

EUROPARC VERIFICATION 25/26TH MAY 2005

1. The ViSIT Forum were advised at the last meeting that Richard Partington had been appointed by Europarc as the expert verifier for the Cairngorms National Park Authority submission for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. This verification process was undertaken at the end of May and a programme involving a number of ViSIT Forum members was arranged including representatives from the private sector interests, Tourist Information Centres, visitor attractions and organisations such as VisitScotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Eastern Cairngorms Access Project.
2. Richard Partington asked questions relating to the value that each participant places on the environment and how it is managed in sustainable tourism terms; how tourism stakeholders were involved in the development of the Strategy and Action Plan; and how partners can contribute to the management of sustainable tourism within the National Park in the future.
3. A report of the visit will be submitted to Europarc for consideration at the end of June, and we should therefore hear the outcome in early July. A separate report will be received by the NPA in due course. If we are successful the Charter will be awarded at the Europarc conference in the Netherlands in September.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ANNUAL CONFERENCE

4. An annual conference to encourage all tourism stakeholders to become involved in the delivery of the Action Plan is a requirement of the European Charter, and this is action 2e of the Action Plan. It is suggested that this should be held in October, following the workshop held last October in Ballater.
5. It is suggested that the following subjects might be included in the conference/workshop, and views of the ViSIT Forum members are invited at this stage to allow a draft programme to be developed for finalisation at the September meeting of the Forum:
 - Raising awareness of the Charter, and accreditation and what that means for the National Park area and tourism enterprises (supposing the Charter has been awarded). Highlighting areas where further work is required if we have not been accredited.
 - Raising awareness about the Cairngorms brand, the criteria for use etc and the link to part 2 of the Charter which is about recognising individual tourism enterprises and their commitment to the Charter Principles
 - Discussions on local initiatives that might be broadened out Park wide, or replicated elsewhere in the Park eg the Aviemore, Badenoch, Strathspey and Cairngorms Marketing group
 - The work of the Local Outdoor Access Forum
 - Visitor Pay Back Schemes, an initial discussion