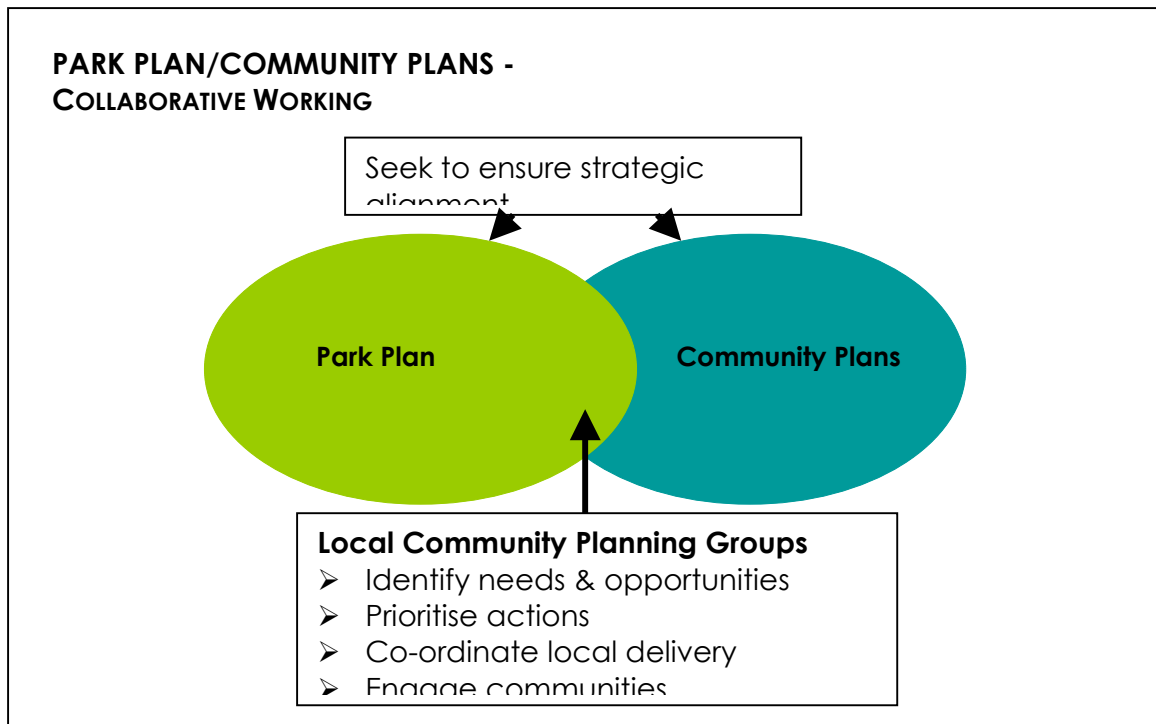
8. Community Engagement is highlighted in the second of the guiding principles within the 2008/2011) corporate plan: Support and Add Value to Activity; *“Influencing and persuading others (Participating in Community Planning and Catchment Management Planning)”* (p3). In addition, there is a direct achievement (under the Sustainable Tourism and Business priority for Action) that states: *“Community Action Plans in place for every community- that will ensure- a proportion of Community Councils/groups feel quality of life in the Park is improving”*.

Key Mechanisms for Community Engagement and Support

9. It is important for the Board to acknowledge the complexity and variety of mechanisms for community engagement and support that currently exists. The following section outlines the various components that the CNPA are working with.

Community Planning Partnerships

10. Community Planning is a nation wide, statutory process, facilitated by Local Authorities, which helps public agencies to work together with the community (including communities of place and of common interest/identity) to plan and deliver better services which make a real difference to people's lives. There is an area of common interest between the Park Plan and the Community Plans that cover parts of the Park. Officers are therefore engaging with the Community Planning process to achieve the objectives of strategic alignment, a joined up approach to community engagement and communications, and joined up delivery of activities/projects, which takes account of locally identified and prioritised needs and opportunities. This is illustrated by the diagram below.
11. The Scottish Government sees community planning as being the primary mechanism for community engagement and support. They have agreed, or are working towards having, Single Outcome Agreements for each Community Planning Partnership to ensure that their focus aligns with the National Performance Framework.
12. The CNPA recognises the pivotal importance of engaging in community planning processes as a means to delivering the Park Plan within the context of the different Local Authority areas within the Park. The challenge for the National Park Authority is maintaining consistency of outcome with the four (and potentially five) Local Authorities all with different interpretations in the design and delivery of community planning.



