
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CNPA LAND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to seek board approval for a refreshed package of land management support to help delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan and make the most of the forthcoming Rural Development Programme.

Recommendations

That the Board approve a refreshed package of land management support to be co-ordinated and delivered by CNPA.

Executive Summary

CNPA is currently offering support to land managers to help ensure we retain a vibrant and skilled working community across all land management sectors. Our support is targeted at assisting the delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) and supporting plans, particularly the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (CNAP) and ensuring land managers are well equipped to adapt to new market opportunities and comply with new obligations.

This paper sets out how we propose to refresh our land management support in line with actions in the Partnership Plan, to provide a visible, clear and well-targeted package of land management support that will help make the most of the forthcoming Rural Development Programme. The proposed package builds on our current support to deliver **advice and support services, training and skills development and assisting communications and networks.**

CNPA LAND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT - FOR DECISION

Introduction and Context

1. The management of the land shapes the landscapes we value, the habitats and species, and special qualities, as well as being an integral part of the economy and employment in the Park.
2. A 2010 study^[1] has shown that the wider land-based industry in the Cairngorms National Park accounts for at least 900 jobs (10 per cent of the total employment) and contributes a minimum of £42 million gross value added to the local economy (11 per cent of the total) – forestry accounts for a further £11 million (3%). The National Park's international reputation as a tourism destination is worth around £115M (30%) to the local economy and more to Scotland as a whole. Many Land Based businesses are diversifying into this sector to support other activities. Development of the tourism sector is an important element in drawing in economic benefit to the National Park and is dependent on the landscape, habitats, wildlife and active land use that provide the primary tourism resource.
3. Land management in the National Park contributes to all three of the long-term outcomes in our National Park Partnership plan:
 - a) A sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities
 - b) A special place for people and nature with natural and cultural heritage enhanced
 - c) People enjoying the Park through outstanding visitor and learning experiences
4. The land use strategy for Scotland captures the importance of the land management sector in delivering “A Scotland where we fully recognise, understand and value the importance of our land resources, and where our plans and decisions about land use deliver improved and enduring benefits, enhancing the wellbeing of our nation”.
5. The Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) is a programme of economic, environmental and social measures, utilising the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development funding plus domestic Scottish Government funding. SRDP funding includes: the Crofting Counties Agricultural Grant Scheme, Food Processing, Marketing and Co-operation Grant Scheme, the Forestry Commission Challenge Funds, the LEADER initiative, Less Favoured Area Support Scheme, Rural Development Contracts and the Skills Development Scheme. The current SRDP ends on 31st December 2013; the new programme for 2014-2020 is currently under consultation.
6. It is critical that land managers continue to make the most of SRDP. There have been 317 Rural Development Contracts (RDC) awarded in the Park during the current programme, with the projected spend as follows.

^[1] *The Economic and Social Health of the Cairngorms National Park*, Cogentsi and Rocket Science, 2010

Year	Projected RDC spend in CNP (£ million)
2009	1.6
2010	3.3
2011	3.8
2012	4.1
2013	2.9
2014	1.5
2015	4.4

7. SRDP is complex and it is high on the Scottish Governments agenda to make it easier for land managers and others to find their way through the application process including through the use of a network of advisors. One of the key purposes of this proposed programme of land management support is to help land managers be ready for the next round of SRDP with preparations for applications made in advance.
8. Further policy context is provided in Annex I.

Key Principles

9. The following key principles are included to highlight the underlying significance of land management to the National Park:
 - a) The special qualities of the National Park depend upon a continued diverse and active land management community and thriving land-based businesses.
 - b) A diversity of landuse and land management practices within the National Park must be maintained to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits.
 - c) Land management support needs to be responsive to current trends, demands and opportunities but must also enable land managers to adapt to new market opportunities and comply with new obligations.
10. By offering the right kind of support to land managers we can help to maintain and enhance the landscapes and habitats that provide the foundations for our long term vision for the National Park: *An outstanding National Park, enjoyed and valued by everyone, where nature and people thrive together.*

