

Integrated Land Management Advisory Forum 6 March 2006

Paper 2

Title: The Scottish Rural Development Regulation

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Background

Integrated Land Management is a priority for action identified for the CNP. The Scottish Rural Development Regulation (RDR) offers a real opportunity to help deliver integrated land management. Its implementation could also threaten some of the special qualities of the Park. This paper briefly sets out the changes in the RDR and the Common Agricultural Policy, and identifies the action being undertaken by the CNPA.

What are the Changes?

Farmers and crofters used to receive payments for the numbers of cattle, sheep and amount of cereals produced. These payments have now been disbanded and replaced by the 'single farm payment.' To receive this payment, the farmer/crofter has to keep land in good condition. The payment rate for each farmer/crofter is a percentage of what he/she used to receive. This percentage is decreasing with time, lowering the amount paid to the farmer/crofter. A review of the single farm payment is planned for 2008, and it is expected to be phased out over the next few years.

The change has many consequences for the National Park. Payments linked to cattle/sheep restricted the ability of farmers and crofters to respond to the market, and are linked to environmental damage in some areas. However, weakening the support to farmers and crofters means they are less viable. It also means that there is less incentive to keep animals. Grazing animals, especially cattle are often vital to providing landscape and biodiversity special qualities.

The Rural Development Regulation

For the last 6 years, a Rural Development Regulation has been the umbrella term for the EU schemes such as the Less Favoured Area Support Scheme and the Rural Stewardship Scheme. Payments were made only to farmers and crofters.

The Rural Development Regulation has been revised by the EU, and is different to the previous programme. It is open to anybody in rural areas, and contains three main categories, known as 'axes':

- a) Axis 1. Support for rural industries to become more competitive. This includes things like modernisation of buildings, advisory services, quality branding schemes and training.
- b) Axis 2. Improving the environment and countryside. These include agri-environment schemes, payments for managing designated sites and funding of access.
- c) Axis 3. Improving the quality of life in rural areas and the diversification of the rural economy. This includes things like tourism, small economic businesses, and cultural heritage.

A further aspect of the revised Rural Development Regulation is the need for a regional Leader Plus Local Advisory Group approach to some or the entire

programme. Currently, all decisions about the Rural Development Regulation programmes are made by the Scottish Executive and implemented at a national level. This change from 'top-down' to 'bottom-up' means that some or all of the funding will be allocated through a local advisory group, and that there is the opportunity for areas to design their own priorities.

This new Rural Development Regulation provides us with many opportunities to deliver many aspects of the National Park Plan. However, there are threats to the current delivery of our special qualities, for example, if funding is withdrawn from current agri-environment schemes. The change also weakens further the support for land managers, as the schemes are now available to a wider range of rural needs.

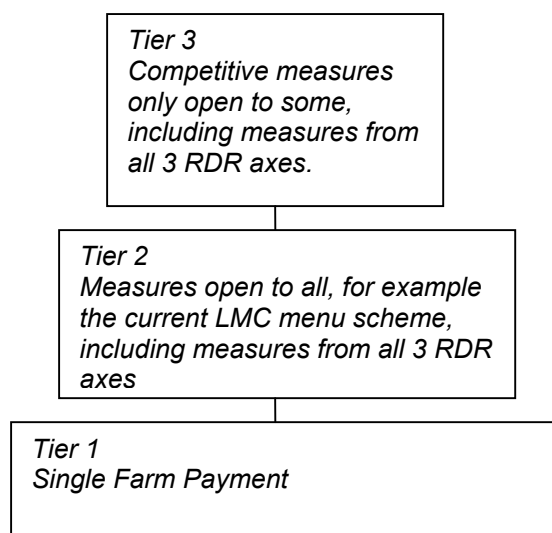
What is the Current Timescale?

The new Rural Development Regulation starts in January 2007. The Scottish Executive is drawing up a plan for Scotland. This is the start of a longterm process. It is not anticipated that there will be a complete scheme or schemes in place for January 2007.

What is the Relationship between Land Management Contracts and These Changes?

The Scottish Executive is committed to introducing tiered land management contracts as a way of integrating public support for land managers. This includes the single farm payment and current schemes. They plan to eventually introduce schemes under the Rural Development Regulation so that they form the top two tiers of a single land management contract:

Figure 1: The three tiered land management contract model



It is proposed that LMCs will have 3 tiers:

- Tier 1 would be the single farm payment.
- Tier 2 would be measures that would be open to all, including those from all three axes of the Rural Development Regulation
- Tier 3 would be competitive measures that would only be open to some land managers. These could include payments for managing designated sites, and measures from all three axes of the Rural Development Regulation.

The Scottish Executive also wishes to integrate other schemes, including SNH's natural care scheme, and the Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme into the LMC, so that it becomes a one-stop shop for land managers. It is possible that some RDR schemes will not be delivered through LMCs, for example support for the upgrading of village halls.

The work of the CNPA

The CNPA has been influencing the shape and design of the Rural Development Regulation. In particular, we have been assessing the opportunities that arise from the regionalisation of decision making, with the CNP as a region. This would enable local decisions to be made about public spending. This would enable us to support land managers to deliver the priority public benefits required to look after the special qualities of the National Park.

To this end, we have developed a Draft Priority Statement for deliverables in the Cairngorms under the Rural Development Regulation. We have also been assessing the opportunities and risks that may arise through the adopting the Leader approach to decision making at the local level. Clearly, there is a large difference between the Leader schemes and the land management schemes and there is much careful thinking and planning to be completed. We have also been advising on the land management planning project, which is looking at the ways of delivering LMCs.

Work on the Scottish Rural Development Regulation will now be taken forward through the action plan for Integrated Land Management (see paper 1).

Further information

This paper is only a brief overview of the CNPA's work on the Rural Development regulation. Further information can be found at:
CNPA's draft priority statement:

<http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/07102005/CNPA.Paper.1057.Board.Board.Paper.2.L.pdf>

Emerging policies for Integrated land Management:

<http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/10022006/CNPA.Paper.1273.Board.Board.Paper.3.E.pdf>

The Scottish Executive's consultation on the Rural Development Regulation:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/02/08132503/0>

Questions for the Integrated Land Management Advisory Forum

The Forum is invited to question and comment any aspect of the Scottish Rural Development Regulation. We would welcome views on the following:

- What are the key priorities for the implementation of the Scottish Rural Development Regulation in the Cairngorms?
- Are there new measures that should be adopted in the Cairngorms?
- Who should be involved in setting those priorities?
- What changes are likely to occur in the farming sector as a result of changes to the Single Farm Payment and Rural Development Regulation?
- How do we ensure that the changes to the Single Farm Payment do not affect the special qualities of the CNP?
- How can we all work towards attaining regional status for the Cairngorms?