Park Plan Implementation Framework and CNPA- Communications

- 13 With regards to the formal Park Plan implementation framework, there are various channels for community engagement – both with communities of interest and geographical communities (see Annex 1).
14. We seek to keep communities well informed through our communications activity – Park Life, press releases, e-mail bulletins, etc. In addition, the stakeholder engagement programme that was approved by the Board in July has clarified our core communication themes and the roles to be played by Board members in overall stakeholder engagement.

CNPA Directly Elected Board Members

15. The CNPA has five directly elected community representatives on its Board. As agreed by the Board when they considered the stakeholder engagement paper in May, these members should attend the pre-board meetings in their area (or whatever replacement is proposed following the review led by Jaci Douglas) as well as local community council meetings and other community based events. This role will increase the accessibility and raise the profile of locally elected Board members within their communities so that they can accurately reflect local views and concerns raised by the communities they represent at Board and Committee meetings when decisions are being made.

Cairngorms Local Action Group (LAG)

16. The Cairngorms LAG is the broad partnership that supports community-based projects across the National Park. Subject to final confirmation of Convergence monies, they are administering LEADER/Convergence grant support of £2.088 Million through to 2013. Additional CNPA and SNH funds have been pooled alongside this. The CNPA are represented on the LAG and host the LEADER staff.
17. The LEADER Strategy and Business Plan has been framed in the context of the Park Plan and Community Plans and so the funds are hugely important in unlocking the potential of communities to deliver aspects of these plans.
 Community interests are well represented on the LAG. The AoCC has three representatives (including the Chair of the LAG, Joyce Lyle). All Community Planning Partnerships are represented.

Community Needs Initiative

18. Under the auspices of the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Planning Partnership, the CNPA has worked with public sector partners and the communities of Grantown-on-Spey, Dulnain Bridge, Cromdale and Advie to pilot community-based action planning approaches. The purpose of this was to:
- a) establish clear baseline information on these communities, especially in relation to housing needs, tourism and other economic/social issues;
 - b) identify local needs and opportunities and a small number of prioritised actions (and fund some early actions);
 - c) build support from both local community based organisations and community planning partners to progress and support these actions;
 - d) develop a simple 'toolkit' that can be used by other local communities to go through a similar process.
19. The work has proved positive and so we are seeking to encourage and support similar work in other communities across the Park, as follows –

Badenoch & Strathspey	Proposals are currently being developed as to how this work could be rolled out across the patch, with oversight maintained by the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Planning Partnership.
Moray	The CNPA and the AoCC are currently liaising with the Tomintoul and Glenlivet communities with a view to supporting them in undertaking such work.
Aberdeenshire	The Marr Community Planning Group has undertaken to support up to three community needs assessments per year. Initial interest has come from communities out with the Park but exploratory discussions are underway to conduct an exercise in

	Ballater.
Angus	Angus are piloting a new approach to localised community planning in Kirriemuir and the Glens. The CNPA has been supportive of this.

20. As well as helping Community Planning Partners to identify how their resources might best be focused, the above work will help identify key projects for Cairngorms LAG support.

Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC)

21. The AoCC has evolved from the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils and, prior to that, the Cairngorms Community Councils Group. The AoCC's stated purpose is:

To promote and represent the shared interests of communities in and around the Cairngorms National Park for the benefit of the public by:

- a) Providing a forum for sharing information, experience and networking;
- b) Identifying shared issues and encouraging appropriate action;
- c) Providing communication between the National Park Authority and other relevant organisations to support an exchange of views and information, allowing the National Park Authority to engage with communities and to meet all its statutory aims;
- d) Providing appropriate support to the membership.

22. The AoCC's draft Business Plan (May 2008), which includes an internal organisational review and actions to improve their operation, sets out their proposed work plan for the next three years. In summary, they have objectives to –

- a) widen the membership base of the Association, by including at least ten other relevant community membership organisations and key bodies, by April 2009;
- b) identify at least three examples of good practice within the Park which can be exchanged/developed in the remainder of the Park, by 31 March 2011;
- c) facilitate a community needs assessment throughout the Park and produce a community action plan for one third of the communities each year, concluding the final third by March 2011;
- d) deliver a Community Day conference in 2008 with keynote speakers and events for all of the communities in the Park;
- e) identify and facilitate the implementation, through relevant community groups, of 3 community benefit pilot projects by 31 March 2011.

