

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: Corporate Plan Report: Theme 4

Prepared by: Nick Halfhide, Head of Strategic Policy and Programme Management
Don McKee, Head of Planning and Development Control

Purpose

To inform the Board of our work to date to achieve the fourth strategic theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08, and our plans for future activity.

Recommendations

- That the Board note the progress and plan for achieving the fourth theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08.

Executive Summary

The fourth theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 states:

“To ensure our commitment to future generations we will look beyond the horizon and put in place plans to guide and co-ordinate the long-term integrated management of the Park”

The CNPA’s main work to date on this theme has concentrated on developing the Park Plan and Local Plan, and associated interim planning policy. These will continue to be the focus of our work over the next 12 months.

Corporate Plan Report: Theme 4

Background

1. This is the second report on the fourth theme of the CNPA's Corporate Plan for 2005-08. The Board considered the first report in April 2005.
2. The fourth theme is:

“To ensure our commitment to future generations we will look beyond the horizon and put in place plans to guide and co-ordinate the long-term integrated management of the Park”
3. This theme is concerned with providing strategic guidance focused on the area of the National Park. This guidance should help to integrate the four aims of the Park and look beyond the immediate, providing a policy framework in which all those involved in the management of the Park, including ourselves, can then develop more detailed activity.
4. This is an essential theme for the CNPA because it goes to the heart of our general purpose to ensure that the 4 aims of the Park are collectively delivered in a co-ordinated way; through setting out clear and long-term plans, we enable others to deliver. This helps us to provide focus for others and bring their actions more into line with one another; and in pulling these plans together, we provide leadership that is centred on the needs of the National Park.
5. Most of our forward planning efforts are currently focused on the Park Plan and Local Plan.

National Park Plan

6. We have provided regular updates to the Board on the progress of the Park Plan, the most recent being Paper 4 on the 1st July 2005. We have also sought to include Members in more detailed discussions at various Forum meetings and through informal briefings.
7. Overall, the Park Plan is progressing according to the schedule agreed by the Board in July 2004. In particular, the baseline information is now being finalised; the policy framework is almost ready in draft; we have generated a wide range of potential implementation actions through discussions with our partners; and we are drawing up a consultation programme for the draft Plan.
8. We have not managed to make as much progress as planned on the development of indicators for the Park and the monitoring framework for the Plan. To that end, Mairi MacIver is joining us on secondment from Communities Scotland. She will also assist with finalising the text of the State of the Park Report and producing the material for the consultation.

9. Our main challenge now is to turn the long “wish list” of actions into a focused and agreed programme of investment. We are continuing to involve the other public bodies closely in this process through one-to-one meetings and at a senior level through the Advisory Panel on Joined-Up Government.
10. The Board will have an opportunity to comment on the first draft of the Plan at an informal session on 21st October, following which we aim to bring to the Board for their approval on 2nd December

Local Plan

11. As Members are aware the first pre-drafting consultation phase of the Local Plan was successful with over 14% response to the questionnaire and 10% of the population attending meetings in their communities. This consultation gave us a huge body of information that has informed the drafting of the Local Plan over the last few months.
12. A Consultative Draft of the Local Plan is being published in late September for another round of consultation. We have been keen to ensure that, as far as possible, the content of the Local Plan reflects the views expressed by individual communities. Consequently, this document has not been prepared in a vacuum: there has been ongoing engagement with local communities and other stakeholders since the initial consultation. Drafts of community statements and settlement maps have been the subject of an iterative dialogue with community councils for several months.
13. Following the resolution of the Planning Committee, the Consultative Draft of the Local Plan is being published solely as work in progress to gauge reaction and gain valuable feedback that will inform the Finalised Deposit Version that will be published in March 2006. It is made quite clear that Members have endorsed the publication, but not the content at this stage. There will be parallel discussions with Members on the Consultative Draft Local Plan with a view to maximising consensus on the content of the Finalised Version.
14. Housing numbers have not been finalised at this point in time as the Heriot Watt work on housing needs is still being concluded and we are waiting for up to date population and household projections from GRO. This information will be available to inform the Finalised Version and provide a justification for the housing policies and allocations that appear in that document.
15. The allocation of housing and other development sites in the Local Plan is also being informed by a Landscape Capacity study carried out by external consultants. This has helped to identify locations that are the most appropriate in landscape terms to absorb new development.
16. Strategic Environmental Appraisal of the emerging Local Plan and Park Plan is continuing. External feedback to date has been supportive of the methodology that we have developed.

Future Planning Policy Activity

17. The Local Plan has obviously been the focus of activity and will continue to be so for the next 18 months or so up to adoption. We are, however, in discussions with the Building Research Establishment regarding the possibility of working with them and the construction industry on the early preparation of sustainable design guidance that would ultimately form Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Other Plans

18. The CNPA has begun work on a number of other plans that will help to flesh out in more detail the strategic direction provided by the Park Plan. Some of these are well underway, including the Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Access Strategies, while others are scheduled to begin later in the three-year timeframe of this Corporate Plan.
19. Our challenge here is to ensure that work already underway reflects the investment priorities emerging through the Park Plan.

Knowledge Base

20. Forward planning relies on a good understanding of the facts. To that end, we have already spent considerable time drawing together existing information about the Park, and seeking to understand better how the different aspects and activities in the Park interact. This will continue to be an important aspect of our work and we have begun to feed in the requirements of the Park into the research programmes of other organisations, including SNH and Macaulay.
21. Equally important is making the knowledge accessible and understandable to as wide an audience as possible on the basis that better management will be assisted through better information and understanding. We are tackling this in the first instance through pulling together our knowledge through the State of the Park Report and considering innovative ways of disseminating this.
22. We plan to bring a paper to the Board later in the year which will examine our role in research.

Nick Halfhide
Don McKee

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nickhalfhide@ Cairngorms.co.uk
donmckee@ Cairngorms.co.uk