

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR DISCUSSION

**Title:** THE LAND BASED BUSINESS TRAINING PROJECT:  
UPDATE

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### Purpose

- To discuss various options for the future of the project and update Members on the progress of the project to date.

### Executive Summary

The Cairngorms Land Based Business Training Project, part funded by the CNPA, the European Social Fund and Land Based Businesses has provided training support for over 500 people, working for 80 land based businesses, since January 2004.

The support provided includes financial support, sourcing of courses, networking to build course numbers, influencing venues and dates, and monitoring the quality of courses.

The project also arranges the delivery of Public Benefit courses, which have no direct commercial benefit for businesses, but which help them deliver the Park's aims.

ESF funding for the project is in place until December 2005, and applications are being made for 2006. These timescales, together with the success of the project to date have highlighted the need to discuss options for the future development of the project, which may include expansion of the beneficiary base of the project, as well as of the delivery of Public Benefit courses and the continued support of the CNPA.

## LAND BASED BUSINESS TRAINING PROJECT - UPDATE

### Background

1. The Land based business Training Project (LBBTP) evolved from work in the late 1990's to establish 3 Deeside estates as Investors in People. This process highlighted strong organisational and individual training needs. However, the task of identifying and sourcing appropriate training was seen to be:
  - a) complicated and time consuming
  - b) difficult due to the wide ranging and unusual requirements
  - c) difficult to source appropriate trainers and influence course dates
  - d) difficult to host training events locally or in-house
  - e) expensive if bespoke courses were set up by 1 estate.
2. These obstacles severely limited the amount of training carried out. Kincardine and Deeside trust (KADET), supported by the Cairngorms Partnership, set up a project to act as a one-stop-shop for training, co-ordinating and managing the training as a whole. This project was then expanded to 16 other estates across the Cairngorms, management of the project being undertaken until the end of 2003 by Enterprise North East Trust (ENET), a successor body to KADET.
3. The CNPA took over the management of the project in 2004. The LBBTP for 2004 expanded on the previous project to offer more extensive training opportunities to more categories of land based worker. Where the previous projects supported a small number of estates only, from 2004, any business that is involved in the use and/or management of land is eligible for support through the LBBTP. This includes estates, farms, crofts, outdoor recreation centres, horticultural nurseries, community land owning groups etc.
4. The LBBTP has two strands. The first is the continuation of the existing project delivering training to help land based businesses (LBBs) become more efficient and competitive. LBBs are given support with funding (45% - 50%), but more relevant is the support in sourcing courses; in finding trainers to set up new courses when these do not already exist; in networking with other LBBs to build up course number so as to keep costs down as well as meet the needs of very small businesses; and in ensuring where possible that the trainer goes to the LBB rather than expecting the delegate to travel to training centres.
5. The second strand was completely new in 2004. This strand focuses on helping existing LBBs to deliver the Public Benefits associated with the 4 aims of the National Park. These Public Benefit Courses (PBCs) have no direct commercial benefit for LBBs, but emphasise the relationship between the wider public benefits LBBs provide and the potential financial benefits. PBCs are 100% funded.

### Update

6. In 2004, a total of £94 672 was committed, with 416 individuals, working for 64 LBBs, receiving training through the project. Annex 1 details the breakdown of expenditure and outcomes. Approximately 166 courses were undertaken, covering various topics such as customer care, environmental management, health and safety,

IT skills, management development and business skills, technical skills, use and maintenance of machinery/equipment/vehicles, and Public Benefit Courses (PBCs). Annex 2 shows pie charts of the courses and beneficiaries.

