
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: **CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS WORK PROGRAMME
DELIVERED BY UPPER DEESIDE ACCESS TRUST
2006/07**

Prepared by: **Bob Grant, Senior Outdoor Access Officer**

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide further detail of the proposed work programme being delivered by UDAT for 2006/07 and seek Board approval to fund the programme.

Recommendations

- a) That the Board notes the detailed justification for funding the proposed programme of works for 2006/07; and
- b) That the Board approves funding of £100,000 towards the 2006/07 programme of works being delivered through the upper Deeside Access Trust.

Executive Summary

At the Board meeting of 11 August the Board approved the principle of £100,000 of grant support to the Upper Deeside Access Trust. The detailed support was conditional on the initial approval of the Convenor and Vice-Convenor and a more detailed justification of the works that would be funded. The attached expenditure justification, which has been commented upon by the Convenor and Vice-Convenor, addresses these points and provides a full description of the works that will be undertaken.

The total value of the planned programme of works is £496,000 which is made up of 2 elements. The first relates to an interim programme developed in agreement with all the funding partners and the second to funding the final elements of the Eastern Cairngorms Access Project. As the amount required is in excess of the Board's delegated limit, final approval rests with the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department.

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EXPENDITURE JUSTIFICATION

Ref: 06/08/01

Approved:

1. Title

Upper Deeside Access Trust.

2. Expenditure summary

Operational Plan (Goal No. – Task No.)		9-3	Project	
Outdoor access infrastructure			Grant	✓
Core	(detail)	Account	Consultancy	
Is this spend to be funded from an existing budget line, existing line with additional funds or is it a totally new spend?		£100,000	Existing	✓
		£	Additional	
		£	New	

(delete as appropriate)

3. Description

- Brief overview of project/activity
- Specific elements for which support is sought (if not whole project/activity)

Summary

- a) The Upper Deeside Access Trust is seeking £100,000 support from CNPA towards an agreed programme of works for the 2006/07 financial year. The total value of the programme amounts to £496,000.

Background

- b) The Upper Deeside Access Trust has delivered a wide-range of path projects and associated infrastructure and information over the last 8 years. Funding to date has stemmed from Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Balmoral Estate with further income deriving from car parking charges at Glen Muick, sale of leaflets covering promoted walks, donations to the Trust and other sources. In addition, a large scale path programme - the Eastern Cairngorms Access Project (ECAP) - attracted substantial funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, European Union (ERDF) Angus Council and other partners in Angus.
- c) Changes in legislation have resulted in the statutory elements of access now being delivered by the Cairngorms National Park Authority rather than Aberdeenshire Council within Upper Deeside. This coupled with ECAP coming to an end in Sept 06, have required UDAT and its partners to review and consider the most effective means of funding and delivering their access objectives both within and outwith the Upper Deeside area in the future.

- d) The lead in time for planning and implementing any such changes can be quite long, and whilst it was originally hoped that long term decisions would have been in place by the beginning of the 2006/07 financial year, this has not proved possible. To maintain the momentum and ensure that a range of suitable projects which meet the CNPA's objectives can still be taken forward, that final elements of the ECAP programme are completed, and to retain the skills necessary to achieve this through the deployment of UDAT and its core staff, it is proposed to offer a single year grant to UDAT.
- e) The Eastern Cairngorms Access Project is a large scale £2.4 million project that has been funded through partner organisations, Heritage Lottery Fund and EU Objective 2 ERDF programme. The project commenced in 2003, prior to the inception of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and therefore, to date, no CNPA funds have been put towards this programme. The programme is on target to be completed in 2006 and will make a major contribution towards the Park's aims.
- f) The programme is packaged with a fee component to each project to cover the cost of buying in professional services (pre and post contract fees) - such as surveyors, engineers and site supervisors - to assist in delivering the projects. Substantial savings have been made in this area (circa £40K) by deploying UDAT staff to do some of these tasks, and these savings vired into the capital programme to enable more work to be done on the ground. At the same time additional works have been identified whilst a number of projects have been in progress- for example the Slugain path, the Ladder path, the Mount Keen footbridge, and the Loch Kinord path network - which due to site logistics and mobilisation costs, are far more efficient to tackle whilst the contractor is on site.
- g) For these reasons ECAP has incurred greater revenue costs to date, and as a consequence there is a shortfall in revenue funding to complete the programme. This amounts to £47,796. A full breakdown of costs is shown in Section 7 of this document.
- h) The complete programme of access related works delivered through this funding is detailed in Annex 1.

