

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: Proposals for a Local Access Forum

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Purpose

To seek Board approval for the establishment of a Local Access Forum for the Cairngorms National Park Authority as required under Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

Recommendations

- That a Local Access Forum is established for the Cairngorms National Park Authority which comprises twenty members with places allocated to people with relevant knowledge, skills and experience of outdoor access in relation to specific stakeholder groups as follows:
 - recreational users - five places;
 - land management interests - five places;
 - community interests - seven places (to include all-abilities interests);
 - other relevant public bodies - three places (to include Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission and one other relevant public body to be decided by the Board).
- That the selection process for the members of the LAF should be undertaken by:
 - direct invitation to the public agencies to nominate a named representative; and
 - a paper-based selection exercise undertaken by CNPA staff from Visitor Services and Recreation Group, overseen by a small panel comprising two Board members; a representative from the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils; an officer from the Paths for all Partnership and an Independent Assessor.
- That:
 - all appointments are made initially for a period of two years and that the Forum agrees, with guidance from CNPA, the future duration of tenure; and
 - a full review of operation of the LAF, including membership and other matters, takes place after three years.
- That the LAF is chaired by Head of Visitor Services and Recreation Group until such time as a Chairperson is elected from amongst the membership, and that the Forum is encouraged to develop a set of operating principles within the first six months of its existence. A guidance framework will be provided initially by CNPA through the Convener.
- That the Forum should be referred to as the “Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum”.

Executive Summary

This paper outlines proposals for establishing a Local Access Forum for the Cairngorms National Park Authority. It refers to the legislative framework for establishing a Forum, and reports on progress in respect of the six local workshops held in September 2004 seeking people's views on the structure and appointments mechanism for establishing a Local Access Forum for the National Park. The paper considers the issues raised at the meetings, and through a wider consultation with national interests, and makes recommendations for future action.

Annex 1 provides a summary of the views gathered from the workshops and the wider consultation with national interests.

Proposals for a Local Access Forum

Background

1. Under Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 the Cairngorms National Park Authority is required to establish one or more Local Access Forum (LAF). Its main purpose is to advise on issues relating to the implementation of Part One of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Its functions, as stated in the legislation, are:
 - (a) "...to advise and assist [CNPA] and any other person or body consulting the forum on matters having to do with the exercise of access rights, the existence and delineation of rights of way or the drawing up and adoption of a plan for a system of core paths ...
 - (b) to offer and, where the offer is accepted, to give assistance to the parties to any dispute about -
 - (i) the exercise of access rights;
 - (ii) the existence and delineation of rights of way;
 - (iii) the drawing up and adoption of the plan referred to in paragraph (a) above; or
 - (iv) the use of core paths,towards the resolution of the dispute."
2. The legislation goes on to specify that the Local Access Forum consists of those members who are appointed to it by the Park Authority. The Park Authority is required to ensure that the membership of the Forum reflects a reasonable representation and balance of those individuals or bodies with an interest in exercising access rights; and those individuals or bodies who own land (or who represent those who own land) over which access rights extend or on which there is a core path.
3. On 7 May 2004 the CNPA Board approved a process and timescale for establishment of the Local Access Forum. The Board agreed that the structure of the Local Access Forum should be underpinned by the following principles. The LAF should:
 - reflect the requirements of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in terms of a balanced representation, inclusive of all relevant interests;
 - ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to outdoor access issues across the National Park;
 - strengthen, where possible, the existing structures relating to the management of outdoor access within the National Park;
 - contribute towards effective delivery of outdoor access at a local level; and
 - be effective and practical to administer.
4. It was also agreed that the appointments process to the Local Access Forum should:
 - be open - opportunities should be widely advertised;
 - be transparent - people should be able to understand why decisions about appointments were made; and
 - be inclusive - to ensure opportunities for all.

