

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### **FOR INFORMATION**

**Title:** Corporate Plan Update, Theme 5

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#### **Purpose**

To inform the Board of our work to date to achieve the fifth strategic theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08, and our plans for future activity.

#### **Recommendations**

- That the Board note the progress and plan for achieving the fifth theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08.

#### **Executive Summary**

The Board agreed the Authority's Corporate Plan for 2005 to 2008 at its February meeting. The Corporate Plan was framed around 5 themes, setting the overarching framework for the Authority's plans over the next three years. The fifth of those themes is:

“to be an open, innovative and professional organisation that engages effectively with the public and behaves with integrity”.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a second update on progress made and plans in place to deliver this fifth strategic theme of the Corporate Plan. This paper seeks to complement the more detailed papers providing regular quarterly updates on delivery of the 20 goals set out in the Corporate Plan and actions and tasks developed in the operational plan, by providing an overview of activity within this general theme.

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## Corporate Plan Update, Theme 5

### Background

1. The Board considered a paper in March 2005 which gave the first in this series of updates on delivery of the Corporate Plan, looking at the work undertaken over the last year on areas covered by Theme 5 of the Corporate Plan and exploring the key activities to be undertaken in the coming years.
2. Theme five of the current Corporate Plan is: “to be an open, innovative and professional organisation that engages effectively with the public and behaves with integrity”. This theme relates both to the internal workings of the organisation and its relations with the general public. The wording of the theme reflects the outcome of work to identify and specify our core organisational values. These are as follows:
  - a) **Integrity**  
Honest, trustworthy, fair, reliable, consistent, clarity of vision, good leadership, prudent.
  - b) **Open & inclusive**  
Transparent, clear, approachable, accessible, accountable, responsive, listening, user-friendly, public-focused, fun to work for and with.
  - c) **Innovative**  
Dynamic, bold, willing to take risks, supportive and trusting atmosphere, learning from mistakes, embracing new technology, high environmental standards.
  - d) **Professional**  
Committed, competent, knowledgeable, responsible, efficient, getting things done.
3. Everyone in the organisation - staff and board - is responsible for ensuring that we live up to these values. However, specific work to deliver this theme is largely the responsibility of two Groups with an organisation wide responsibility - Communications and Corporate Services. This paper therefore primarily focuses on the work programme being taken forward by these two groups.
4. This paper aims to complement the regular, more detailed, quarterly updates on delivery of the operational plan, by providing an overview of activity within this general theme. The paper looks at our work under each of the major elements of themes in turn.
5. It is worth noting, before moving on to the detail of the update, that the 6 month period since the first update was presented to the Board has seen the post of Head of Communications vacant. This has inevitably resulted in some delay in the development and delivery of our communication policy objectives. However, a

great deal of work has been undertaken by Communications staff over this period. The efforts of Karen Archer and Alison Fleming during this difficult period in the absence of their Head of Group should therefore be acknowledged.

## **Integrity, Open & Inclusive, Engaging with the public**

### **External communications**

6. The previous update on this theme set out our Communications Strategy, identifying four principles that should underpin our communication - openness, clarity, pro-activity, and responsiveness and 4 target audiences - local people; opinion formers; the people of Scotland; and visitors and potential visitors to the area. In each case, our objective has been to keep these audiences informed about our work through our programme of communications activity.
7. To compensate for the loss of our Head of Communications over the last 6 months, we have contracted with Simon Stewart Communications to support the Communications function. In particular, this contract has sought to address the goal in the current year of developing high levels of understanding and appreciation of the Park, the role of the Authority, and ensuring high local and national media profile.
8. Below we report on our efforts to communicate with the first three of these audiences. Communication with visitors will be addressed in a future report to the Board on progress under theme 1.

### **Audience 1: local people**

#### ***Principal communications tools used***

9. **Media** – regular press releases and articles in local newspapers, and a monthly column by Andrew Thin in the Badenoch and Strathspey Herald. We have also gained some coverage for the Park in the national Scottish media through press notices and interviews.

