CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: **Managing for Visitors in 2022**

Prepared by: **Adam Streeter-Smith- Recreation and Access Manager**

Purpose: **To update members**

Background

1. The summers of 2020 and 2021 were unprecedented in relation to visitor management with the combination of lockdown easing and the desire from visitors to experience popular locations in the Park. This led to a significant increase in visitor pressures at key locations. The response from the Park Authority and its Partners was the development of Managing for Visitor Plans, deployment of rangers and investment in infrastructure.

2. The CNPA and its partners are continuing this work within the national visitor management framework and the #CairngormsTogether framework to deliver a Park wide visitor management plan that dovetails and supports site based visitor management plans and estate management objectives.

3. Annex 1 sets out the agreed Managing for Visitors Plan for 2022. Like the previous ones the plans objectives is to:

   - Provide a warm welcome and support exceptional experiences for the public to enjoy the outdoors:
   - Mitigate any negative impacts from increased recreation in sensitive or popular sites:
   - Reduce potential conflict between residents and visitors:
   - Promote collaboration across estate and organisational boundaries ensuring a positive visitor experience.

Annex I

Cairngorms National Park Managing for Visitors Plan: 2022 Season

Background and Strategic Context

4. The summers of 2020 and 2021 were unprecedented in terms of changes to visitor behaviour and distribution in the Park. A combination of circumstances, including the easing of lockdown and the desire of visitors to experience the outdoors and nature, put significant new pressures on certain locations in the Park.

5. New arrangements for the managing for visitors were put in place with partners during this time. These arrangements have been comprehensively reviewed by the CNPA Board in December 2021 – papers are available at https://cairngorms.co.uk/working-together/meetings/meeting/board-2021-11-26/

6. Looking forwards, the CNPA is committed to working with partners as part of the national visitor management framework to deliver high-quality visitor experiences within the Park. In late 2021 the CNPA consulted on the National Park Partnership Plan (2023-2028). The consultation prompted a record level of public response and the feedback will be analysed carefully. The modified Plan will be approved by the CNPA Board and then signed off by Scottish Ministers in June 2022. The draft Plan included several objectives relating to visitor management including that listed below:

    Draft NPPP Objective C4: Work closely with partners across the National Park to manage the impact of visitors and provide a high-quality experience. Ensure public infrastructure is of a high standard, able to cope with demand at key destinations, and consider how to best utilise areas of the National Park with capacity for increased visitor numbers.

7. During 2022, further work will be undertaken on a number of action plans including the Tourism Action Plan, Strategic Infrastructure Plan and Active Cairngorms (covering outdoor access, active travel, health, volunteering and the management for visitors). In the meantime the regional visitor management plans that were developed in 2020 have been reviewed based on the feedback received during 2021.

Objectives

8. The objectives for the Managing for Visitors Plan are to:

    *   Provide a warm welcome and support exceptional experiences for the public to enjoy the outdoors.
    *   Mitigate any negative impacts from increased recreation in sensitive or popular sites.
    *   Reduce potential conflict between residents and visitors.
    *   Secure the confidence of the Park's communities that the Park's special qualities are being well-managed and cared for.
    *   Promote collaboration across estate and organisational boundaries ensuring a positive visitor experience.

Key Partners

9. Collaboration with partners is key to the successful delivery of these objectives. At a regional level the key partners to CNPA are:

    *   Local Authorities
    *   Cairngorms Business Partnership

- Partner Ranger Services
- Land Managers
- Owners/managers of key visitor sites
- Police Scotland
- NatureScot
- Scottish Fire and Rescue
- Volunteer Rangers

10. The work with partners will be facilitated by advice from the following partnership/advisory groups:

- Managing for Visitors Group – meeting every two weeks over Easter/Summer to provide operational guidance, networking and support to staff undertaking on-the-ground activity.
- Cairngorms Tourism Partnership (CTP) – meeting roughly quarterly to focus on review of Tourism Action Plan.
- Cairngorms Tourism Response Group – meeting monthly (as a sub-group of the CTP) to focus on business, communication and marketing issues.
- Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum – meeting roughly quarterly to advise on management of outdoor access issues.

