

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Point of Entry Marker Project

**Prepared by: Peter Crane, Senior Visitor Services Officer and
Murray Ferguson, Head of Visitor Services and Recreation
(on behalf of the Project Team)**

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to seek approval for expenditure on the installation of entry point markers (and associated landscaping and interpretation) at 21 sites on roads and long distances routes around the boundary of the Park. Approval for expenditure at sites on the four Trunk Roads will be the subject of a further Board paper as the scheduling of work at these sites requires further discussion with the Scottish Executive.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- Notes the completion of the development work that has been undertaken to date and the recommendations on location and design of granite markers and associated landscaping;
- Approves expenditure of £328,000 over two financial years (£120k in 05/06 and £208k in 06/07) to implement Phase 1 of the project at 21 sites on the non-trunk roads; and
- Approves Phase 2 of the project in principle and notes that a further Board paper will be presented in due course with a recommendation to approve expenditure of between £237,000 and £500,000.

Executive Summary

This paper summarises the development work that has been undertaken on the Point of Entry Marker Project and seeks approval for expenditure of funds so that work can start on the ground. Implementation of the project is split into two phases. Phase 1 involves work at 21 sites around the Park on non-trunk roads and long distance routes. Phase 2 involves work at 4 trunk road sites. Assuming the necessary approvals are granted the first permanent entry point markers will be installed in spring 2006.

POINT OF ENTRY MARKER PROJECT

Background

1. The development work associated with the Point of Entry Marker Project started in early 2004 when the Gateways and Visitor Information Working Group worked with specialist advisers on a Scoping Report. The Board received an update on the work in July 2004 when they agreed that the high quality markers were the most desirable option. The Board agreed that staff should undertake further development work, including investigation of external funding opportunities. The Board also approved a series of general principles to guide the development work through to completion. The first principle is:

“Entry point markers should be developed, in association with landscaping and other works, to provide a positive experience for people arriving at the Park, encapsulating the area’s essential character and, as far as possible, evoking the Park’s fundamental values of quality, welcome, integrity, respect, protection and progress.”

2. Meanwhile the development of the Cairngorms brand was considered in Board papers presented in June 2004 and February 2005. The chosen brand has been integrated into the design of the entry point markers to reinforce the integrity of pre-arrival information, the boundary experience and the information and facilities available within the Park.
3. Significant developmental work has been undertaken over the last 14 months to come up with a quality design for the markers at each site that will last for many years and can be delivered with minimal risk to CNPA, at reasonable cost. This process has had to be flexible to adjust to the varying factors that have arisen as this complex project has evolved. Since July 2004, the Project Team has presented two further Board Papers (in December 2004 and May 2005) and more recently have provided monthly updates on progress for Board members and staff.

Progress Report on Installation of Signage

4. The original scoping report identified the need for markers at 31 sites around the Park. Permanent signs incorporating the Park brand have now been erected at the five railway stations, in keeping with existing station signage. Interim road signs have now been erected at 10 sites with the Park brand on a flat metal panel, supported by two posts. The National Cycle Network Route 7 passes Drumochter at the site of the proposed road marker and does not require a separate sign.
5. The erection of the interim signs during the developmental phase for the permanent markers has allowed people to provide some very useful feedback. Comments about the signs which have come to the attention of the Project Team have been broadly positive with concerns falling into three main categories:
 - *Location of signs* - some comments that the precise location of some signs was not quite the right. These comments have assisted in final site choice for the permanent entry point markers;

- *Misunderstandings about the temporary nature of the metal signs.* Where possible it has been explained that the metal signs are only likely to be in place for two to three years.
 - *Use of the Gaelic language* - two comments have been received that the Gaelic writing on the signs is too small and does not reflect the importance of the language in the area.
6. Therefore there will be a total of 30 entry point markers required around the Park. With the five signs already in place at the stations, this paper deals with the remaining 25 sites.

Development work undertaken to date

7. The following bullet points summarise the development work that has been undertaken on the granite markers and associated landscaping since the last Board Paper: -
- a) Production of PVC trial markers, and testing at each site to confirm the precise location and appropriate size of markers and to assess road safety implications (see **Annex 1** for summary of marker size at each site and **Annex 2** photographs of trials).
 - b) Completion of Sign Design Report which adapted the preliminary concept designs to the different entry point locations and integrated the Cairngorms brand. The design of these markers was presented to the May 05 Board. The full Sign Design Report is available should Members wish to see it, but in brief, final design proposals are as follows:
 - It is recommended that the granite be sourced from within the Park boundary and the report highlights that this should be practicable. All the necessary engineering tests have now been undertaken;
 - The rear face of the smaller single-piece signs (featuring the brand image only) will be left as quarried stone to increase the natural appearance.
 - The signs will have a rough, flame-textured finish;
 - To achieve a high contrast and a design life of 30 years plus the lettering will be profile-cut stone letters (made from black granite) inset into the granite sign; and
 - Engineering drawings of the designs are in **Annex 3**.
 - c) Completion of Landscape Architects' Report. This provides designs and costs for the installation of all 25 markers using the designs developed in the Design Report. The report also contains concept designs and costs for the landscaping of five lay-bys/car parks at Drumochter, Kinloch Laggan, Grantown (Huntly's Cave), Mains of Dalvey, and Dinnet. The costs are estimates that have been produced by a quantity surveyor based on visits to each site by the landscape architects. A full copy of the Landscape Architects' Report is available should members wish to see it.
 - d) Ongoing programme of information and awareness-raising including written updates to Community Councils, presentations to the ViSIT Forum and the Brand Management Committee.
 - e) Invitation was sent to Community Councils members close to Drumochter, Laggan, Glenlivet and Tomnavoulin to attend site meetings and comment on

