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## CAIRNGORMS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FORUM

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- Title:** Project Update
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- Purpose:** This paper provides an update and flavour on some of the main areas of work underway, or in development, that will contribute to the delivery of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
- Advice Sought:** Forum members are asked to note the work undertaken and planned. Any questions, comments or suggestions are very welcome.

### POLICY

1. **National Park Plan.** The public consultation on the next Park Plan began on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September and will run through to the 9<sup>th</sup> of December. The consultative draft has been shaped by extensive informal consultation with communities and partners. Over the last year each community in the National Park has come up with a vision statement and these will be referenced in the Park Plan. An early draft of the plan can be seen at <http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/08072011/CNPA.Paper.4376.Board.Paper.I.Annex.I.pdf>. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy shaped the draft plan and ensuring that *the Cairngorms National Park delivers an outstanding visitor experience and is an international benchmark for sustainable tourism* is one of the three strategic objectives..
2. **Local Development Plan.** Work has already started on the next Local Development Plan, which will in due course replace the Local Plan. The [Development Plan Scheme \(DPS\)](#) outlines how the CNPA will prepare the new Local Development Plan. The first stage in this process is to compile a Main Issues Report which will go out for public consultation in September 2011 at the same time as the National Park Plan.

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

3. **Cairngorms Business Partnership.** Funding agreement is in place from CNPA, HIE, Scottish Enterprise and Highland Council to support the CBP for 2011/12 with a business plan that focuses on promotion, development and advocacy. CNPA and HIE also committed to supporting CBP in subsequent years, subject to final government

settlements. VisitScotland will support a Park-wide marketing campaign for 3 years with £50k per year from their Growth Fund. See [www.visitcairngorms.com](http://www.visitcairngorms.com).

4. **Tomintoul Regeneration.** A project is currently underway to assist the Tomintoul and Glenlivet communities to assess their current economic challenges, identify feasible options for long term sustainability and start to deliver these. This project is being led by the CNPA in partnership with The Crown Estate and the community. It will build on the recent community planning exercises in Tomintoul and Glenlivet and consider the long term economic sustainability of the area (as well as the more specific current issues such as the abandoned hotels). The project will focus on what can feasibly be delivered, who can deliver it and how, and the commitment that will be required from all parties to enable it to work both in the long and short term. A long term forward plan will be produced and working groups of community representatives and partners established to take forward key actions.
5. **Food for Life.** The Cairngorms Food for Life Development Plan was launched in September 2010. It was developed with Soil Association Scotland and a number of partners and provides a unique regional model for developing a sustainable food system that increases the availability, supply & use of fresh local seasonal produce. A sector-wide Cairngorms Food Group meet quarterly to guide the implementation of the Plan. A LEADER funding package worth £116,000 (incl CNPA funding) has been secured to assist the implementation. Early project activity includes: a Park-wide industry audit; a catering guide; a visitor guide; a training course for residents; establishment of a part-time schools and community engagement post; promotion of food tourism opportunities and a major conference in September 2011 to encourage greater public procurement of locally sourced produce.
6. **Broadband.** Opportunity exists to position the Park at the forefront of next generation access (NGA) broadband delivery in rural areas. HIE have already secured pilot project funding for delivering NGA across the Highlands. Further bids for UK government funding are being developed by different local authorities, some in collaboration with each other. A draft Broadband Plan for the Park is under development (with LEADER support) and discussions are progressing with HIE and Highland Council as well as with other local authorities. There is much interest in using the Park as a regional model to develop solutions for isolated rural communities.

## **OUTDOOR ACCESS**

### **7. COAT.**

- a. Low ground paths projects are being taken forward on a case by case basis with a number of paths currently going through the planning and development process. In

the east these are: the Ministers Path in Angus and the new Strathdon Bridge. In the west there are now new bridges over the Allt Mhor and Alt na Feithe Buidhe between Kingussie and Newtonmore providing the last link for UB34: the Kingussie to Newtonmore path via Loch Gynack.