4. Rationale and Strategic Fit

- Objectives/intended beneficiaries
- Evidence of need and demand
- Fit with National Park Plan/Corporate Plan/other relevant strategies
- Linkages to other activities/projects

- a) The range of work planned provides a mix of both high and low ground work, with supporting signage and leafleting. Improving path provision will enable people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the special qualities of the Park and, for the upland areas, help protect fragile plant communities from pressures arising from outdoor access. These are both strategic objectives within the draft Park Plan. In addition, the draft Outdoor Access Strategy has policies that seek to improve the path provision and quality and seeks greater provision for people of all abilities and multi-use. The proposed programme has therefore a very close fit with the work of the Park Authority.
- b) The identification of works within the UDAT programme has stemmed from broad consultation with stakeholders and through area wide audit and assessment processes including a strategic condition survey of higher level paths.

- c) Much of the work planned complements work already undertaken with examples being the Quoich/Slugain path linking into the large scale programme delivered by NTS on Mar Lodge Estate and the Glas Allt path repairs providing a linked circuit with the large scale improvements done on the Ladder path over the last year.
- d) The development of appropriate leaflets and signage where new path networks have been developed e.g. around Loch Kinord and Craig Leek, will help encourage access to a range of high quality facilities across the low ground, enabling wider participation by all sectors of the public, including those with special needs, to enjoy the special qualities of the Park. Providing both the infrastructure and the information can assist in delivering Scottish Executive policy objectives on both health and social inclusion.

5. Option Analysis

- Are there other ways in which the above objectives could be achieved?
- If so, why is this the preferred option?

- a) The management of this overall programme of works by a single professional body provides a coordinated and cost effective approach to delivering a diverse range of individual projects. It would be possible in some instances to have elements of the programme taken forward as single, stand alone projects developed through individual initiatives and led by communities where this capacity exists. Such an approach would involve a much greater degree of management and involvement from potential funders, as there would not be the level of project management experience, quality control and contract supervision that can be assured through UDAT. For all these reasons, it is felt that the most appropriate means of delivery is through UDAT.

6. Risk Assessment

- Are there risks to the CNPA in funding this project/activity?
- Are there risks in the project/activity not being delivered to required timescale/quality?
- Comment on the likelihood of such risks occurring, their potential impact, and (where appropriate) any action that would be taken to mitigate the risks.

- a) The risks to CNPA of funding this programme are very low. UDAT have considerable experience of handling a diverse annual programme of works of this magnitude and content. The main risk is in relation to partnership funding, however all other funding sources have been agreed which includes Aberdeenshire Council, SNH, HLF, EU Objective 2 and private estates. A further risk would exist if there was staff turnover with the Trust, however the Trust utilise self-employed contractors on a regular basis to augment the work of its core staff and therefore staff turnover is unlikely to pose a significant threat to delivery. We have already contributed to works that have been delivered by the Trust and this they have done to good effect.
- b) Statutory and other permissions have already been obtained for the majority of works with others in advanced stages of planning. All landowners concerned have given consent for the works to take place. As such there would appear to be little external risk posed through permissions being refused.
- c) Financial risks have also been considered as UDAT operates without reserves nor can they borrow to bridge funding gaps. Cash flow projections have been considered and are based on funding streams being delivered at agreed times.

- d) There is the potential for funding of this work programme to be viewed as favouring one area within the Park. Whilst this is possible the development of an Outdoor Access Strategy is not yet complete and its implementation should see all areas within the Park having as good a network of high and low ground as will shortly exist within Deeside once this programme is complete. The work is therefore entirely consistent with the policies contained within the draft Outdoor Access Strategy which will ensure the equalisation of investment across the Park over time.

7. Costs and Funding

- Detail the financial costs of the project/activity
- Detail the sources of funding
- Detail any non-monetary costs to the CNPA (such as Member or staff input)

- a) The total value of the programme amount to £496,000 and the breakdown of the component parts is shown in the table below. CNPA's contribution is towards the 3 component elements. These are the ECAP programme, the interim programme and the core costs to ensure all can be delivered. We have assumed that UDAT's own funding stream of £38,000 will be used to maintain existing capital works and is derived from revenue drawn from the Glen Muick car park and the sale of leaflets.

- b) If funding is approved, CNPA's overall contribution will be 20.1% of planned expenditure.

	ECAP Programme	Interim Programme	Core Funding Costs	Totals
Total Expenditure	£310,796	£134,996	£50,207	£495,999
Committed funding	£263,000	-	£38,000	£301,000
Other Partner Funding	-	£94,999	-	£94,999
Potential CNPA Contribution	£47,796	£39,997	£12,207	£100,000
CNPA proportion	15.4%	29.6%	24.3%	20.1%

More detail of the works being delivered is shown in Annex 1.

8. Deliverables/ Impact Assessment

- What end products/outputs will be delivered?
- How will success be measured?
- How will the project be monitored and what will be the feedback to the CNPA?