23. In support of this business plan, the AoCC has approached the CNPA requesting grant funding of £35,000 per year over the next three years. In the short-term stop gap funding has been agreed to support the

organisation to this point pending the Board decision on future grant support.

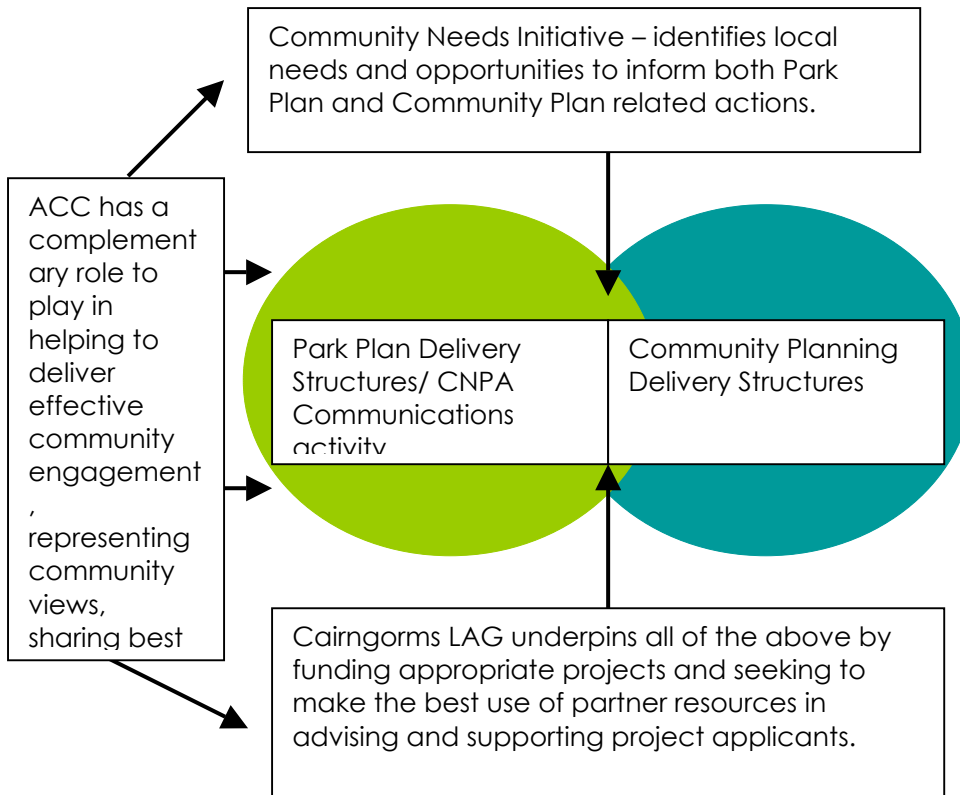
24. To date we have engaged closely with the AoCC and they have been seen as an important element of our overall approach to community engagement. The CNPA have been a main funder for the Association since its inception:

Pilot project 2003-2006 costs)	£49,452	(50% of the project costs)
Extension project 2007-2008 costs)	£15,000	(50% of the project costs)
Total CNPA input	<u>£64,452</u>	

25. The AoCC have identified their main recent achievements as:
- a) Broadening representation on Forums, Community Action Groups, CNPA Delivery groups, LAG etc;
 - b) Involvement in the Communities Needs Initiative pilot;
 - c) Communication of key messages about the National Park out into the wider community, including an Annual Community Conference;
 - d) Involvement in wider consultations: BT telephone box review. Reduction of Cover –Scottish Ambulance Service. Data protection-implications for community groups;
 - e) Ongoing projects: Recycling/composting project and Community Newsletters/websites and Awards Event.

How it all Fits Together

26. To show how these various mechanisms for community engagement inter-relate, we have sought to illustrate them in the diagram below.



Recommendation

27. That the Board consider the current overall framework for community engagement and support.

Grant Support to the AoCC

28. It has been highlighted earlier in this paper that the Community Planning Partnerships have existing mechanisms for engaging with local communities that do not use the Association of Cairngorms Communities as a direct conduit, although there is some overlap in representation. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that the AoCC identifies potential duplication and delivers value above and beyond these structures.
29. It should be stressed that the AoCC themselves and other partners feel that if the CNPA agree to further funding it is important that the capacity issues identified in the AoCC Business plan are rigorously addressed, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.
30. A view from the Board is sought as to whether the CNPA should continue to grant aid the AoCC and, if so, the level of support that

might be appropriate. Three broad options are presented below for consideration.