7. Since the beginning of 2005, 16 businesses have joined the LBBTP and received training support through the project, with a total of 80 land based businesses committed to the project. There has been a huge uptake of training in the first quarter, with approximately £54, 000 already having been spent on training courses. This represents a 500% increase on the same period last year, prior to the project team starting. In addition to the existing beneficiaries, 100 new beneficiaries have received training support this year. We plan to recruit another 250 new beneficiaries by the end of 2005. This means that 766 people working in the land based sector will have received training through the LBBTP.
8. The LBBTP recently commissioned an external evaluation of the project. The results of this evaluation, and a survey of the beneficiaries carried out by the project team (Annex 3 details the survey results) confirms that the project adds value through the combination of funding, sourcing, networking to build course numbers, influencing course dates/venues and monitoring. The project team has gained a reputation for their “can do” philosophy, and is regarded as delivering a “quality” product in terms of the nature of training programmes organised, the overall quality of trainers provided, and the way courses are organised and delivered. In addition, the team has gained a good reputation for engaging with local estates and businesses in order to generate or sustain interest in appropriate training courses.

## Issues/Discussion

### *Public Benefit Courses*

9. Public Benefit Courses have no direct commercial benefit for a business, but help the business deliver the public benefits associated with the aims of the National Park, e.g. “The Cairngorms Wildlife - Identification and Interpretation”, and “SOAC and Communication Skills” courses. In 2004, 3 PBCs were arranged by the LBBTP, delivered to 70 delegates. This year, 5 PBCs have already been delivered by the project, to 141 delegates, with another 6 scheduled. These bespoke courses have been arranged specifically to help LBBs to deliver the public benefits associated with the 4 aims of the National Park. Course topics have been identified through consultation with CNPA staff, as well as with LBBs. In addition the project team sourced courses that were externally arranged, but which still indirectly help businesses meet the aims (e.g. SNH Sharing Good Practice Courses, RSPB courses, Scottish Countryside Rangers Association courses). Annex 4 details Public Benefit courses delivered.
10. Interest in the PBCs is growing, due to the high quality of courses that are delivered; the fact that course topics directly meet the needs of LBB’s as most have been developed through direct consultation with LBB’s; and the fact that the courses are generally run in both Speyside and Deeside. Each of these courses are arranged with specific National Park aims in mind, as well as consideration of new and evolving legislation. It is considered that the LBBTP should continue to expand this element of the project, with an increased amount of time and money committed to the

identification of Public Benefit training needs, and the setting up of courses to meet those needs.

11. Currently, the PBCs are delivered to LBBs only. As the project continues to grow, there may be room to expand these courses to a wider beneficiary base. As we develop other strategies e.g. Natural Heritage, Resource, Interpretation, it may be that we consider delivering courses on these topics to the general public at a subsidised rate. Through arranging and delivering these courses we would be helping the people who live and work in the Park to deliver the aims of the Park, without making this delivery incumbent on working for a LBB.
12. To date, the CNPA contribution to the project has been modest, with the bulk of the funding obtained from the ESF. Approximately £5 000 of the £18 000 committed by the Park Authority towards the project was spent on PBCs last year. This represents 28% of the total expenditure. Given the popularity and growth of the PBCs, it is anticipated that the CNPA contribution to them will amount to £15, 000 this year. It follows that should we continue to develop and expand the PBCs in the future, the Park Authority will be required to expand its financial commitment

## Discussion Points

13. **Should the LBBTP consider expanding the emphasis on the PBCs; in terms of increased financial commitment; more staff time dedicated to identifying training needs and arranging courses; and expanded beneficiary base to include the delivery of some courses to the general public?**

### *Beneficiary base*

14. Currently, training support is delivered to staff of LBBs only. Land managers provide vital jobs and housing in fragile rural areas; produce timber; offer high value recreation and tourism opportunities of benefit to the local community as well as to landowners; accord special protection to key natural heritage sites and encourage responsible access to areas in the countryside. This clearly demonstrates the importance of LBBs and the need to continue to support this sector through training.
15. Various agencies are able to either fund training, or offer subsidised training for LBBs (including LEC's, SAC, FWAG). Lantra and HIE are able to point people in the direction of training providers. Whilst there is clear partnership working - MBSE puts LBBs in contact with us in the first instance; communication links exist with the Learning Centres, we have access to Lantra's Trainer's Database - no-one is delivering **all** the elements that the LBBTP offers (funding, sourcing, networking to build up course numbers, influencing venues/dates and monitoring). The project team has gained a good reputation for engaging with local estates and businesses in order to generate or sustain interest in appropriate training courses, and is clearly adding value to all the other training that is available. We are working closely with other partners to ensure that there is no duplication of efforts, and to co-ordinate funding.
16. The possibility of extending the LBBTP to include tourism has been considered. Although all LBBs are involved in varying degrees of tourism, the project does not