Progressing the Establishment of the Local Access Forum

5. In order to hear views of those who were likely to be interested in the proposed LAF, six workshops were held in September. The purpose of the workshops was to give members of the public an opportunity to comment on proposals for a structure and appointments mechanism for the Forum. In addition, national organisations were invited to send in their views.
6. The issues raised in discussion at the six workshops are summarised in Appendix 1. The workshops were structured so as to draw out a range of views from the public, rather than to encourage consensus around particular proposals. The summary of views reflects the diversity of opinions expressed. A summary of views received from national organisations is also included.
7. The proposals in this paper are informed by the guidance contained in the Paths for All Partnership and SNH publication “Local Access Forums: A Guide to Good Practice”, and the draft guidance on the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 which was produced by the Scottish Executive early in 2004. During the development of this work there has been extensive liaison with officers from the Paths for All Partnerships and the adjacent local authorities. The experience of other established Local Access Forums has also been drawn upon.
8. The paper goes on to considers the remaining issues under the following headings:
 - A single Forum
 - Size of the Forum
 - Involvement of a balance of interests
 - Selection process and appointments mechanism
 - Terms of appointment
 - Operating principles and financial implications
 - Next steps

A Single Forum

9. The issue of whether to establish more than one Forum for the Cairngorms National Park Authority was discussed by the Access Working Group (comprising Board members and representatives from SNH and Paths for All Partnership) at a meeting on 21 May. There was broad consensus that in view of the criteria that had been agreed at the previous Board meeting, one Forum for the Park was preferable. The creation of one Forum was judged to be the best solution in that it could provide a consistent point of reference for information and good practice, and be more effective in providing advice in a unified and “joined-up” way. The proposal to establish one Forum for the Park was therefore put to the six workshops. Although some concerns were expressed about the perceived lack of ‘localness’ of a single forum, it was generally accepted that this was a satisfactory way to proceed and that most concerns could be overcome by ensuring that the Forum networked with existing local groups and organisations, and functioned in an open and accessible manner.

10. It is recommended that one Local Access Forum is established for the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Size of the Forum

11. It was initially proposed that the Forum should comprise 16 members. In view of the general consensus that this was too few for such a large area, there would be advantages in increasing the size of the Forum to 20 places. Although this would be larger than that advised by the good practice guidance (PfAP/SNH), the benefits of increased direct involvement of interested parties outweighs the potential disadvantages of managing a larger group. In addition, due to travel difficulties around the Park, full attendance is rarely likely to be achieved, thereby making a Forum of twenty more justifiable.

12. It is recommended that there should be twenty places on the Local Access Forum.

Involvement of a Balance of Interests

13. The good practice guidance from Paths for All and SNH indicates that there are commonly four main stakeholder groups that should be directly involved in Local Access Forums - recreational users, land managers, community interests and public agencies. This framework provides a good basis for ensuring an appropriate balance of interests on the Forum.

14. It is clear from discussion at the workshops and from communications received from national bodies that there are a greater number of organisations interested in having a place on the Forum than can fit the available spaces. Overall, it is considered more important that the Forum consists of people with the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience than that members are representatives of particular organisations or interest groups.

15. The legislation requires that the makeup of the Forum consists of a balance of recreational users and landowners. Ideally, membership of the Local Access Forum will reflect the wide diversity of recreation and land management interests in the Park and it would be useful for the public credibility of the Forum that it is seen to include persons with particularly relevant knowledge or expertise. While qualifications can demonstrate technical competence, affiliation to an organisation can be regarded as a demonstration of a person's interest in their sector, and perhaps of their willingness to network with others in their interest group. It is important that the members of the Forum are willing to work to build consensus to look at the strategic aspects of outdoor access and land management across the Park.

16. It is recommended that ten places are allocated to people with relevant knowledge, skills and experience of outdoor access as follows:

- **recreational users - five places; and**
- **land management interests - five places.**

17. The issue of local and community involvement is of key significance to those living in the Park. Because of the size of the Park, the creation of a larger Forum (with 20 members)

should allow greater scope for an appropriate level of involvement for the community interests.

