

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DISCUSSION

**Title:** **PARK PLAN UPDATE - VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

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### **Purpose**

- To discuss the emerging vision and objectives of the Park Plan and update Members on the progress of the Park Plan to date and the process ahead to completing the Draft Plan.

### **Executive Summary**

The work on the Park Plan to date is drawn together in the draft vision and strategic objectives attached. These are the product of ongoing consultation with stakeholders, using the background State of the Park and policy research. The vision sets out a high-level view of the long-term destination for the Park: what we collectively want it to be like in the future. The objectives set the strategic direction that will take us towards our vision.

From each objective a series of actions within a 5-year time horizon will follow. The next step is to hold detailed discussions with partners to address the key issues lying behind these objectives, to agree actions that will deliver the first milestones in moving towards our vision. This is a key stage in developing the Plan that requires complex and sometimes controversial issues to be addressed, and therefore requires leadership from the Park Authority - Board and staff - and engagement with all sectors to agree effective actions that move the agenda forward. The vision and objectives will continue to evolve as detailed discussions with partners develop. The Draft Park Plan, supported by the State of the Park Report and Key Issues Papers, will be presented to the Board in December, prior to public consultation starting in March 2006.

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## PARK PLAN UPDATE- VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### Background

1. At the Board meeting in January Members noted the progress towards identifying the vision and strategic objectives for the Park Plan and agreed Board input into this process through a series of seminars. Informal seminars with the Board took place on 17 February and the 3/4 March to discuss the vision, key issues and strategic objectives.
2. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the emerging vision and objectives, and update Members on the process ahead.
3. This paper draws on the all the Park Plan work to date, which has been designed to set out a transparent and logical process to develop a draft vision and objectives as a starting point for the Plan.
4. The Park Plan is a real opportunity to address the issues at the heart of our designation as a National Park. It is a new opportunity for the whole public sector to develop the way it works and show that it can be joined-up and efficient. It is also an new opportunity for private and community sectors to engage in shaping the future of the Park, to move the agenda forward and find new ways to address the issues that have in some cases been discussed for so many years.
5. The draft vision and objectives annexed here provide a starting point and sense of direction, within which we can now determine the actions needed to address the issues highlighted, and make the most of the opportunity presented by the Park Plan. The vision and objectives must remain open to adjustment as the full plan evolves, but it is necessary to articulate them at this stage in order that the vital work to agree actions to be taken can move forward effectively. It also demonstrates publicly the strategic direction for both the Park Plan and the Local Plan, to assist ongoing consultation and engagement in their preparation.

### Update

#### *State of the Park Report*

6. Following the update in the January Board meeting, we have received revised working papers from the consultants, which have since informed the discussions of key issues facing the Park. The consultants are currently writing the Report, which we expect to be completed by the end of April.
7. Following submission of the report by the consultants, we intend to carry out a restricted review with the key data providers to develop a broad agreement on the base data and its interpretation. Where there are differences of interpretation, these should be recognised. This process will add value to the report, ensuring that it can present a common understanding of the State of the Park in support of the Draft Plan for public consultation.

### *Contents of Plan*

8. Members were given an initial list of contents for the Plan in Paper 2 of the Board meeting of 2 July 2004. The proposed content and structure of the plan has developed further as a result of the work above, and an updated list of contents is provided for information at Annex 1.
9. The overall structure remains the same, but the content of the three themes and the guiding principles continues to evolve as discussions with partners takes place, to ensure that the plan combines the strategic view of the long-term together with the more immediate actions and milestones.

### *Draft Vision*

10. A draft vision statement is attached at Annex 2.
11. The vision reflects our aspirations for what the Park should be like at least 25 years in the future and provides an overarching direction to everything that the CNPA and other partners do in the Park. As such, it must reflect the aspirations of the Park as a whole. We have therefore developed the vision through discussion with a wide range of stakeholders (see consultation below).
12. The vision needs to be high-level in its view and set out the big picture. However, it must also contain enough detail to be relevant to the Cairngorms and paint a picture that people can identify. The attached statement seeks to balance these needs by setting out an overall vision for the Park, then giving more detailed visions under each of the three themes of the Plan. Essentially, it amplifies the aims of the Park to set out what they actually mean in the Cairngorms.
13. The vision statement attached is a text statement to set out a working vision that will shape development of the plan. We propose to present the vision in a variety of forms in the Draft Plan in order to appeal and be meaningful to different audiences. These may include contributions from local school children as well as adults on their ambitions for their area in the future, an 'email from the future' or perhaps indicating what we don't want to see as well as what we do, as ways to bring to life the overall vision.
14. **Discussion Points:**
  - a) **Does the draft vision balance the pitch of a high-level view with the need to paint a picture that is recognisable and relevant to the Cairngorms?**
  - b) **Does the draft vision give a useful and effective starting point for the objectives and actions that will follow?**