extend to accommodation providers, restaurants etc. It is considered that there is already a large amount of training support available to accommodation providers (through VisitScotland and the LEC's). The Sustainable Tourism Strategy has identified that with the wide range of tourism support bodies in place, it is imperative that there is not a duplication of roles. It is considered that it may not, at the current time, add value to extend the project to non LBB tourism.

17. The possibility of extending the LBBTP to support youth, primarily through the proposed Youth Apprenticeship Scheme has been considered. This scheme is still at a developmental stage, but the LBBTP team is heavily involved, with a view to identifying how best to use the project to support training for young people.
18. The possible extension of courses on the developing Natural Heritage, Resource and Interpretation Strategies to the general public may be considered.

### **Discussion Points**

19. **Should we broaden our beneficiary base to incorporate other sectors within the National Park, as well as LBBs?**

### ***Funding***

20. Funding for the project has to date been provided by the European Social Fund (training costs up to 50%), the LBBs (training costs up to 55%) and the CNPA. The CNPA acts as the lead body for the LBBTP, and provides a financial contribution to PBCs, promotion of the project, and administration costs, as well as in-kind support through employing the officers, providing staff accommodation and management support. In 2004, the CNPA contribution was approximately £18 000.
21. The LBBTP has secured funding from the ESF programmes until the end of 2005, and will bid for funding for 2006. The present ESF programmes end in December 2006. The future of the ESF programmes is currently the subject of discussions between the various Governments and the EU Commission. The advice is that new, similar programmes will develop, but given the entry to the EU by 10 new members the order of funding available will inevitably be reduced. In addition, it is worth noting that historically, there has usually been a hiatus between "old" EU programmes and "new" for administrative systems, application procedures and indeed applications to be put in place.
22. In addition to the CNPA and ESF, MBSE has contributed a small amount towards the current project. It is considered that we should source future funding from additional external partners.

### **Discussion Points**

23. **When the current ESF funding programme comes to an end in 2006, should the project cease to exist, or an expanded version of the project continue, with increased support from the CNPA, and additional external funding being sourced?**

## Policy Context

24. The LBBTP meets the aims of the National Park;
- a) By training those who are responsible for land and environmental management within the National Park so helping conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area
  - b) By training those people who are responsible for welcoming visitors onto the land the project is helping promote the understanding and enjoyment of the qualities of the area by the public
  - c) By helping to improve the performance of land based industries through training, the project is benefiting the local economy and helping create an adaptable and multiskilled workforce so helping economic and social development.
25. The LBBTP has very clear direct links to two of the CNPA's Corporate Plan Strategic Themes:
- a) **Theme 2:** To promote sustainable resource, land and water management; and to protect and enhance our wildlife and landscapes.
  - b) **Theme 3:** To support and stimulate economic and social development within the Park that sustains and is sustained by its special natural and cultural qualities.
26. It is also links directly to several of the Corporate Goals:
- a) *"Public benefits which can be produced by land managers defined and supported through publicly funded integrated schemes"*
  - b) *"Good communication and consultation by land managers on objective setting for public benefits"*
  - c) *"Stronger and more diverse economic opportunities within the CNP area"*
- and indirectly to others:
- a) *"Duties as the outdoor access authority effectively and efficiently delivered"*
  - b) *"Arrangements in place to meet needs of visitors, land managers, and communities for information and management of access (i.e. equivalent of ranger functions)"*
  - c) *Wide range of opportunities to experience the special qualities of the Park in a sustainable manner is available to all"*
  - d) *"High levels of understanding and appreciation of the Park and of the role, of the CNPA and partners"*
27. The LBBTP will be an important mechanism within the Integrated Land Management Strategy. The proposed strategy framework recognises that in order for management objectives to be set that further the public interest, and would not otherwise occur, the long term vision must involve the development of highly effective support mechanisms, including training, e.g. the delivery of courses to help farmers understand the Integrated Land Management Contracts, and use them to their best advantage.