18. In order to obtain adequate geographic coverage of the Park, it may be preferable to have seven places available for community interests. Within this stakeholder group, members with a diversity of interests relating to the Park would be sought. In addition, in view of the benefits of direct involvement of all-abilities interests, it should be possible to ensure that a person from this background is involved.
19. **It is recommended that seven places are allocated to people with relevant knowledge, skills and experience of outdoor access in relation to communities (to include all-abilities interests)**
20. There are benefits in including other relevant public bodies in the Forum in respect of particular expertise and the national context that they can bring. Their direct involvement may also be of assistance when projects requiring funding are under discussion. In view of the number of other Forums that the National Park Authority coordinates and the wide range of contacts we have with other public bodies through the development of the National Park Plan and other projects, it is proposed that three places on the LAF would be sufficient. Two public agencies stand out as having a particular role to play in the management of outdoor access in the Cairngorms. Scottish Natural Heritage has a remit for enjoyment and understanding of the natural heritage and has a special role to play at national level on implementation of the Land Reform legislation. The Forestry Commission has a national remit for all matters to do with multi-purpose use of woods and forests and is a significant land and recreation manager within the Park. Both SNH and the Forestry Commission have experience of directly managing and advising on recreation and outdoor access issues in areas of environmental sensitivity. Other relevant public bodies with an interest in outdoor access include Sportscotland and bodies from the tourism sector and the local enterprise companies.
21. **It is recommended that three places are allocated to relevant public bodies to include Scottish Natural Heritage, the Forestry Commission and one other public body to be decided by the Board.**

Selection Process and Appointments Mechanism

22. As agreed at a previous Board meeting, the selection process and appointments mechanism to the Forum needs to be open, transparent and inclusive. It is important that as wide a range of people as possible is aware of the opportunity to become involved and that, in considering whether or not to become involved, they have a good understanding of the type of work to be undertaken and the time commitment required. It is also important that people are aware of the basis on which decisions about appointments are made, and that they have confidence in the process.
23. Discussion at the workshops, together with the information received from national organisations, indicated that both models of selection - peer selection and panel selection (see Annex 1, paragraphs 30 and 33) - had advantages and disadvantages. As no clear consensus emerged, and given the scale of the Cairngorms area and the difficulty in organising one meeting at which all of the relevant interests in each stakeholder group

could be present, it is proposed that the panel selection method should be used. This method fits best with the principles outlined by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, known also as the Nolan standards. These include the principles of appointment being made in an **open** and **transparent** fashion that is **proportional** to the post and its responsibilities, and that candidates are chosen on the **basis of their merit** and **probity**, and under **independent scrutiny**.

24. For the representatives of public agencies the most appropriate selection process is relatively easy to determine. It is proposed that once a decision is made about the public bodies that CNPA wishes to involve, a letter should be sent to each organisation inviting them to nominate a representative.
25. For the remaining three stakeholder groups there are options about how best to develop the selection panel process. It is estimated that there could be as many as 100 applications for the available places and it will be necessary to ensure that the selection process used is easy to administer and is appropriate for appointment to these voluntary positions. In general it is not expected that we would want to interview candidates except in exceptional circumstances.
26. It is recommended that a small panel of people is put together to oversee the work that will be undertaken by CNPA officers from Visitor Services and Recreation Group. It is proposed that the panel consists of two Board members (with a background in either land management or recreation use); a representative from the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils; and an officer from the Paths for All Partnership, reflecting their extensive organisational experience of establishing Forums throughout Scotland. It is envisaged that the panel would only need to meet twice.
27. In addition, a fifth member could be appointed whose purpose would be to ensure that due process is observed in the selection proceedings and that decisions are made on the right basis. An analogy is made here with the involvement of an Independent Assessor in the process of recruitment to the Park Board.
28. All the applications for membership will be considered alongside one other and assessed against a framework to be agreed with the panel. This framework will be based on the requirements of the legislation, the criteria agreed by the Board in May 2004, and any other direction that the Board wishes to give. This process will allow all posts to be considered together and enables a balancing of the Forum members to include the best possible blend of skills, experience and expertise.
29. The recruitment exercise will be advertised in the local press and we will also circulate recruitment details to a wide range of people who have indicated an interest through either participation at the workshops, or who have made direct contact with us about the establishment of the Forum. A detailed job specification, clear criteria for selection and a standardised application form will be made available to all those interested in applying. Candidates would be asked to select which of the three stakeholder groups (communities, land managers and recreational users) they thought they could best represent. In order to attract applications from all-abilities interests, letters will be sent to those groups representing disabled people, informing them of the process and encouraging them to apply.