- a) Each product will result in improved access opportunities within the Upper Deeside area. Combined, they will enhance the range of opportunities that already exist in the area and will make a positive contribution to both local and visitor experience within the Park.
- b) There are a range of measures that will be used to gauge success. These will include sales of leaflets, feedback from visitors and reduced damage to fragile ecosystems.
- c) The monitoring of all path and other projects is undertaken through the UDAT Management Group. CNPA is represented on this group by Bob Grant, Senior Outdoor Access Officer. Progress reports, including financial monitoring are presented to this group quarterly. The Management Group have responsibility for recommending changes to the work programme, noting that such changes require ratifying by the UDAT Board of Directors.

9. Value for Money

- In view of the costs, do the deliverables appear to offer value for money? (consider cost of comparable projects, where available).

- a) The Upper Deeside Access Trust has proved to be effective at delivering access related projects. All but £30,759 of the £496,000 costs are expended directly on the delivery of the programme of works including some small maintenance works built into the £50,207 "core" funding in the analysis set out in section 7. The remaining element covers administrative costs.
- b) The leverage gained by contributing to this large scale programme is considerable with a ratio of nearly 4:1 from the Park Authority's contribution.
- c) The programme of works provides good value for money by delivery being undertaken through a single organisation with a recognised pedigree for delivering high quality work timeously.

10. Exit or Continuation Arrangements (where applicable)

- If this is not a discrete, time-limited, project or piece of work, what are the exit/continuation arrangements for when CNPA support ceases?

- a) This is a one year offer of funding. Future funding will be dependant on decisions CNPA take on how best to deliver the access remit within the Park. At present, active consideration is being given to the creation of a Park-wide Trust, but this is one of three options under consideration.
- b) A single year funding ensures a broad programme of identified work which meets the Park's objectives is fully delivered, provides continuity and retention of existing UDAT staff, and allows CNPA to work up the options under consideration to ensure sufficient time is available to enact any changes from 2007/08.

11. Additionality

- Does this work/project substitute for or duplicate work being carried out or proposed by others?
- What would be the effects of the CNPA not supporting the project? Would it proceed without CNPA support?

- a) The proposed work programme does not duplicate or impinge on other projects.
- b) CNPA's contribution is essential to allow the ECAP element progress. The 15% contribution towards this element of the work will help generate some £310,000 of works many of which would not otherwise go ahead. Similarly, the contribution towards the interim programme would progress but on a much more limited scale if CNPA was not to contribute to this work. In addition, the reduction in scale of works would have a staffing impact on UDAT.
- c) The CNPA contribution allows some significant economies of scale to be achieved. In developing a programme of capital infrastructure investment such as that proposed by UDAT, there is a fixed cost element for project management required to deliver the works. Our contribution both supports project management costs and allows additional infrastructure investment to be added with minimal additional management costs.
- d) We will be providing some core funding support. This will help ensure the organisation may be run on a robust, secure footing over the course of the year - eliminating some risk to

delivery of the overall £496,000 programme. Consultancy work, included within the budget for core costs, to develop a longer term business planning process will also assist considerably in developing the Authority's own thinking on development of a Park-wide access Trust.

- e) Overall the Authority will be making contributions which allows each of UDAT's ECAP programme, interim 2006/07 programme and core operations to work to their full potential over the course of the year.

12. Stakeholder Support

- Have the organisations and/or communities that would have an interest in this work/project been involved, and are they supportive?

- a) UDAT has broad support in the relevant communities and has representatives from this wider group on the Management Group. There are some 47 affiliated organisations who are kept up to date with the work of UDAT and who are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting to feed in their views on the work of UDAT.
- b) The other funding agencies: particularly SNH and Aberdeenshire Council hold UDAT in high regard.

13. Recommendation

- a) This is a one year offer of funding which will help deliver a good range of individual projects. In addition, the funding will provide some stability for UDAT as decisions are made by both UDAT and CNPA on future funding mechanisms for delivering access infrastructure within the Park.
- b) I recommend that funding of £100,000 is given to UDAT to complete the programme of works shown in Annex 1.

Name: Bob Grant

Signature: _____

Date: 29/08/06

14. Decision to Approve or Reject

Head of Group

Name: Murray Ferguson Signature: Date: 29/08/06

Chief Executive (consider if approval required)

Name: Jane Hope Signature: Date:

Management Team (consider if approval required)

Name: Meeting Signature: Date:

Finance Committee (consider if approval required)

Not applicable.

Name: Signature: Date:

Board (consider if approval required)

Name: Signature: Date:

SEERAD (consider if approval required)

Name: Signature: Date: