

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: NATIONAL PARKS UK PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL CHARITY

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Purpose

This paper seeks the Board's approval to the Cairngorms National Park Authority's participation in the development of a charity operating on a national basis for all 15 National Parks in the United Kingdom.

The paper sets out general terms of delegation to senior management for taking this work forward should the Authority's participation be agreed, and seeks any wider parameters which Board members agree should be established for this work.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) approve the Authority's participation in the development of a charity supporting investment in all UK National Parks;**
- b) delegate authority to the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services to work with relevant parties to ensure a national charity is formed in such a way that protects the interests of the emerging charitable activities of the Cairngorms Trust**

Background

1. Two distinct, though linked, areas of work inform and give rise to proposals to create a national charity to seek and accept charitable donations in support of the work of the UK's 15 National Park Authorities (NPAs).
2. All 15 NPAs have collectively agreed the need to identify and explore opportunities for NPAs to generate new income streams in order to help offset falling central government grant funding and lessen dependency of investment in national parks on

central grant. The NPAs have established a “Growing Income” working group to explore this subject and I am a member of that group, representing both Scottish National Parks.

3. National Parks Partnerships Limited (NPP) has already been established to progress sponsorship and commercial opportunities on behalf of all NPAs. Board members will already be aware of the first commercial relationship established by NPP with Columbia Sportswear.
4. Both the Growing Income working group and NPP have identified the development of a mechanism to seek, accept and distribute charitable donations as a key element of a more diversified future income base for NPAs.

Current Position

5. In developing contacts and relationships with a wide range of commercial organisations, NPP have received consistent feedback that many such organisations primarily or only seek to support third parties through making charitable donations. The Board and staff of NPP have been clear that some form of charity infrastructure supporting investment into National Parks is therefore essential to unlock these potential funding streams.
6. The Growing Income working group also identified charitable donations and voluntary giving as a key potential strand of income diversification. In this regard, members of the working group are aware that a number of NPAs already benefit from a range of relationships with charities operating within their National Parks. A key facet of moving toward a nationally based charity would be to ensure this development would not adversely interfere with existing local charitable operations and wherever possible complemented and augmented existing local operations.
7. The Working Group and NPP representatives all believe that a “national” charity, representing all 15 of the UK’s National Parks, would be an important step toward unlocking significant additional financial contributions supporting investment. There is a belief, built from experience and recent contact with large commercial organisations, that entities with a national or international marketing focus are likely to be interested in a funding relationship with a nationally based and operating charity while very unlikely to engage with charities with a local or regional focus. This in itself helps differentiate the market in terms of ensuring a new national charity did not interfere with the operations of existing and emerging charities within individual national parks.
8. The Growing Income working group is now seeking authority to progress with the development of a charity structure to operate with all 15 NPAs in the UK.

Implications within Cairngorms

9. In Cairngorms, we have the Cairngorms Trust which, while very busy in overseeing the delivery of the Cairngorms LEADER programme, is still very much in its infancy in terms of wider charitable operations.
10. The Management Team does not perceive any adverse implications on the development of the charitable operations of the Cairngorms Trust from the evolution of a National Parks Charity with a national remit. We believe that a national charity will significantly help promote the potential for charitable donations to help investment in National Parks. This nationally focused activity could, in addition to securing funding not accessible to a local charity, help with promoting the potential for more local and regionally based companies to develop relationships directly with the Cairngorms Trust.

Conclusions and Decisions Required

11. The Board is therefore requested to approve the Authority's participation in the development of a charity supporting investment in all UK National Parks.
12. The Board is also requested to delegate authority to the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services to work with relevant parties to ensure a national charity is formed in such a way that protects the interests of the emerging charitable activities of the Cairngorms Trust.
13. The Board is also invited at this juncture to identify any other material issues which it believes senior management taking this work forward must have regard to in their work developing and influencing the structure of a national charity.

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