30. Letters of appointment should be issued by the Convener of the Park Authority.
31. **It is recommended that the selection process for the members of the LAF should be undertaken by:**
- **direct invitation to the public agencies to nominate a named representative; and**
 - **a paper-based selection exercise undertaken by CNPA staff from Visitor Services and Recreation Group, overseen by a small panel comprising two Board members; a representative from the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils; an officer from the Paths for All Partnership and an Independent Assessor.**

Term of Appointment

32. The term of appointment of the members should be specified at the time of appointment. It will be necessary to ensure that members have the time to develop experience and that the LAF membership does not all change at one time.
33. **It is recommended that:**
- **all appointments are made initially for a period of two years and that the Forum agrees, with guidance from CNPA, the future duration of tenure; and**
 - **a full review of operation of the LAF, including membership and other matters, takes place after three years.**

Operating Principles and Financial Implications

34. There would be advantages if the Forum selected their own Chairperson and, within the framework of open and accessible working, determined their own operating principles in respect of time of meetings, venues, conduct of meetings, etc. It is suggested that the Forum is chaired by the Head of Visitor Services and Recreation until such time as the Forum is ready to elect its own Chairperson.
35. It is proposed that reasonable expenses should be paid (including costs of e.g. travel or child care) to encourage widespread involvement. Agency representatives would generally be expected not to claim costs. It is estimated that the running costs of the Forum (including mileage, childcare, advertising of meetings and venues) will be in the region of £12,000 per annum, based on five to six meetings per year and associated events.
36. **It is recommended that the LAF is chaired by the Head of Visitor Services and Recreation Group until such time as a Chairperson is elected from amongst the membership, and that the Forum is encouraged to develop a set of operating principles within the first six months of its existence.**

Name of the Forum

37. Although the legislation is quite clear that the Forum should be known as the 'local access forum' this nomenclature has already caused confusion with 'Local Access Panel' (see Annex 1, paragraph 13). In order to avoid further confusion it is suggested that we do two

things. Firstly we should encourage use of the term ‘outdoor access’ as opposed to simply ‘access’ in the context of the Land Reform Act. This would tie in well with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. We should therefore refer to the Forum as the Local Outdoor Access Forum. Secondly, we suggest that the Forum should be referred to as the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum to distinguish it from the Forums of other local authorities.

38. It is recommended that the Local Access Forum for the National Park Authority should be referred to as the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum.

The Next Steps

39. Subject to the Board agreement, the next steps of formation of the LAF will be as follows:

- Formation of panel to oversee selection process
- Development of ‘job’ specification, application form and selection criteria
- Advertisement for membership of the Forum widely circulated in the press and by direct mail to key contacts and those who have expressed an interest
- Process of selection takes place
- Appointments ratified by Convener
- First meeting of the Local Access Forum

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Summary of Information Received From The Six Local Workshops

1. The information presented below summarises the way in which the six local workshops on the proposed Local Access Forum were organised and the information received as a result of discussion with those who attended. The purpose of the workshops was to seek the views of interested parties on the structure and appointments mechanism for a Local Access Forum for the Cairngorms National Park.

Publicising the workshops

2. A twofold approach was taken to advertising the workshops. Firstly, national bodies who were likely to have an interest were sent information about the meetings to disseminate to their own members living within (or outwith) the National Park. Officers of these organisations also received a paper outlining the six questions that would be posed for discussion at the local workshops, and were asked to give an organisational response to these questions.
3. Secondly, efforts were made to reach individuals at a local level. The concept of Local Access Forums and the proposed workshops had been advertised in Parklife in the spring, and this early advertising drew interest from some people who asked to be included in future mailing lists. Particular use was made of the outdoor access contact databases held by neighbouring Local Authorities. These gave CNPA the opportunity to directly contact those people who had already expressed an interest in outdoor access matters, and tell them about the forthcoming workshops. The cooperation of the neighbouring authorities was much appreciated.
4. To summarise, letters were sent to the following: full and corresponding members of the National Access Forum; Community Councils; community newsletters; Disabled Ramblers Groups; Moray Council contacts; Aberdeenshire Council contacts; general contacts within Badenoch and Strathspey, and in the Angus Glens; Activity Scotland contacts and to Scottish Environment Link. All were asked to disseminate the invitation further amongst their members, contacts and colleagues.
5. The workshops were also widely publicised in the local press. Advertisements were placed in the Deeside Piper, the Donside Piper, the Badenoch and Strathspey Herald, the Northern Scot, the Forfar Dispatch group and to community newsletters. Each advert was accompanied by editorial copy.