- b. A total of 12 individual path projects are being taken forward as part of the mountain heritage project. To date work has been completed on sections of the Lairig Ghru, Bynack Mhor path, light touch works on the route to Ben Macdui and on the Carn Ban Mor path amongst others.
8. **Promoting outdoor access opportunities responsibly.** CNPA access staff are continuing to develop materials for the “tread lightly” campaign. A further one year grant offer has been made to Invercauld Estate to help them address issues arising from irresponsible camping in Glen Clunie.
  9. **Outdoor Access Events.** Work is continuing in supporting the role of the Events and Festivals Coordinator within the Cairngorms Business Partnership. Prospective event organisers have found that there are challenges in developing events at sensitive times of the year and likewise some land managers still feel that there are a lot of events. Feedback from a number of event organisers is that numbers seem to be down which might indicate that the market is becoming saturated. Either way it is still very important that event organisers and land managers are brought together.

## VISITOR INFORMATION & INTERPRETATION

10. **Community Path Leaflets.** Work is continuing with the development of three leaflets for Glen Doll, Glen Clova and Glen Mark. Work has already started on the Tomintoul, Strathdon and Dulnain Bridge community path leaflets. Initial discussions have taken place with both the community and the estate on the potential for a Blair Atholl community path leaflet. The Carr-Bridge path leaflet is now complete which complements those that have already been developed for Ballater, Kingussie, Nethy Bridge and Boat of Garten.
11. **Blair Atholl Visitor Information Hub.** CNPA Board has agreed in principle financial support to create an information, interpretation and education facility in Blair Atholl. The project has been developed by Perth and Kinross Council and Blair Charitable Trust with support from Scottish Enterprise and Blair Atholl Area Tourist Association. The proposal is to substantially upgrade the existing ranger facility in the centre of the village making space available for visitor information and interpretation alongside a classroom area. The site contains an existing café and the Atholl Country Life Museum and the proposal includes landscaping of the car park and a communal area shared with these

facilities. Detailed plans and costs are currently being developed. If funding can be agreed by partners work will commence in early 2012.

12. **Ranger Services.** As part of the consultation over the next National Park Plan CNPA is reviewing its role in supporting ranger services and the role that ranger services play in delivering the National Park Plan (and Sustainable Tourism Strategy). One of the key stages in this work is consultation with Ranger Service Managers in early November.

## COMMUNITIES

13. **Cairngorms National Park Junior Ranger Project.** There are three groups running at present working with young people from Grantown Grammar, Kingussie High, Aboyne and Alford Academy and Webster's High school in Kirriemuir . Seven junior rangers have also taken part in an exchange visit to Bavaria to look at National Parks in Germany and the Czech Republic with a return visit to CNP arranged for August 2012. Two young from CNP also attended the annual Europarc Junior Ranger Camp in Netherlands this summer.

## RESEARCH

14. **Business Barometer.** The quarterly CBP Business Barometer continues to develop with more and more businesses taking part in the short survey. The Annual Report for 2010-2011 has recently been completed. [The full report can be read here.](#) Key findings are:
- a. April 2010 through to March 2011 has been a challenging time for businesses – continued wider economic fears, political change, public sector reform, national and international weather phenomena and natural disasters. However, the year has also shown continued evidence of a growth in domestic tourism fuelled by the 'staycation effect' as more Brits opt to holiday at home within the UK. So whilst threats abound in the market place there remain opportunities for businesses to exploit current trends.
  - b. These wider threats and challenges however, appear to have acted as a stumbling block to growth during the period; business levels along with investment are consequently below average. Supplier costs as well have risen; it appears exorbitantly for some businesses. Increased VAT, increased raw material costs along with higher travel and transport costs are likely to be the drivers, which are increasingly testing business profitability. Despite this though businesses continue to demonstrate both courage and ambition to develop and grow their business; many expect to spend more on their business in the coming 12 months against a difficult economic backdrop.

- c. Confidence dropped to an all time low in Q1 2011 highlighting the extent of the challenges ahead. The role organisations play in providing support for local businesses and helping to encourage wider collaboration is set to become even more important in order for businesses to deal positively with a trend of increased running costs and a perception of decreasing customer numbers and turnover.

15. **DOVE.** A Park-wide programme to gather customer feedback has recently commenced using the hand-held DOVE system.

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