

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: Update on Developing a Park for All

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update Board members on progress in relation to the CNPA's work on social inclusion issues.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board note the progress made on social inclusion issues.

Executive Summary

Following on from the 'Park for All' recommendations approved by the Board in August 2004, work has been taken forward to embed social inclusion thinking as a crosscutting issue within the overall work of the CNPA. In developing the Park Plan, in developing policy and projects, and in the way that the Authority operates, specific actions have been taken to ensure that this is the case.

Issues relating to social inclusion and our aim of being a 'Park for All' must, of course, continue to be addressed. So that the Board can continue to have an oversight of our work on this front, an annual progress report will be prepared each June.

UPDATE ON DEVELOPING A PARK FOR ALL

Background

1. Following on from the work of the Board's Park for All Working Group, a paper on social inclusion issues was presented to the Board in August 2004. This paper contained an analysis of some of the key barriers to different groups being able to participate in the economic and social life of the Park or being able to access it. It then went on to set the context for the Park Authority's role in relation to social inclusion.
2. What the August paper demonstrated was that social inclusion is very much a crosscutting issue that needs to be considered within all of the Authority's policy and project development activity. The Board therefore agreed that -
 - a) consideration of appropriate ways to address the identified barriers would need to be taken into account in developing the Park Plan;
 - b) mechanisms should be developed to ensure that social inclusion issues are adequately addressed in the development of projects that are led/supported by the CNPA;
 - c) in terms of the way in which it operates, the Authority should strive to be an exemplar with respect to social inclusion.

Introduction

3. The idea of the Cairngorms National Park being a 'Park for All', not just the fit and the few or better off, is at the heart of what the CNPA is seeking to achieve, through both its own work and that of partner organisations. This aspiration is reflected in a lot of the work being conducted Authority but often goes unseen or is not widely communicated. This report therefore seeks to communicate some of this work and, in doing so, to update the Board on progress against the recommendations that were approved in August.

Developing the Park Plan

4. In developing the strategic objectives for the Park Plan, a check was made that they adequately addressed the barriers to social inclusion that were previously identified. These will also be considered in developing the detailed actions.
5. As was agreed by the Board in February, rather than conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Park Plan and Local Plan, we will be conducting a more holistic Sustainability Appraisal. This takes into account social and economic considerations, as well as environmental, and so will provide a further opportunity to 'social inclusion proof' these plans.

Embedding Social Inclusion Thinking in Policy/Project Development

6. As you will have noted, in the new Corporate and Operational Plans, the ‘Park for All’ theme has been removed as a freestanding theme and is now highlighted as one of three crosscutting themes (the others being ‘Sustainability’ and ‘Delivering the 3 Es’). This is in recognition that social inclusion cannot be hived off as a separate piece of the Park Authority’s work but rather that it needs to be considered in everything that we do.
7. To ensure that due consideration is given to social inclusion issues, Board papers relating to policy or project development now have to explicitly state the implications in relation to the crosscutting themes. A similar approach is planned with regards project appraisal and evaluation documentation.
8. Of course, this is simply addressing the systems side of things in ensuring that there are prompts for people to think about social inclusion. Alongside this, it is important that the Authority raises the level of staff knowledge and understanding of social inclusion issues so that people automatically consider these in policy and project development in an informed manner. One step that has been taken was the holding of disability awareness training for both staff and Board members. These sessions were both well attended and well received and another session is planned for new Board members or staff, or people who missed out on the training last time.
9. It is worth noting that the Authority have developed or supported or are in the process of developing a number of specific projects that address the identified barriers to social inclusion, as is shown below.

Constraint	Current activity
<i>Public transport</i>	
Lack of local transport means isolation and non-participation	A public transport timetable has been produced. Meetings to be held with Local Authorities and other relevant partners to influence current development of Local Transport Strategies, and future development of Regional Transport Strategies, from a Park perspective. Working with community car schemes to spread good practice within the Park.
Public transport within and into the NP can be limited, costly and not co-ordinated	
<i>Affordable Housing</i>	
Local people on local wages are priced out of the housing market	Development of Local Plan housing policies and work with Cairngorms Housing Strategy Implementation Group to update Action Plan.
<i>Education, training and employment</i>	
Lack of opportunities in higher education, training and jobs;	The Land Based Business Training Scheme is proving successful. Work is ongoing to develop a

Constraint	Current activity
Shortage of well paid, better quality jobs	pilot Youth Apprenticeship Scheme. The Integrated Land Management, Sustainable Tourism and branding work should, in time, contribute to improving economic opportunities.
Lack and/or expense of childcare prevents women finding work	Funded seminars for women considering returning to work or training. In discussion with Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce over potential CNPA funding. Part of their plans include work on childcare issues.

<i>Access to advice and information</i>	
Poor access to information and advice on careers, jobs, training, health, other opportunities, benefits, etc	Where CNPA needs to make information available, we seek to do so via most appropriate distribution channels. Examples of information provided include public transport guide and directory of physical activity in Badenoch and Strathspey.
<i>Health and Fitness</i>	
Poor health and disability, particularly significant to older and disabled people	The pilot affordable health and fitness project has been completed with elements of it now being taken forward by other partners. A Directory of Physical Activity (Badenoch & Strathspey) was produced and circulated. Building upon this work. a successful Park-wide conference was held in March.
<i>Young people's voices</i>	
Young people's views are often not heard.	See information on Youth Communications Initiative (para.13)
<i>Awareness and information on the NP</i>	
Lack of awareness and poor access to information on the National Park	<p>This is being addressed via the CNPA's communications strategy and the developing Interpretive Framework for the Cairngorms.</p> <p>The John Muir Award and the Moorlands Project are also important practical examples of ways in which we are working with individuals to educate them on specific aspects of the Park.</p>

<i>Other Barriers in accessing the NP</i>	
<p>Physical barriers reducing access to the countryside</p>	<p>The Park Authority, as the statutory access authority, has a duty to uphold access rights and this will include ensuring that such ‘barriers’ are modified or removed by landowners and land managers. We are currently in the process of devising a system for logging such ‘complaints’ made by the public and also developing our thinking on how we deal with barriers to the countryside that discriminate against all users.</p> <p>As part of the process of developing an outdoor access strategy we are compiling an audit of the all-abilities outdoor access provision across the Park . This will help inform what further provision is required, what sort and where. This will be built into the outdoor access strategy, which in turn will form part of the Park Plan. We expect the audit report to be completed by the end of May and the strategy itself to be completed by the autumn.</p> <p>In addition, the new Local Outdoor Access Forum which will advise the Park Authority on a number of matters relating to outdoor access has Ken McMillan, Chair of the All Abilities Communications Network, as a member. His input into the development of these future plans and strategies will be invaluable.</p>
<p>Cultural and psychological barriers and fear of discrimination can inhibit ethnic, inner city or disadvantaged groups from visiting the NP</p>	<p>Via the John Muir Award (JMA), Princes Trust Volunteers from urban areas are coming to the Cairngorms to learn about the National Park and experience its special qualities.</p> <p>The JMA has also established a partnership with the Scottish Youth Hostel Association and its ‘Give Us a Break’ social inclusion programme, which provides fully funded residential opportunities for disadvantaged groups. In addition, the JMA itself has a small amount of funding available to groups to enable them to become involved in the Award.</p>
<p>Financial barriers can prevent disadvantaged groups from visiting the NP</p>	<p>The JMA has also established a partnership with the Scottish Youth Hostel Association and its ‘Give Us a Break’ social inclusion programme, which provides fully funded residential opportunities for disadvantaged groups. In addition, the JMA itself has a small amount of funding available to groups to enable them to become involved in the Award.</p>