Building on Current Land Management Support

11. The National Park Partnership Plan 2012-17 sets out a commitment to:
 - a) Improve co-ordination of land management advice through a range of providers;
 - b) Target advice and support to help land managers contribute to National Park Partnership Plan delivery, including support for land management planning
 - c) Support networks for communication and collaboration.
12. CNPA currently provides support to land managers across a wide range of activity including:
 - a) Offering advice on conservation, landscape, access and visitor management, rural development, housing, renewables, etc
 - b) Funding and project support
 - c) Communications, networks and collaboration

- d) Training and skills development
- e) Ranger service support
- f) Marketing and promotion
- g) Planning and development management
- h) Research and data collation

13. With a new Rural Development Programme due to begin soon, now is the time to refresh the package of land management support to deliver these actions in the Partnership Plan. We propose to build on the extensive support already provided, and deliver a more visible and targeted package of support. This is summarised in **Table I** below.

Table I: CNPA refreshed package of land management support
(Further details showing the types of support, priorities, targets and CNPA resource implications are provided in **Annex 2.**)

1. Advice and support services
<p>To deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation management • Visitor experience, interpretation and access management • Diversification and business development <p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm audits • Management planning • Data collation and research • Land management casework and projects • Research and data collation
2. Training and Skills
<p>To deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant and necessary skills to help deliver the National Park Partnership Plan • To support a viable work force with a succession of young people <p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training • Bespoke courses, seminars and events • Volunteer co-ordination
3. Communications & Networks
<p>To deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationships and good communications with land management community • Awareness of new opportunities for land managers • Assist land managers to collaborate and share knowledge with one another and CNPA <p>Through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Forums and Advisory Groups • Partnerships • National Groups • Voluntary groups • Social media

14. The following provides an overview of each of the above elements included in Table I.

Advice and Support Services

15. We will provide advice in relation to Partnership Plan priorities and support for management planning. Advice will be provided through a combination of:
 - a) CNPA staff
 - b) Partner organisations
 - c) Contracted specialists
16. By supporting farm audits and estate management planning we aim to help land managers provide a sound basis for funding applications, delivery of Partnership Plan priorities and continued business viability.
17. We propose to support management planning where there are particular opportunities to deliver partnership plan priorities, to support the Wildlife Estates Initiative and to inform SRDP and funding applications.
18. Advice and support on funding opportunities will be key. We will work with partners to target opportunities for SRDP applications, and pursue other opportunities with a 'shovel-ready' approach to seeking funding from a range of sources. Work is currently progressing to put an "Expression of Interest" to Scottish Government for continued support for the Park through the next generation of LEADER 2014-2020.
19. It is important that management advice be backed up by up to date research and data. CNPA with partners will commission research where necessary. We are currently establishing a research web hub for the National Park and research strategy in which knowledge exchange between the research community and land managers will be a key action.
20. We are currently commissioning a survey of Estates in collaboration with Scottish Land and Estates which will obtain detailed information on current land management practices and opportunities which will help guide future land management support.

Training and Skills Development

21. Training is important for securing a viable land based work force for the future including a succession of young people with the skills to meet future challenges
22. CNPA has had a good reputation for land based business training provision. It is important that we maintain this, ensuring that training is aimed at helping land managers deliver effectively on the ground with a skilled workforce for managing a world-class National Park. Training also provides opportunities for people to develop new skills and diversify into new areas of work. As well as offering bespoke 'public benefits' courses targeted at delivering specific aspects of the NPPP and the CNAP, land managers greatly value assistance in a wide range of necessary vocational courses, with benefits from networking and collaboration.