- trial markers on site. This process resulted in a change in location of the sign at Tomnavoulin to improve its visual impact.
- f) Meeting with Scottish Executive Trunk Roads Department. The Executive have indicated very positive support for the project and offered to consider taking on the project management of the works on the four trunk road sites. This would have considerable advantages because the trunk roads pose the largest challenge in terms of lay-by construction and traffic management. The Executive may also have the ability to claim back the VAT element of this phase. There is some way to go before achieving a formal partnership on these sites and discussions will continue over the autumn.
- g) Completion of environmental site surveys to determine the impact of installing each marker and associated works.
8. The Scoping Report identified the opportunities for interpretation and visitor information at, or associated with, entry point markers at the key sites. The high quality design of the entry point markers, the use of local materials and incorporation of the Park Brand are all designed to tell people that they are entering a special, quality place that is well managed. But additionally there are opportunities at some sites to:
- orientate visitors and communicate something of the essential character of the Cairngorms and the area's special qualities;
 - elicit a sense of anticipation of the experiences to come;
 - begin to satisfy visitors' information needs; and
 - encourage visitors to stay in and explore the Park, stimulating visits to the areas' communities.
9. As result of further development work we consider that the entry points at Drumochter, Laggan and at Dinnet offer the best opportunity to capture the visitor and provide them with provocative interpretation that will inspire them about the whole Park and its special qualities. Further details about the approach to Interpretation at the entry points are in **Annex 4**.
10. The site at Dinnet still presents a challenge as to where best to locate the entry point marker while meeting the desire of residents to retain the 'Highland Boundary Marker Stone' in a prominent position. We propose to progress this by meeting with local Board members and residents to look at a number of options which have been worked up linked to both the location of the marker and the provision of information.

Recommendation

11. **It is recommended that the Board note the completion of the development work that has been undertaken to date and the recommendations on location and design of granite markers and associated landscaping.**

Project objectives

12. The overall objectives of the Point of Entry Marker Project are to:-
- Install granite markers at 25 entry points to the Park;
 - Upgrade lay-bys and car parks at key sites adjacent to the entry point markers; and

- Develop interpretation and visitor information at suitable entry points.
13. In developing the project the priority has been to focus on the installation of the granite markers and to achieve such other associated improvements to associated infrastructure at the key sites as is practically possible given the likely funding and resources available. Further improvements to visitor infrastructure can follow in due course.

Funding the project

14. A funding package has been prepared involving a number of different organisations and funding schemes, each of which covers different parts of the Park. This causes some additional complexity in terms of project implementation. Further discussion is required with the Scottish Executive Trunk Roads Department about the implementation of the works on the trunk roads (as described in paragraph 7 above). It would not be prudent to hold up implementation at the other sites while these negotiations are concluded as this may prejudice the funding that is currently available. For example, Objective 2 funding has already been approved for the Project and we have to make some expenditure in the near future. In addition there is an outstanding funding application to the Objective 1 programme.
15. It is therefore proposed that project implementation be considered in two phases as follows:
- Phase 1: Installation of 21 entry point markers and upgrading of one lay-by and one car park.
 - Phase 2: Installation of four entry point markers at trunk road sites with options to upgrade lay-bys depending on the resources available.

Phase 1: Non trunk roads and long distance routes

16. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the costs and partnership funding for Phase 1. The cost estimates include VAT and are derived from the Landscape Architects' report. They include estimates for consultant's fees and legal costs but no allowance has been made for inflation.

17. **Table 1: Expenditure and Funding for Phase 1 (at 21 Entry Point Marker Sites in Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland)**

Area	Works	Expenditure (£)	Funding (£)
Aberdeenshire and Angus	Install 11 markers	274,300	Objective 2 94,670
	Upgrade Dinnet car park		SE Grampian 30,000
	Install information at Dinnet		CNPA 149,630
Moray	Install 4 markers	91,200	Moray Council 15,000
			IMBSE 25,000
			CNPA 51,200
Highland	Install 6 markers	156,700	Rees Jeffries (1) 30,000
	Upgrade Grantown lay-by		CNPA 126,700
		522,200	CNPA Total (2) 327,530
			Others 194,670
			522,200

- Notes: 1. Support form Rees Jeffries Road fund is yet to be confirmed.
2. CNPA funding is some 63% of the total.

18. In order to meet the requirements of external funding, work will need to commence on the above sites in the current financial year. However, total expenditure would be spread over two financial years as shown in Table 2.