Venues

6. Venues were chosen to provide good geographical coverage of the Park; meetings were held in Edzell, Tomintoul, Kingussie, Strathdon, Grantown and Aboyne. Efforts were made to find venues that were suitable for all abilities.

The workshop programme

7. The workshop programme opened with a presentation by CNPA staff outlining the requirements for a Local Access Forum, its purpose and function, and the proposals for structure and appointment mechanisms. This was followed by a short briefing from the

relevant local authority on the proposals for the LAF in the area adjacent to the Park. Questions were taken from the floor, and then the participants were split into small groups each of which was facilitated by staff from CNPA and the relevant local authority. Staff from Scottish Natural Heritage and Paths for All Partnership also assisted in facilitation at several of the meetings. Each group was asked to discuss the six questions (see below) and then a representative was asked to summarise the issues raised for the benefit of all those present. Participants were invited to complete a sheet recording name and address, their interest in attending future outdoor access related meetings, and whether they were interested in being a member of the LAF.

Evaluation

8. Participants were asked to complete a feedback sheet from the workshops, specifically addressing the timing, venue and format of the meetings. The feedback was used on an ongoing basis to make modifications to the organisation of events over the fortnight consultation period. On completion of the meetings all the sheets were reviewed and an evaluation exercise was undertaken by staff. A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the workshops was circulated to all staff and Board members.

Summary of outputs

9. A total of 159 people attended the meetings. All of the reports from the group facilitators and the written responses received are available for viewing in the Park Authority offices. The results are summarised below.
10. ***Question 1 - We need to achieve a balance of interests - land management; recreational; public agency and community - on the Forum. Should members be representatives of organisations (e.g. Scottish Rural Property and Business Association, British Horse Society, Community Councils), or should they simply be individuals with no affiliation to any particular organisation?***
11. Overall it was felt that there would be benefits if Forum members could speak on behalf of a sectoral interest (e.g. recreational users or land management interests) - rather than a specific organisation (e.g. Cyclists' Touring Club or the National Farmers Union of Scotland). It was widely recognised that there is a far greater number of bodies wanting representation than there will be places available on the Forum (see question 2). A concern expressed at the workshops was the potential for dominance by national interests on the Forum at the expense of local interests. However it was acknowledged that should Forum members happen to be members of a national organisation, they should have connections with a wider constituency of interest and are thus well placed to network with others. It was suggested that organisations with similar interests should be asked to liaise with each other to try and jointly identify potential members who could represent the wider interest of their sector.
12. The biggest area of debate was how communities could be represented within one Forum covering such a large area. There were suggestions of a representative from each of the 24 Community Councils; some suggested a single representative from the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils (ACCC); others suggested specific geographical allocation of places. However, it was widely acknowledged that this could potentially

clash with the need to have sectoral interests represented on the Forum, particularly from land managers and users. The word 'local' in relation to Local Access Forum was widely regarded as being misleading. In the legislation 'local' relates to Local Authority boundaries, but in the eyes of most participants 'local' means their specific community or area. More discussion on community and local representation is covered in Question 3 below.