### **Draft Strategic Objectives**

15. The strategic objectives for the Park Plan are attached at Annex 3.

16. These objectives are the result of drawing together all of the Park Plan work to date. The State of the Park research has provided information on the current range and status of resources and the key trends affecting them. At the same time we have researched the current policy context, reviewed the consultations leading up to the establishment of the Park and reviewed the special qualities of the Park, to develop a fuller picture of the context in which we are developing the Plan.
17. Using this research as a starting point, we have worked with stakeholders to identify the key issues facing the Park. From these, we have developed a set of strategic objectives, through which the Park Plan can address the issues identified.
18. The key issues lying behind these objectives will be presented with the draft plan in a series of supporting issue papers, to provide a logical 'audit-trail' of information that explains why the plan addresses the issues it does, based on the background research and consultation. These papers in their draft form will also provide a starting point for discussions with partners, and will be completed as development of the plan progresses.
19. The objectives are strategic in nature, and intended to set out a relatively long-term set of outputs needed to achieve our vision. From each objective, a number of more detailed and short-term actions will follow. The objectives are grouped into 3 themes:
  - a) Conserving and Enhancing the Park
  - b) Communities Living and Working in the Park
  - c) Understanding and Enjoying the Park
20. We expect the objectives to evolve as discussions with partners develop. There is a significant degree of interaction between the three themes, and in developing the plan we intend to draw these out through cross-referencing and continually review how best to present the objectives and actions as an integrated plan.
21. **Discussion Points:**
  - a) **Are the objectives pitched at the appropriate strategic level?**
  - b) **Is the coverage of objectives appropriate?**

## **Consultation**

22. The CNPA has repeatedly emphasised the importance of involving external stakeholders in all our work. Their involvement is key to the successful preparation and implementation of the Park Plan, and we must develop this communication further as the important stage of agreeing actions moves forward.
23. The vision and strategic objectives presented here are the result of an ongoing process of consultation with stakeholders. This has included a series of presentations, discussions and workshops at meetings of the three stakeholder advisory forums (Economic and Social Development; Visitor Services, Information and Tourism; and Integrated Land Management) and informal discussions with partner agencies.
24. To date, the consultation has been on an informal basis, principally through the forums, which bring together communities, agencies, businesses and individuals. In

taking forward detailed discussions from April, we will set out a co-ordinated programme for meeting with partners and stakeholders, and continue to consult informally through the forums in advance of the full public consultation starting in March 2006.

## **Next Steps: Completing the Draft Park Plan**

### ***Developing Actions***

25. The next stage is to hold detailed discussions with partners to agree implementation. This is the crucial stage in which we must address the big issues facing the Park, move beyond the 'business-as-usual' and agree with partners a range of actions to address these issues.
26. The actions will focus on the coming five-year period. They will be the first milestones in achieving the objectives and moving towards the longer-term vision. We expect these discussions to take until the end of September to complete, given the range and complexity of likely actions, number of external partners and the need to ensure sufficient detail and commitment to be confident of delivery.
27. We are developing a co-ordinated programme for discussions with external partners, as it is likely that many will be involved across CNPA groups and have an interest in several different objectives and actions.
28. Discussions with partners will be ongoing at officer level, building on the day-to-day relationships already established. Some of the more complex or controversial issues may require the involvement of Board Members during this process. The Advisory Panel on Joined-up Government will meet in June to review progress on action discussions with partners at a senior management level.