28. The Draft Interpretive Framework for the Cairngorms has identified the LBBTP as the mechanism to develop interpretive training programmes. Interpretation training has already been funded through the project to date, with further training earmarked for the first quarter of 2006.
29. The promotion of responsible outdoor access under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 is a duty of the Park Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage. The LBBTP has already arranged bespoke Access training, with further, advanced courses scheduled into 2006 and beyond.
30. The LBBTP is a mechanism to independently deliver at least 8 of the actions of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy, without duplicating on the work of the other agencies. Annex 5 details the actions and how the LBBTP delivers them.

## **Implications**

### ***Financial Implications***

31. The current Operational Plan makes provision for £50,000 to cover the CNPA's contribution towards Public Benefit courses, staffing, project evaluation and promotional activity. External funding has been secured until the end of 2005. Given the current situation regarding ESF funding already mentioned, it is possible that ESF funding will be reduced in the future. As such the expanded continuation of the project may require increased financial support from the CNPA particularly with regards the development of the PBCs.

### ***Presentational Implications***

32. The LBBTP has been widely publicised, through press releases and advertisements of Public Benefit courses, as well as inclusion in several related magazines/journals; distribution of leaflets through mail shots, at shows and at relevant meetings; and various presentations. (Annex 6 details the publicity profile). This has a knock effect of positively promoting the CNPA as a whole.
33. The LBBTP is also an extremely important tool for positive engagement with landowners and land managers.

### ***Implications for Stakeholders***

34. The main stakeholders of the LBBTP are LBBs. The core aims of the LBBTP are:
  - a) To improve the performance and competitiveness of existing land based businesses through establishing a more highly trained, flexible and efficient workforce.
  - b) To provide the opportunity for the rural workforce to gain new skills and update or formalise existing skills.
  - c) To protect existing jobs by improving the skills base of workers and to help create an adaptable workforce with transferable skills who can participate in emerging sectors of the labour market.
  - d) To create a culture where both employers and employees recognise the long-term benefits of training and lifelong learning.

- e) To further the aims of the National Park by increasing the efficiency of land-based businesses which will have a direct impact on the social and economic fabric of the National Park as well as enable those businesses to deliver the public benefits of the National Park.
35. An in-house survey was recently conducted to assess the impact of the project on businesses and individuals, and to see if the project is meeting these core aims. (Annex 3 details the survey results).
36. The majority of respondents perceive that the LBBTP training support has increased their confidence, helped them to do their jobs better, increased their job satisfaction and made them more ambitious to develop their roles further. This was substantiated by employers in terms of the positive impact of the LBBTP on their business's efficiency and competitiveness. A strong majority wish to undergo further training. Over 94% of the employer respondents indicate that the training support they receive through the LBBTP contributes to their business's delivery of the Park's aims.

## Conclusions

37. The LBBTP has important strategic links which serve to demonstrate that the Project acts as an effective delivery mechanism for several of the National Park goals and related actions. It clearly has an important role to play in; awareness raising (on a wide range of strategically important issues); skills training; creating adaptable and efficient workforces; job creation; culture change in land based businesses; delivering public benefits; community capacity building; sustainable communities; sustainable use of the land; protection of the natural heritage.
38. It is considered that in the short term, the project should continue with the level of support currently delivered to businesses. However, we recognise the need for developing a training strategy for the national Park for the long term. Whilst it is considered that there may permanently be room to develop and deliver PBCs, the importance of developing an exit strategy with a view to encouraging businesses to take on a training culture is noted.
39. This paper provides an opportunity to discuss how the project can be developed in the future, primarily with regards the beneficiary base and the delivery of public benefit courses. The intention is to take the Board's views and develop them into a clear vision of the future role of the LBBTP. We hope to come back to Board early in 2006 to present an update on the project in 2005, and to present a business plan for the project for the next 3 years.

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