13. Other key issues to come out of this part of the discussion:

- There was confusion about the terminology in relation to Local Access Panels. Since 1981 many local authorities have established Local Access Panels for the purpose of improving disabled access to the built environment, services, advice and information etc. The similarity between the two terms belies the distinct function of Local Access Forums and Local Access Panels and there was a strong view from disability interests that proper distinction should be made between the two to avoid confusion.
- Given the importance of all-abilities issues, many participants felt that there should be a specific place allocated to someone able to represent disabled people on the Forum. Other interests it was felt should be represented included conservation and the natural heritage, young people, tourism, and business.
- The issue of public agency representation (such as Area Tourist Board, Health Board, Forestry Commission or Scottish Natural Heritage, etc) was debated. The benefits of having agencies on the Forum were recognised, particularly in relation to expertise and potential sources of funding. Most participants felt that there could be a role for those agencies but that their places on the Forum should not be at the expense of places for sectoral or community interests. Participants did not feel it was necessary to have equal numbers of places for public agencies compared with other interests.
- At a couple of meetings concerns were raised about the appropriateness of only one Local Access Forum for the Park. Some participants felt that two Forums - covering the northwest and south east of the Park would be better able to represent interests and deal with issues at a more local level. Other participants favoured three Forums for similar reasons. However, other factors were raised in support of a single Forum for the Park, including the important role of the Forum in giving advice on strategic matters (e.g. the Outdoor Access Strategy and the Core Paths Plan); the need for a consistent and co-ordinated approach to outdoor access issues across the Park; and the provision of a manageable and effective Forum serving the needs of the whole area.

14. ***Question 2 - We are considering proposing 16 places for members on the Forum. Is this about right?***

15. The consensus view from the meetings was that while a Forum of 16 members had advantages in terms of being a manageable group and a reasonable size for discussion, a larger group of around 20 members would allow a better representation of interests in the Park. This was coupled with recognition that all meetings would be unlikely to field full attendance. Some participants felt that it was important to have an odd number for 'voting purposes' - but most recognised that as the Forum would be an advisory, rather than a decision-making body, this was not likely to be a necessity. A minority view was expressed that a very small Forum of no more than 5-8 people would be desirable.

16. The use of sub-groups or topic groups for the Forum was discussed at several of the meetings. Many participants supported this for the extra dimension of local knowledge that this could lend the Local Access Forum in its deliberations of more localised issues. Some people were sceptical about the extra administrative implications of this approach.
17. ***Question 3 - Should we take account of where members live in the Park to ensure an even distribution of members geographically?***
18. Overall, participants felt that having a spread of members drawn from all geographical corners of the Park was important, especially given the intention for a single Forum for the Park area. It was generally agreed that allocating places on a geographical basis - whether demographically, by community council, local authority or electoral ward - might conflict with the desire to have members who could speak on behalf of sectoral interests. However, others felt that a solution might be to allocate places both to sectoral interest groups and to geographically defined areas of interest, especially if a bigger Forum (up to 20 places) was envisaged.
19. The issue of whether there would be a requirement that all Forum members should live within the Park boundary was raised at all meetings. There was a strong view that it would be desirable if all members were residents, or at least had social and economic links with the Park. However, it was felt that the Forum would also benefit from including people with particular skills, knowledge or experience of the area who did not live within the Park. As a minimum, it was generally accepted that to be considered for a place on the Forum, potential members should have a strong interest and knowledge of outdoor access issues in the Park.
20. ***Question 4 - How could the Forum communicate best with the public and interest groups, and vice versa?***
21. Many suggestions were made for how the LAF could send out messages about its work, including:
 - use of the general press, community newsletters, and the specialist interest press for advertising meetings and publishing editorial copy about the work of the Forum;
 - holding an annual open seminar/conference on outdoor access;
 - using the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils to link the Forum to community interests;
 - sending minutes to key organisations;
 - having a system of ‘corresponding’ or ‘affiliate’ members;
 - a column in Park-life and space on the CNPA website;
 - well advertised meetings which rotated round the Park and minutes of meetings publicly available; and
 - talks to groups about the role of the Forum.
22. In addition, as two-way communication was regarded as being important, suggestions were made for how people might communicate with the LAF:
 - the establishment of sub-groups;
 - interactive website pages;
 - a dedicated access phone line;