Option 1 – No grant funding

Without CNPA grant support, the AoCC would be likely to either fold or operate on a much more limited basis. The key considerations here should be the extent to which the AoCC is helping to deliver the Park Plan and the extent to which the activities they undertake could be delivered through other mechanisms. Certainly the AoCC's purpose and proposed work plan (see paras. 21-25) all help or have the potential to help achieve aspects of the Park Plan. Without the AoCC in place, different means of appointing community representatives on to Park Plan delivery groups, the Cairngorms LAG, etc, would have to be identified. Whilst some of the roles or proposed actions could be progressed via Community Planning Partnerships, the ability to work with communities on a pan-Park basis would be much more limited. Certain Park-wide issues are currently coming to the fore that perhaps does need a broader response from communities: Climate Change, Developing Sustainable Communities etc.

Option 2 – Support Full Business Plan

Supporting the full business plan would (subject to the rest of the funding package being secured) allow the AoCC to further develop its role in respect of delivering the Park Plan and to progress the full proposed work plan. It would also enable them to develop greater capacity as the full business plan allows for them employing a new administrative assistant to free up more of the existing Development Officer's time to focus on delivery.

However, there is an argument that some of the work they are proposing to undertake can or is being addressed in other ways. For example, the AoCC has ambitions to be much more actively engaged within community planning structures. Local authority community planning contacts, though, have indicated that they have separate structures in place to collectively engage with communities within their respective areas and so do not necessarily see a role for the AoCC in this regard.

Similarly, their objective to facilitate community needs assessments throughout the Park is not one that they are in a position to deliver. As is outlined in para. 19, these are being progressed in ways that link into the community planning structures in each part of the Park. It is likely that they will have a role to play but it is unlikely in most cases that that they could take the lead role.

Option 3 – Agree More Limited Level of Grant Support

An alternative to supporting the full business plan would be to tie our support to those elements that most clearly contribute to Park Plan delivery and do not potentially duplicate the role fulfilled by community planning structures for community engagement.

These would include actions the AoCC have identified themselves:

- a) deliver a Community Day conference in 2009 with keynote speakers and events for all of the communities in the Park;
- b) sharing examples of best practice between different local authority areas in the Park: evolving community engagement methods, examples of community enterprise

And actions that the CNPA would have an interest in the AoCC taking a lead on:

- c) developing adaptation and mitigation projects addressing the challenges of climate change on a Park-wide basis.
- d) Promoting and developing projects related to sustainable communities (renewables, re-cycling etc.)

In line with this, we could offer a continued annual grant of, say, £15,000 per annum. This would be in line with previous levels of grant support given.

- 31. If option 3 was supported, we would work with the AoCC to develop the specific deliverables to which we would seek to tie our grant support to.
- 32. If either Option 2 or Option 3 was supported, we would also seek to tie any offer of grant support to the AoCC making demonstrable progress against the organisational improvement actions that they have set out in their business plan. This would potentially include strengthening links with directly-elected CNPA Board Members.
- 33. If the principle of continuing grant support is agreed, then a more detailed Expenditure Justification will be prepared for consideration by the Finance Committee.

Recommendation

- 34. **That the Board approves the principle of continued CNPA grant support to the Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC) tied to specific Park Plan deliverables and to them actively progressing the organisational improvement actions set out in their Business Plan (Option 3).**