19. **Table 2: CNPA contributions for Phase 1 by financial year**

	05/06	06/07	Total
CNPA	120,000	208,000	328,000

Recommendation

20. **It is recommended that the Board approve expenditure of £328,000 over two financial years (£120,000 in 05/06 and £208,000 in 06/07) to implement Phase 1 of the project.**

Phase 2: Trunk Roads

21. The four trunk road sites are Drumochter, Kinloch Laggan, Slochd and Mains of Dalvey. Trunk roads are managed by the Scottish Executive and all the sites except Slochd have lay-bys associated with the proposed marker site. As the managing authority Scottish Executive have overall responsibility for the upgrade of lay-bys on trunk roads. These sites are the most complex and expensive to develop if the final vision of both high quality markers and upgrade lay-bys/car parks is to be realised.

22. Discussion over the works proposed for these sites are progressing well and the Executive have indicated a willingness to work in partnership with the CNPA. They have agreed in principle to consider project management of works at the sites which makes a great deal of sense because they are experienced at delivering engineering works on trunk roads. If Scottish Executive take on the costs of project management and consequently are able save the associated VAT on this element of the project this

would result in a saving on the trunk roads sites of some 22% of the costs. On this basis alone it would be worth developing the partnership.

23. Discussions with the Scottish Executive over which elements of the lay-by costs could be considered as routine works are at an early stage. These could be undertaken as part of the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of trunk roads and therefore there is potential that the Executive could meet part of the costs.
24. The precise costs for implementation of Phase 2 are therefore hard to pin down at this stage but can be quantified in terms of minimum and maximum spend as shown in Table 3.

25. **Table 3: Costs associated with Phase 2**

	Cost to CNPA of Phase 2	Total CNPA contribution (Phases 1 and 2)	Total Project costs (Phases 1 and 2)
Option A: Installation of four entry point markers at trunk road sites (with no upgrade of lay-bys)	£237,000	£565,000	£759,200
Option B: Installation of four entry point markers at trunk road sites plus upgrade to lay-bys and associated interpretation (1) (2)	£400,000 - 500,000	£728,000 – 828,000	£1,336,000

- Notes: 1. As the application to the Objective 1 Programme has still to be determined the figures are presented as a range.*
- 2. These figures assumes that the work is project managed by Scottish Executive and includes a contribution they would make to meeting minimum standards on trunk roads for lay-bys of this type.*

26. Option A represents the ‘worst case’ scenario where CNPA would install only the entry point markers at the trunk road sites (i.e. in advance of the lay-by upgrading which would probably be undertaken in due course by Scottish Executive to normal standards). Option B represents the installation of the four entry point markers and the upgrade of three lay-bys and associated interpretation.

Recommendation

27. **It is recommended that the Board approves Phase 2 of the project in principle and notes that a further Board paper will be presented in due course with a recommendation to approve expenditure of between £237,000 and £500,000.**

Project timetable

28. Table 4 provides an outline of the ‘key milestones’ in project development assuming Board and Scottish Executive approval.

29. **Table 4: Summary of Project Development 2005-2007**

Month	Activity
September 2005	Tender for Landscape Architects to project manage installation of 21 Granite Markers Instruct land agents to negotiate formal site agreements Retain Sign Design Consultant Continue discussions with Scottish Executive on trunk road sites
October 2005	Appoint Landscape Architects Develop detailed site plans Tender Interpretation Contract
December 2005	Appoint sub-contractors
Spring 2006 – Spring 2007	Install 21 Granite markers
Early 2006	Conclude discussions with Scottish Executive
April 2007	Start installation of four trunk road markers

Risk Assessment

30. **Annex 5** contains a detailed assessment of the risks associated with the development of the project. The combination of thorough planning to date and the use of additional control measures indicate that no individual risk is ‘high’. However, the complexity of the project means that the associated risks will need to be evaluated throughout the life of the project and control measures updated.

Delivering Sustainability

31. The aim of the project is to deliver high quality, entry point markers for the National Park and associated infrastructure. The entry point markers will be made of local materials and are designed to have a minimum life of 30 years. Site landscaping has been designed to require the minimal maintenance and the.

Delivering a Park for All

32. The installation of the markers is designed to clearly mark all vehicle, rail and long distance routes into the Park so that everyone entering will area will be aware that they are in the Cairngorms National Park. Where lay-bys and car parks associated with the markers are to be upgraded, access has been designed to allow people of all abilities to use the sites.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

33. In assessing the economy of the project it is easy to be drawn in to comparisons with other public projects especially those linked to signage. However, the thorough programme of works undertaken in developing the project to this stage was designed to ensure economy, effectiveness and efficiency, and it is against this activity that the project should be assessed.
34. The case for installing high quality threshold signage linked to the Cairngorms National Park brand has been made previously. However, using information from the recent National Park visitor survey it is worth restating that an estimated 45,000 people pass the road entry points on a daily basis. It is also notable that, in any one year if only 5% of visitors stay one extra day in the Park then they will spend an addition £1.3 million in the area. This equates to the total cost of installing all markers and upgrading all lay-bys.

Cairngorms National Park Authority
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petercrane@cairngorms.co.uk
murayferguson@cairngorms.co.uk