Focus

11. The Cairngorms National Park is the largest National Park in the UK and much of it is remote, mountainous and relatively inaccessible. The vast majority of visitors behave very responsibly and the management issues caused are generally localised and predictable. It is unrealistic and unnecessary to implement all management measures equally across the Park, given staffing and resources. However, it is essential to implement confidently and consistently the clear, simple messaging about the importance of safe, responsible and enjoyable behaviour in the Park.

12. The focus of managing for visitors measures will be on the proactive, safe management of key countryside sites simplified into two broad areas:-

- Rural "hot spots"
- Rural "warm spots"

These are identified in Table 1. A risk rating for each site identified is given as follows:

■	Very popular, pinch points on trails, could be on a dead end road, limited parking and overspill sites, popular hills or beauty spots, heavily promoted by 3rd parties, close to main transport routes i.e. trunk roads and accessible from large towns.
■	Popular, parking previously sufficient for level of use, setting off point for hills or beauty spots and promoted by 3rd parties, likely to experience overspill from nearby popular sites.

Table 1- Rural "Hotspots" and "Warm Spots"

Key Countryside Location	Risk	Manager	Roads Authority	Onsite support (including estimated FTE coverage)
Muir of Dinnet	■	NatureScot	Aberdeenshire	SNH Site Manager and Aberdeenshire Ranger
Cambus o May	■	FLS	Aberdeenshire	FLS Ranger (0.1)

Glen Tanar	🟥	Glen Tanar Estate/ Charitable Trust	Aberdeenshire	GTCT Ranger Service (1.4)
Loch Muick	🟥	Balmoral Estate	Aberdeenshire	Balmoral Ranger Service (2)
Keiloch Car Park	🟧	Invercauld Estate	Aberdeenshire	Staff but no ranger
Linn of Dee	🟥	NTS	Aberdeenshire	NTS Ranger Service (2)
Glen Clova	🟥	FLS / Angus Alive/NatureScot	Angus	AA Ranger Service (2)
Glen Mark	🟧	Angus Council and Dalhousie Estates	Angus	CNPA Seasonal Ranger
Killiecrankie	🟥	NTS	Perth and Kinross	NTS Ranger
Beinn a Ghlo (car park)	🟧	Lude Estate	Perth & Kinross	No ranger service
Falls of Bruar	🟥	Atholl Estate and House of Bruar	Perth and Kinross	Atholl Estates
Glen Feshie (car park)	🟧	Achlean Croft	Highland Council	No ranger service
Uath Lochans	🟧	FLS	Highland Council	FLS Ranger (0.1)
Feshie Bridge	🟧	FLS	Highland Council	FLS Ranger (0.1)
Laggan Wolftrax	🟧	FLS and Laggan Forest Trust	Highland Council	FLS Ranger (0.1) and LFT staff
Loch an Eilien	🟥	Rothiemurchus	Highland Council	Rothiemurchus Estate Ranger Service (2)
Glenmore	🟥	FLS	Highland Council	FLS Ranger Service (2)
Cairngorm Mountain	🟥	HIE	Highland Council	CM Ranger Service (2)
Loch Garten	🟥	RSPB Scotland	Highland Council	RSPB Community Ranger and estate staff (0.3)
Glenlivet Estate	🟧	Crown Estate Scotland	Moray Council	CES Ranger (0.5)

Managing for Visitors Measures

13.   Successful management for visitors is based on good communication between partners, suitable infrastructure, continued public engagement and risk management. All of these elements are under-pinned and guided by continued monitoring and evaluation.