National Standards for Community Engagement

35. The National Standards for Community Engagement were developed and published by Communities Scotland (as was) on behalf of the Scottish Executive as a central feature of the Community Planning Act 2003 (for detail of the standards you can refer to <http://www.scdc.org.uk/national-standards-community-engagement/>).
36. These seek to promote good practice in community engagement and are widely referred to by Community Planning Partnerships.
37. In 2006 it was decided that the CNPA should explore the use of the National Standards to guide its own approaches to community engagement. This work was taken forward by our Head of Communications, Françoise Van Buuren, and our Education and Inclusion Manager, Claire Ross.
38. Comment was sought from community representatives and from the two community liaison officers who were working for the Park Authority at that point as to how appropriate the Standards were for the Cairngorms National Park context. The feedback suggested that the guidance was rather prescriptive and rigid and that, if it was followed to the letter, would be more resource intensive than most organisations could deal with.
39. Subsequently, a more user-friendly version of the National Standards was drawn up (see Annex 2) still reflecting all the elements of the original standards and was used to guide two important pieces of consultation work – the pilot community needs assessments in Grantown on Spey, Dulnain Bridge, Cromdale and Advie, and the Core Paths Plan consultation (2007/2008).
40. Having reviewed how well the locally tailored standards have worked, it is felt that they are appropriate for adoption by the Park Authority. If adopted, there would need to be follow up work to ensure that:
 - a) CNPA staff understand and follow the Standards, taking into consideration the balance between best practise and best value;
 - b) The Standards are promoted externally as appropriate, so that there is an understanding of what people can expect in relation to our community engagement activities.

Recommendation

41. **That the Board agrees to adopt the locally tailored version of the National Standards for Community Engagement to guide how the CNPA engages with communities.**

Other Aspects to be noted:

Delivering Sustainability

42. A more joined up approach to community engagement and support means that it is easier to effectively match resources to communities both in the short and long term. Park-wide community led initiatives could focus on projects supporting sustainable communities and issues around climate change.

Delivering a Park for All

43. Using the proposed standards for Community engagement ensures that there is a wider diversity of people involved at all levels with the Park. A key part of that process is identifying stakeholders that might not normally have the opportunity to engage with the Park, identify what stops them getting involved and where practical removing barriers to participation.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

44. A more joined up partnership approach to community support and engagement means a more streamlined targeting of resources, and less duplication of effort. Utilising the Community Planning Partnerships brings communities closer to the agencies who deliver services on the ground, particularly when there is a mechanism for communities to identify for them selves what their priority issues are.

Implications

Financial Implications

45. There will be modest training costs associated with adopting the locally tailored version of the National Standards for Community Engagement. These can be covered by existing training budgets.
46. Grant support to the AoCC under option 2 would amount to £35,000 per annum over three years. This level of funding is not provided for within the Corporate Plan and could only be met if funding was transferred from other planned activities.
47. Grant support to the AoCC under option 3 would amount to around £15,000 per annum over three years. This level of funding could be accommodated within existing Corporate Plan budget provision.

Presentational Implications

48. Promoting the locally tailored version of the National Standards for Community Engagement would provide a clear indication of what people can expect of us with regards how we go about engaging with communities. It would be a positive message to promote.
49. If we were no longer to grant support the AoCC and, as a result, they could no longer continue, there could well be a negative perception that the Park Authority is not supportive of local communities.
50. It is not envisaged that a continuation of grant funding in line with previous levels would be negatively received.

Implications for Stakeholders

51. If all of the recommendations are approved, there are not expected to be any direct implications for stakeholders other than those already outlined for the AoCC.

