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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR INFORMATION

**Title:** Joint Working between the National Park Authorities

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### Purpose

To update the Board on progress made against the National Park Authorities' Joint working Programme agreed by the Board in May 2009.

### Recommendations

That the Board note the update set out in this paper.

### Executive Summary

1. The Scottish Government's strategic review of National Park Authorities recommended that Scotland's two National Park Authorities should:
    - a) explore opportunities for wider sharing of corporate services and increased harmonisation of employer arrangements; and
    - b) jointly agree the scope and direction of service sharing and establish a plan and timetable for the work required.
  2. A 'harmonisation programme' for NPAs was presented to and agreed by both Authorities last year (May 2009 Board Meeting for Cairngorms NPA). The rationale for developing joint working arrangements is focused on the development of more robust services, where the corporate support delivery and organisational development initiatives undertaken by two relatively small Authorities are better able to withstand changes in workloads and staffing. Currently, we can suffer from an inability to provide service cover within limited staff resources, particularly at times of staff absence or turnover.
  3. This report summarises the good progress made within this programme during the last year, and follows a report on the same subject to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NPA Board in June 2010.
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## JOINT WORKING BETWEEN THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES FOR INFORMATION

### Background

1. The Scottish Government's strategic review of National Park Authorities recommended that Scotland's two National Park Authorities should:
  - a) explore opportunities for wider sharing of corporate services and increased harmonisation of employer arrangements; and
  - b) jointly agree the scope and direction of service sharing and establish a plan and timetable for the work required.
2. A 'harmonisation programme' for NPAs was presented to and agreed by both Authorities last year (May 2009 Board Meeting for Cairngorms NPA). The rationale for developing joint working arrangements is focused on the development of more robust services, where the corporate support delivery and organisational development initiatives undertaken by two relatively small Authorities are better able to withstand changes in workloads and staffing. Currently, we can suffer from an inability to provide service cover within limited staff resources, particularly at times of staff absence or turnover.
3. This report summarises the good progress made within this programme during the last year and follows a report on the same subject to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NPA Board in June 2010.

### Summary of Progress

4. Good progress has been made over the last year with staff from both organisations working closely together in areas such as HR, Finance, IT, Planning, Land Management and Education. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority has also formally contracted with CNPA during 2010/11 for 30% of the CNPA Corporate Services Directors time to lead on alignment of corporate service functions and also to develop corporate strategies to underpin the NPA's long term operations, given future public sector financial constraints.
5. The initial focus for this work has been aligning corporate service functions and looking into options for integration of employer arrangements. Progress has also been made during the year in other policy and service delivery areas. Among the joint working achievements during 2009/10 were:
  - a) A memorandum of understanding has been drawn up and agreed by both organisations.
  - b) A shared procurement role has been established with responsibility for managing the procurement processes and ensuring best value for money procurement practises across both organisations.
  - c) Joint procurement exercises are underway for services such as external legal advisers, lone working support and new Board induction training.
  - d) On-line Local Plans for both organisations are enabled within LL&TTNPA's network and options are being explored for alignment in other E-Planning areas.
  - e) Senior Management Teams of both organisations have met formally on two occasions to identify areas of joint strategy development and to consolidate

the positions of both organisations when engaging at a senior level with strategic partners, Scottish Government and MSPs.

- f) A number of HR procedures are being rationalised and the same (CNPA) system for staff development reviews and appraisals has been adopted by both organisations.
  - g) A comparison of employer arrangements and working conditions for both organisations has been completed, providing a platform from which future harmonisation work can be developed and consulted upon.
  - h) A common position on the contribution to be made by Scottish National Parks to the Scottish Government's Purpose and associated National Outcomes has been established, and provides a platform from which common messages on the value of National Parks to Scotland can be developed.
  - i) There has been greater alignment in the preparation of year end-accounts and annual reports for both organisations and options for rationalising finance systems and procedures across both organisations are being explored.
  - j) A joint initiative on land management support has been established.
  - k) A jointly funded Learning Teaching Scotland post was set up with a remit to promote best practice outdoor learning projects that can potentially be rolled out across Scotland.
  - l) Integration of work on statutory requirements for development and consultation on equalities schemes.
  - m) Throughout the year there has been joint representation at meetings and conferences resulting in economies of staff time and travel costs. Senior managers from either National Park Authority representing both organisations at meetings such as SEARS Board, NDPBs Chief Executives Forum, Joint National Parks Working Groups etc.
6. Work will continue during the next two years to achieve the objectives set out in the agreed harmonisation programme and we will bring further updates to the Board and its Committees as the programme progresses.

### **Consultation**

- 7. We have been and will continue to consult with staff of both National Park Authorities through the consultative mechanisms established in each of the organisations.
- 8. Additionally, we have been liaising with the Scottish Government Sponsor Directorate on the evolution of this joint working initiative.

### **Policy Context**

- 9. The programme of developing joint working and harmonisation in employer arrangements between both National Park Authorities delivers against the CNPA's Corporate Plan priority of ensuring there is a high quality, continually improving, efficient, effective and responsive service from which its other priorities and actions can be delivered.
- 10. This Corporate priority in turn makes a contribution by the Authorities to the Scottish Government's National Outcome – that our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to other people's needs.

### **Implications**

***Financial Implications***

11. There are no financial implications in terms of added costs to the Authority in this work.
12. Rather, there is a potential to further explore the potential efficiency savings which may be gained by the National Park Authority's joint working arrangements over the coming years, with a view to this area of activity contributing toward addressing the budget pressures anticipated in the coming years.

***Presentational Implications***

13. While it is still relatively early in the overall delivery of the joint working programme, there has been good evidence over the last year of two organisations each committed to achieving improvements in services through joint working being able to deliver positive results.

**Next Steps**

14. We continue to work on all aspects of the joint activity plan approved by the Board in May 2009 and will provide a further overview of progress to the Board in 2011. In the meantime, we will also be reporting to the Board's Finance and Staffing and Recruitment Committees on relevant aspects of programme delivery.

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