### ***Park Plan Communications Group***

29. We intend to establish a communications group in May to guide the publication of the Draft Park Plan, prepare and oversee the joint consultation with the Deposit Local Plan in Spring 2006, and thereafter consider the presentation and communication of the final publication. We propose that this group will include staff from the Strategic Policy, Planning and Development Control and Communications Groups with 2 Board Members and external professional communications expertise.
30. We propose to engage professional communications expertise to help devise and implement innovative and engaging ways to communicate the Park Plan, at both draft and final stages. We recognise that there is a wide range of audiences to reach, and consider that we must use a range of approaches to communicate the Park Plan effectively.
31. **Discussion Point:**
  - a) **Do Members wish to nominate 2 Board Members to join the Park Plan Communications Group?**

### ***Future Board Involvement***

32. We propose to hold a series of informal meetings for Board Members through the year following the Planning Committee meetings, primarily to discuss key issues needing Board input and to update Members on progress. As one of these, we hope to hold a briefing from a representative of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park following the publication on 16th May of their Draft National Park Plan (date to be agreed).
33. We also recommend that Members have an opportunity to consider and discuss the draft plan before it is presented for formal approval at the December Board Meeting. We therefore propose to hold an informal Board seminar on Friday 21 October to discuss the full draft plan. Thereafter, it will be presented to the Board on 2 December, and we will commission publication of the draft in January 2006 to start the formal public consultation in March 2006.
34. The Draft Plan will be supported by the State of the Park Report, a set of issue papers which sets out the background logic behind the issues addressed, and a Sustainability Appraisal Report.

### ***Summary of Key Dates***

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|---------------|---|
| a) 29 April   | State of the Park Report Submitted<br>Programme for partner discussions confirmed |
| b) 6 June     | Joined-Up Government Panel Meet   |
| c) 29 July    | Progress Review of Actions  |
| d) 28 October | Informal Board Seminar on Draft Plan  |
| e) 2 December | Draft Plan presented to the Board   |

### **Policy Context**

35. The draft vision and strategic objectives are the first major milestone towards achieving Goal 2 of our Corporate Plan (National Park Plan in place by end of 2006). They are also the first formal step in setting out how the CNPA and partners will collectively seek to achieve the four aims of the Park.

#### **a) Delivering Sustainability**

The cross-sectoral reach of the vision and objectives sets out a clear agenda to deliver sustainable development of the Park's resources in the long-term. The objectives and actions will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal as they develop, and a report will accompany publication of the Draft Plan.

#### **b) Delivering a Park for All**

The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in developing the vision and objectives gives the Park Plan a starting point that is rooted in the needs of all sectors of the Park. The integrated set of objectives gives a basis to develop actions that are inclusive for all and contain common threads of participation and involvement.

**c) Delivering Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economy**

The objectives integrate the four aims of the Park and are the basis for the joined-up approach through which the Plan will deliver a more effective, efficient and economic approach to managing the Park.

As an early example, the vision and objectives provide the strategic direction for the Local Plan. Development of the two has been working in parallel to ensure consistency. The draft vision and objectives will provide a firm context for the Local Plan consultation later this year.

## **Implications**

### ***Financial Implications***

36. The current Operational Plan makes provision for £40,000 to cover the costs designing, publishing and launching the Draft Plan. It also includes provision for staff time in each CNPA group to undertake discussions on the Park Plan actions. The use of specialist communications expertise detailed above will require an additional budget of c.£15,000 which we expect to be able to resource within the current Operational Plan.

### ***Presentational Implications***

37. The vision and strategic objectives presented with this paper are the first major public milestone in developing the Park Plan. Consistent with our desire to be open and transparent in our process, this paper is an opportunity to keep people informed about the direction of the Plan, once again explain the continuing process and encourage active engagement. We intend to issue a press release following the Board meeting and provide feedback to stakeholders through the advisory forums.

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

38. The next stages of the Plan preparation involve intensive discussions with external partners and stakeholders, to ensure that the plan includes realistic actions that will make a difference, with some certainty of delivery and broad support. This level of external engagement, addressing some big issues to move beyond 'business-as-usual' is both the significant strength of the process and its greatest challenge within the timescale.
39. Development of the actions will require co-operation from a wide range of stakeholders, and provide a further opportunity for them to actively engage in the development of the Park. We will continue to use the stakeholder forums as a means of communicating and informing the Park Plan process. There will be a broader opportunity for all to contribute to the Plan through the public consultation in spring 2006.

## Conclusions

40. The background research and work has come together in the draft vision and objectives set out here. The development of the Park Plan is now at a crucial stage, in which we must engage effectively and efficiently with a wide range of partners to complete a Plan that moves the agenda forward. This paper provides an opportunity to discuss the draft vision and objectives which provide the starting point for this agenda.

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