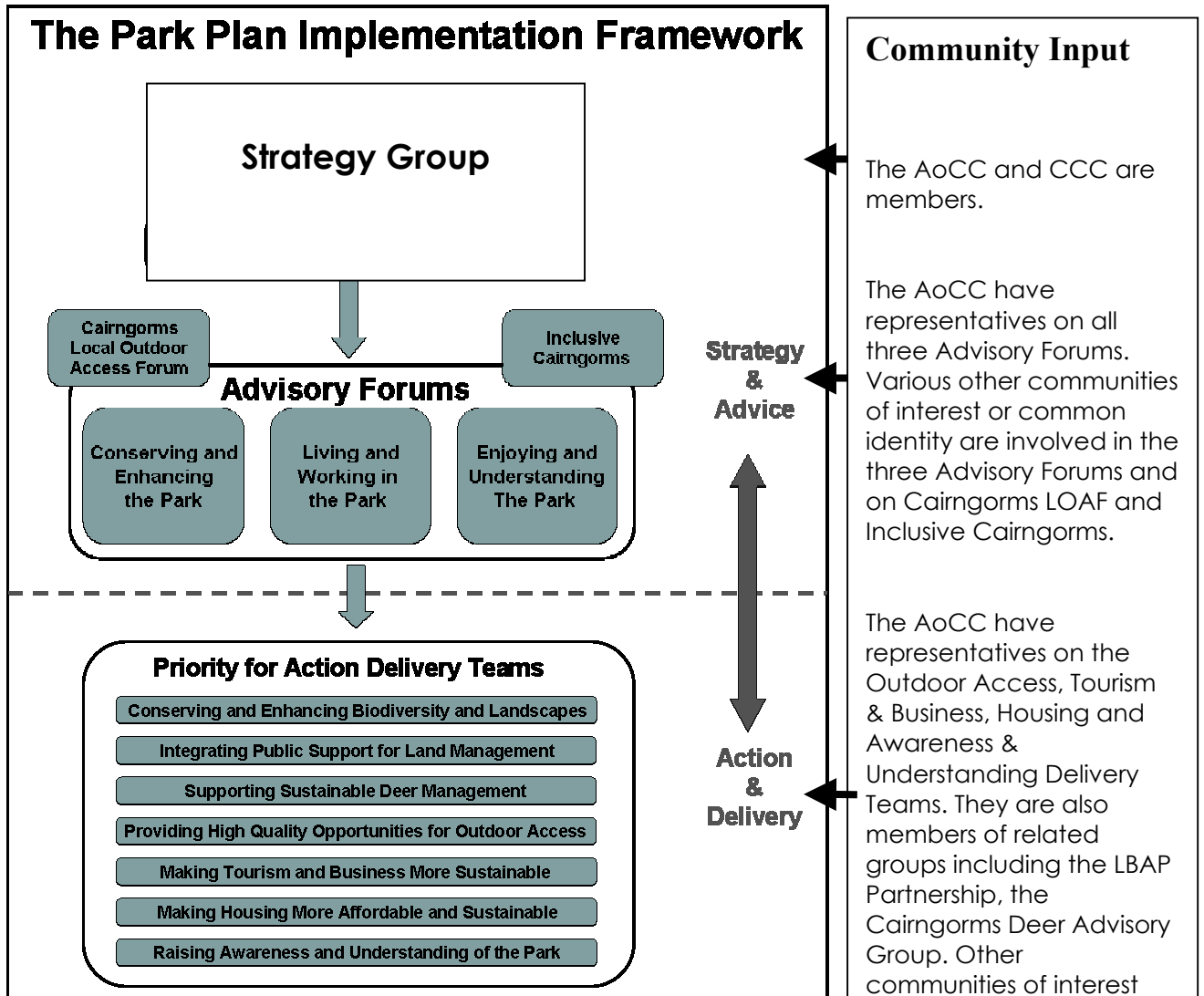
Next Steps

52. Assuming all of the recommendations are approved, the next steps will be to:
 - a) Organise staff training and external awareness raising in respect of the locally tailored version of the National Standards for Community Engagement;
 - b) Work with the AoCC to clearly identify the specific deliverables to which we would tie our grant support to, advise them in finalising their funding package and prepare a detailed Expenditure Justification for consideration by the Finance Committee;

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ANNEX 1



ANNEX 2

PROPOSED CNPA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STANDARDS

1. **The Involvement Standard**
 - a) We will work with our communities to identify what their interests and priorities are to ensure our plans reflect their needs.
 - b) All those with an interest in the issue for consultation will be identified and made aware of a variety of opportunities for participation (not just ACC).
2. **The Planning Standard**
 - a) The purpose and outcome of the engagement process will be made clear to participants focusing on how this will impact on their interests (What's in it for them?) and participants will be involved in agreeing the issues, scope, timescale, actions and resources/support involved.
3. **The Support Standard & Methods Standard**
 - a) Mechanisms, roles and responsibilities will be agreed with the participants/representatives of the community and must be as inclusive as possible with any identified barriers/constraints removed or minimised.
4. **The Working Together Standard & Sharing Information Standard**
 - a) Clear procedures, support and investment that enable participants to communicate, share information and work effectively together will be put in place (in partnership with others if at all possible) as required e.g. capacity building, training, facilitation, etc.
5. **The Working with others Standard & Improvement Standard**
 - a) We will work with other public bodies to co-ordinate our community engagement activities, share resources and learn from each other to continually improve how we collectively engage with communities.
6. **The Feedback Standard**
 - a) We will provide timely feedback to the community on the results of the engagement, what impact/influence the engagement has had and the rationale for decisions made and for what will happen next.
7. **The Monitoring & Evaluation Standard**
 - a) We will monitor whether the engagement achieves its purpose and evaluate how the process could be improved for future participation. Feedback and comments about the process itself from participants should be encouraged. Some data must be

analysed and reported in the same format each time to allow real comparisons to be made.