Communications and Networks

23. There are significant opportunities in the National Park for bringing together land managers across ownership boundaries e.g. farms working together on wetland and wading birds conservation through to larger estates working together to promote woodland habitat networks. In addition to hosting formal partnerships CNPA's broad remit enables us to play a key role in bringing together interest groups in specific topics.
24. Land managers need to keep up to date with current opportunities or threats that might significantly affect them. It is also important for land managers to learn from each other and for CNPA to maintain a 'grass-roots' perspective on land managers' perceptions. The Land Management Forum, Farmer's Forum, Monitor Farms, Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group all have played a significant part in achieving this and will continue to do so. Collaborative groups such as Deer Management Groups and Wildfire Groups are essential voluntary mechanisms, intended to enable land managers to work together to resolve cross estate boundary issues. In many cases these groups can work effectively without additional support from CNPA, but in others CNPA's support through e.g. funding secretarial support or assisting with mapping management objectives can be valuable.
25. CNPA is a core member of a number of formal partnerships or networks, which are firmly established and set to continue. Catchment Initiatives (Spey, Dee and South Esk) have proved to be a versatile and effective means of bringing together a range of sectors to deliver projects that improve habitats, water quality and assist natural flood management. The Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group has strong land management representation and plays a key role in guiding conservation management and the delivery of the CNAP. CNPA's Cairngorms Nature staff have an important role in monitoring progress with the action plan and in overseeing a range of practical projects such as the Cairngorms Rare Plants Project and Raptortrack. The Strathspey Wetlands and Waders Initiative has been very important for providing practical and funding support for farmers.
26. A number of nationally based networks are of importance to land management in the National Park, e.g. the Moorland Forum, Deer Management Round Table, SRDP review groups and National Access Forum. It is important for CNPA to learn from these groups and contribute to them for the benefit of land management in the National Park.
27. Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc) are increasingly being used in all professions. We will be using this and encouraging others to do so as a way of improving communications with and within the land management sector.
28. The Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum fulfils a statutory duty and acts as an essential advisory and communication mechanism for ensuring best practice.

Other Important Areas of Support

29. Other areas of wider work in CNPA will continue to support land management in a range of ways including:

- a) Partnership delivery of ranger services to promote the enjoyment, understanding and care of the National Park through: the first-hand provision of information, advice and activities; interpretation; the management of sites and facilities; and seeking to secure responsible behaviour;
- b) The Economic Strategy for the Park addressing issues including broadband, food and drink, tourism and renewable energy development;
- c) Funding and delivery of path construction and repairs through the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust;
- d) Volunteering, especially linked to the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan
- e) Education through the John Muir Award, Junior Rangers and other education programmes raising awareness of rural skills and opportunities in the land-based sector; and
- f) Co-ordinating business development through the Cairngorms Business Partnership underpinned by the work of the Community Development Officers.

Implications

Financial and Staff Implications

30. The proposed programme includes a combination of in-house staff support and the co-ordination/commissioning of support from partner bodies and specialist contractors.
31. For the current year the budget for contracting specialist input is available within the existing land management programme. Budget allocations for future years will be made and approved through the normal operational planning process.
32. Current staff time will be redirected to deliver this support, and an additional land management adviser post is included in the proposed staff restructure to fully co-ordinate and deliver the advisory service.
33. Annex 2 sets out more detail on current budget allocations.

Presentational Implications

34. This paper presents land management support in three categories: advice service, training/skills and communications/networks. It is important to note that all three of these elements are to provide essential practical support that is targeted at furthering the National Park Aims, National Park Partnership Plan and other supporting plans, particularly the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.
35. By employing CNPA staff to advise land managers we are seeking to fill a niche and not duplicate or replicate the role of other land management advisors. CNPA land management advisory staff will be helping to tackle cross-boundary landownership issues and opportunities and to commission work from other advisors. In so doing we seek to strengthen the land management advice service provided not only by CNPA but by all other advisors in the area.
36. There are limitations to what we can offer and that the priorities and targets set out in **Annex 2** are intended to provide a realistic picture of what we can cover.

Implications for Stakeholders

37. The intention of this programme is to highlight the importance of active land management and to ensure that CNPA plays a significant and visible role in supporting the land management sector and making it as easy as possible for land managers to deliver the long term outcomes expressed in the National Park Partnership plan.

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