14.   Table 2 sets out the key measures to be taken across the Park.

Table 2 - Measures for Managing for Visitors

Measures	Examples
Communications	• Managing for Visitors and Tourism Response Groups • Collaboration on #CairngormsTogether campaign with CBP and others • Tread Lightly campaign in the Park • Deployment of variable message electronic signs • Delivery of national campaigns at regional level
Wild Fire Prevention	• Develop a Park-wide Wildfire Plan
Visitor Infrastructure	• Preparation of Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan • Visitor Infrastructure Improvement Programme grants
Public toilets	• Public awareness of public toilet provision • Toilet improvements for people of all-abilities
Promoted paths and popular mountain paths	• Well sign-posted paths • Well maintained paths that are in good condition
Ranger patrols	• Patrols at key sensitive times • Assistance to land managers and communities with key issues
Land management support	• Funding available for infrastructure improvements
Statutory measures	• Management agreements and guidelines at key hotspots
Enhanced Police Presence	• Enhanced police presence to be deployed in Glenmore during school summer holidays (FLS, CNPA and THC)
Litter	• Cairngorms Litter Network to promote community- led volunteering in partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful • Ranger patrols and land-managers

Ranger Service priorities

15.   The Partnership Framework for Ranger Services in the Park sets out the vision for Ranger Services:

A high-profile network of Cairngorms' rangers connecting people with an outstanding National Park. They work collaboratively to provide an innovative, inspirational and professional service. They are committed to enhancing public enjoyment, understanding and care of the outdoors, focused on maintaining the quality and relevance of their work and recognised, valued and supported by their employers, other related professions and the public.

16.   In the context of the managing for visitors, Ranger Services will focus on positive face-to-face engagement with visitors at key hotspots:

- To ensure a warm welcome and provide support to help people enjoy the outdoors;
- To increase awareness, understanding, care and responsible use of the natural and cultural heritage; and
- To support the sustainable management and use of the outdoors to meet a range of social, economic and environmental objectives.

17. CNPA will continue to develop the family of ranger services across the Park through providing grant-aid, promoting training and development opportunities, advising on ranger roles, and a strong visual identity and branding. Table 3 sets out current Ranger Service coverage in the Park.

Table 3- Ranger Service Coverage

SERVICE	FTE RANGERS
Atholl Estate	2
Balmoral Estate	2.6
Glen Tanar Charitable Trust	1.6
Rothiemurchus	2
RSPB Community Ranger	1
Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve	1.5
Glenlivet Estate	1
FLS Glenmore	2
NTS Mar Lodge	2
Angus Alive – Glen Doll	2
Cairngorm Mountain	1.5
Cairngorms Connect	1
Highlife Highland	1
Dorenell (cross boundary)	1.5
Aberdeenshire Council	0.5
Cairngorms National Park Authority Rangers	4 full time 9 seasonal

Communication Planning

18. We will continue with the successful #CairngormsTogether campaign which was developed with the Cairngorms Business Partnership in 2020 to promote common messaging is support of visitors, communities and local businesses. Detailed communications will be agreed through the Managing for Visitors and Tourism Response Groups but collectively will be:-

   • Positive – sharing and 'celebrating' what people can responsibly do in outdoors
   • Consistent – we all need to say the same thing
   • Concise – get our most important positive, consistent messages across in with few words

19. Where practicable variable message signs will be deployed to provide "real time" information on the status of car parks in the vicinity of the sign. Table 4 sets out the current location of the VMS signs and the relevant managing body. Further information will be added to CNPA website so that all parties are clear about roles and responsibilities for updated in each sign.

Table 4 – Variable Message Signs

Location	Responsible Body
Coylumbridge	CairnGorm Mountain
Minor Rd to Glenmore (Sled Dog turn off)	Forestry and Land Scotland
A97 A944 junction heading west	Aberdeenshire Council Roads
Dinnet A93 west of X roads	Aberdeenshire Council Roads

| B976 Minor County Rd Junction to Loch Muick | Aberdeenshire Council Roads Balmoral Estate |

Monitoring and Evaluation

20. A large percentage of visitors continue to enjoy the outdoors responsibly. Therefore monitoring of visitor behaviour at key hotspots will be used to guide resources and the deployment of staff.