- a suggestion box and ‘tear-off’ forms in Parklife; and
 - dedicated administrative support from CNPA was widely regarded as important.
23. A small number of comments were made that communication should not only rely on electronic means. Chosen methods of communication should also be sensitive to the needs of all abilities.
24. ***Question 5 - How can the Park Authority encourage prospective Forum members to come forward?***
25. Advertising widely in the public arena was seen as being very important - particularly using the local press. There were mixed opinions on whether organisations and representative bodies should be asked to nominate potential members - some people felt that they shouldn’t be; others that it was important that potential members could show the backing of their interest group. However, most people recommended casting the net as widely as possible and using a combination of open advertising; encouraging applications from individuals; and inviting nominations from organisations or groups of organisations sharing the same interest.
26. The overall consensus from the meetings was that the Park Authority should make available a clear summary of the role of a Forum member (a ‘job’ description), the expected time commitment and duration of service, and devise an application form. Asking people to fill in an application form was seen as demonstrating commitment to becoming a Forum member. It was suggested that the application form should give people an opportunity to explain their suitability for the role and importantly, confirm what their constituency of interest is and who is backing them in their application. The question was also raised about a system of substitution if individual members were unable to attend meetings.
27. Several participants felt that specific representation should be sought - particularly in relation to Community Councils and for all-abilities issues. The use of existing Cairngorms-wide structures already in place such as the All Abilities Communication Network and the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils, and canvassing a representative from these bodies, was seen as being very positive.
28. Many participants asked about payment of expenses and childcare etc - also about the timing of meetings to ensure maximum participation from members who are in effect volunteering their own time.
29. ***Question 6 - What are the pros and cons of the ‘peer’ versus ‘panel’ process of selection?***
30. **Peer selection - Persons wishing to be considered for membership of the Forum present their case for membership at a public meeting and are elected by their peers from a particular stakeholder group.**
31. There was some support for selection by peer method as it was perceived as being open, fair, transparent and democratic, and more in ‘local control’. However, there was also criticism of this method for the following reasons:

- It can be difficult to achieve a diversity and balance of interests if the members elected all have too similar an interest.
 - It works best at a single public meeting with all candidates present and given the size of the Park, this might be hard to achieve, thereby disadvantaging candidates who are unable to attend the meeting.
 - Holding more than one peer selection meeting would inevitably favour a geographic bias in selecting members, which might again make it hard to achieve a balance of sectoral interests.
 - Selection at an open public meeting allows candidates to draft in their own supporters and weight election in their favour with an unfair numerical advantage.
32. In mitigation of the above concerns, it was acknowledged that peer selection could work as long as it was primed by the requirement that candidates meet specified criteria (see also paragraph 37 below).
33. **Panel selection - Persons wishing to be considered for membership of the Forum participate in a process of application and selection by a panel, akin to a recruitment exercise.**
34. The panel selection method also had its supporters for the following reasons:
- It could deliver a balanced representation of interests by precluding the ‘random’ factor that could result from election by peers.
 - It could be used to appoint members to specific ‘posts’ and therefore less likely to result in biased representation on the Local Access Forum.
 - It was regarded as the best way to achieve a spread of sectoral and geographical interests with selection based on application and possibly interview.
35. However, the overall difficulty that participants had with this method was how the panel would be selected to ensure that the panel itself was made up of representative and balanced interests.
36. A few felt that the CNPA should simply appoint members, and a number of participants suggested that the method should reflect that of the Park Board - i.e. a mixture of directly elected and appointed members.

Feedback from national organisations and national governing bodies

37. A small number of responses to the questions were received directly from national bodies of interest. However, a significant proportion of the workshop participants indicated their affiliation to a diversity of organisations, therefore national interests were in fact well represented at a local level. Broadly the consensus from governing bodies was that they would prefer to have direct involvement on the Forum, provided by local members. There was a suggestion that participants of activities outwith the right of access (e.g. angling or motorised access etc) should have the opportunity to input to the Forum in some way. All responses indicated a preference for a formal method of selecting members to the Forum and favoured the panel selection method. However, selection by peers at an open meeting was regarded as acceptable as long as the process was primed to achieve the necessary balance and mixture of skills and experience.