The CNPA as an Exemplar Organisation

10. One of the CNPA's core organisational values is to be 'Open and inclusive' and, in part, this means that the Authority must be accessible to all and have clear and comprehensive policies with regards equal opportunities. Specific actions that have been taken, or are planned, include the following -
 - a) With guidance on Promoting Disability Equality forthcoming in the next year, we intend to review our present Staff Handbook against draft guidance to identify any areas where the Authority's procedures may be improved. This will help shape the content of future work to promote equality through development of specific guidance and/or revision of existing procedures;
 - b) A robust approach to equality monitoring will be embedded within the Authority's recruitment and retention procedures;
 - c) Training has been provided to staff and a guidance note has been produced on how to hold accessible meetings;
 - d) We are working to ensure that key channels of CNPA communications are accessible to people with visual impairments. For example, our website has been designed in accordance with the guidelines provided by the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative. In addition, the Authority's newsletter, 'Park Life' is produced in Braille and tape form and circulated via the different Societies for the Blind in Highland, Grampian and Dundee to their members.

Stakeholder Groups

11. In the previous 'Park for All Board' paper, various groups were highlighted at being at particular risk of exclusion. The CNPA has specific mechanisms in place for communicating and working with two of these groups - people with disabilities and young people.
12. The **All Abilities Communication Network** is supported by the Authority and brings representatives from disability organisations together each quarter with the remit to -
 - a) ensure that CNPA policy is well informed by the views of disabled people and their representative bodies who live, work and visit the area;
 - b) provide information and advice to the CNPA;
 - c) generate ideas to put forward to the CNPA Board on disability issues, not just on physical access.

The group has provided advice on various matters and its Chair, Ken MacMillan is now a member of the Local Outdoor Access Forum. The Fieldfare Trust (who promote countryside access for people with disabilities) is also reporting to the group about a project proposal they are developing to promote volunteering in National Parks.
13. The **Schools Youth Group** brings together elected pupil representatives and their teachers from the seven secondary schools whose catchments lie within the Cairngorms National Park. The purpose of the group is both to raise awareness of the Park within the education system, and to enable two-way communication between the CNPA and young people.

14. Stemming from the work of the Schools Youth Group, a variety of mechanisms for engaging young people in the Park have been taken forward, including -
- a) an innovative media project involving groups from each school being trained in the skills required to produce their own film on life in the National Park. The youngsters attended a training weekend in December in Aboyne led by Aberdeenshire Media Unit to plan their film and learn about scriptwriting, use of the camera, editing and interviewing. With financial support from the CNPA and LEADER+, each school has been provided with production equipment to enable them to develop their film, with a view to holding a premiere event in early summer. Not only will the project help to develop new skills and increase awareness of the National Park, but will also encourage communication between the schools through exchange of video letters.
 - b) the CNPA has requested the help of the youngsters in producing a visitor guide to the National Park for young people. Pupils have been asked to suggest the types of places to go and things to do in the Park that would appeal to young people.
 - c) a website www.youngcairngorms.com, has been created by pupils at Grantown Grammar, containing information all about the Park aimed at young people. The site is currently incomplete, so the Youth Group and their classmates have been asked for their input in improving the site and adding local information. The CNPA also ran a competition amongst the schools to design a logo for the site.
 - d) Pupils are being asked to feed in their ideas and concerns in reviewing the NP Youth Manifesto originally drawn up in 2001. This will help the CNPA to focus on the priority issues and barriers that young people face in the Cairngorms.
15. As detailed in the CNPA's Operational Plan, it is intended that a more in-depth piece of work to develop a Youth Strategy and Action Plan will be progressed this year. Consideration is being given to combining this work with the development of an Education Strategy for the Park (also part of the Operational Plan).C

Conclusions

16. As reported above, the CNPA has undertaken a great deal of work to take forward the recommendations set out in the Park for All report, approved by the Board last August. However, there is no room for complacency. If we really are going to live up to our organisational values and work towards it being a Park for All, then social inclusion principles need to underpin everything that the Park Authority is trying to achieve and the manner in which it does so. It is therefore intended that a Park for All progress report will be produced each June, so as to allow the Board to maintain oversight of this important work.

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