21. In support of ongoing monitoring key visitor pressure periods will be agreed by the Managing for Visitors Group and will include:

    - Glasgow Fair holiday period and the following 2 weekends;
    - School holiday dates;
    - Notable "events".

22. A new monitoring framework and form has been developed for 2022 in conjunction with NatureScot to allow consistent reporting of the work of Ranger Services across Scotland – see **Annex 1.** Data gathered through the revised form will feed into the national monitoring requirements of the new Visitor Management Strategy Coordination Group.

23. There will be a post-season evaluation exercise undertaken commencing on October 2022. The key findings will be used to develop the managing for visitor's agenda in Active Cairngorms.

Cairngorms National Park Authority
February 2022

Annex 1- Monitoring framework for visitor management issues

Introduction

1.   The arrangements for collection and management of key information have been reviewed by CNPA Ranger Manager, Lucy Ford, in discussion with partner Ranger Services. This short paper sets out the key information requirements to enable all active partners in visitor management to make realistic resource decisions and to support the development of further plans.

Short Term – April to October

2.   To gather intelligence and identify risks that will need addressing with short term management interventions at an area and Park-wide level the following minimum data must be gathered and shared weekly:
   a.   Number of tents at a given site
   b.   Number of open fires and barbecues at a given site
   c.   Number of camper vans staying over night
   d.   Number of serious irresponsible access incidents.

3.   Annex 2 sets out the feedback form for the short term monitoring period.

4.   This data will be gathered by each site-based ranger service on a weekly basis and collated by the CNPA for the Managing for Visitors Group. Additional information on camp sites, fires and irresponsible access outwith of site based ranger services will be gathered by CNPA seasonal ranger staff.

Medium Term

5.   In order to ascertain what worked well and what didn't and what interventions will need to take forward to implement a deliverable visitor management process across key hot spots in the Park a review will be prepared to include the following:
   a.   Summary of camping trends over key period
   b.   Summary of fires trend over key period:
   c.   Data on number of visitors and key trends in relation to peak periods:
   d.   Trends in irresponsible behaviour
   e.   Summary and reflections on interventions:
   f.   Summary and reflections on communications.

Annex 2

2022 CNP Visitor Management Form

Visitor monitoring form for all sites across the Cairngorms National Park. This form is to be filled in throughout the season with fortnightly reports presented to the managing for visitors group.

*Required

1. Select Area *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Deeside

   ◯ Badenoch & Strathspey

   ◯ Blair Atholl

   ◯ Tomintoul & Glenlivet

   ◯ Angus Glens

2. Select patrol destination *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Aviemore

◯ Boat of Garten

◯ Carr-Bridge

◯ Cromdale

◯ Dalwhinnie

◯ Dulnain Bridge

◯ Glenmore

◯ Grantown

◯ Inshriach

◯ Kingussie

◯ Kincraig/Loch Insh

◯ Loch Pityoulish

◯ Laggan

◯ Loch Garten

◯ Nethy Bridge

◯ Newtonmore

◯ Rothiemurchus

◯ Blair Atholl

◯ Killiecrankie

◯ Tomintoul & Glenlivet

◯ Aboyne

◯ Ballater

◯ Braemar

◯ Cambus o'May

◯ Glen Tanar

◯ Glen Shee

◯ Linn of Dee/Quoich

◯

Muir of Dinnet

Strathdon

Glen Lee -

Glen Mark

( ) Glen Esk

( ) Glen Doll

( ) Other:

3.   Date or period data collected *

4.   Number of people engaged with *

5.   Number of tents encountered in patrol area *

6.   Number of overnighting campervans encountered in patrol area *

7.   Number of dogs on a lead (or under very close control) encountered *

8.   Number of dogs off the lead (or not under very close control) encountered *

9.   Number of live fires/BBQs extinguished *

0.   Number of old fire/BBQ remains cleared *

11.   Number of black bin bags of litter collected (units of .25) *

12.   Incident report required? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No