**Publications** – Park Life continues to be issued three times a year and distributed to every household in the Park (and some just outside the boundary). There has been relatively little feedback. The range of publicity about the Park has been steadily growing over the last 12 months.

**Open Meetings** – prior to each monthly Board meeting, we continue to hold an open evening for the local community to meet and talk to Board Members and staff.

**Consultations** – as we enter the second round of consultation on the local plan, and the first on the National Park Plan (next spring), our mechanisms for engaging with stakeholders became increasingly important.

**Presence at Shows** – we have had a presence at a number of summer shows/games in the Park during the summer. We will be evaluating the feedback from these prior to deciding what level of activity to support next year, and whether to attend shows outside the Park.

**Other Events** – to raise awareness among opinion formers, we have held an event for MSPs at Holyrood, and will have a presence at each of the Party Conferences this autumn/winter. A large number of meetings with stakeholders have been held as part of the process of developing the National Park Plans. In addition, various meetings with Members of other Boards have been held. The various Advisory Forums have met regularly since their establishment, and have provided for a useful two way dialogue with a range of partners and stakeholders

### ***Commentary***

10. We have made considerable efforts to communicate with and listen to people who live and work in the Park. This will continue, with perhaps more emphasis being given to targeting specialist publications, and reaching a wider audience beyond the Park. In the long term, we will be looking at how to establish an ongoing engagement with the committees and stakeholders in the Park, rather than just for purposes of one-off consultation exercises, building on what we have started with the first Local Plan consultation. The aim will be to establish a more joined-up consultation and engagement process for all the public sector.

### **Evaluating our communications**

11. We appointed Scotinform, a public opinion polling company, to undertake a benchmark opinion polling exercise. The work is complete. Analysis and recommendations on how to take this forward, await the arrival of the new Head of Communications.

### **Freedom of Information**

12. At the end of August, our register of requests for information under Freedom of Information legislation totalled some 134 entries. Requests range from very general requests for information about the Park and/or the Authority, to requests for specific items of information, for example on the use of resources and on specific policies operating within the Authority.
13. The Authority's policy is to favour disclosure wherever possible. Our response to information requests will be under review throughout the coming year and reported to the Audit Committee.

## **Internal Communications**

14. The Authority's Staff Consultative Forum (SCF) has now been formed, with meetings taking place in May and August 2005. Membership comprises 5 staff representatives, two Board members representing the Staffing and Recruitment Committee (Anne MacLean and Eric Baird), the HR Manager and Head of Corporate Services. An official of the Prospect Trade Union also attends. All papers and minutes of the Forum are available to all staff.
15. The pay award for 2005/06 and development of a Performance Related Pay (PRP) system are the main items currently on the agenda for the Forum. The forward plan of items for consideration includes benchmarking the Authority's terms and conditions with those of other NDPBs and public sector organisations; establishing union recognition within the Authority; and reviewing the fit between the Authority's current pay structure, future pay remit requirements and operation of PRP systems.
16. Issuing updates on the work and plans of Corporate Services has sought to complement staff meetings in communicating within the organisation.
17. A great deal of developmental work remains to be undertaken on the process of internal communication in the Authority. A number of user groups are being established to look at specific aspects of our operations, highlight areas for change and consider options for doing so. This includes a group to consider internal communication processes. Consideration of our internal communications will also feature prominently in the staff awayday in September.

## **Professionalism and integrity**

### **Developing staff and the organisation**

18. We implemented a staff appraisal process during April and May, preceded by staff consultation and initial training in March. The appraisal process complements the Corporate and Operational Planning processes, taking forward strategic and operational plans and objectives, establishing individual staff targets and intended outcomes based on those.
19. Staff will have a mid-year appraisal review with their line manager in the autumn, considering progress to date in 2005/06 on delivery of targets and development, and reviewing the need to add or amend targets for the remainder of the year. Further training has been arranged for all line managers who will undertake appraisals, and also for all staff.
20. The appraisal process itself will be reviewed over the course of the next 6 to 9 months, taking account of comment received direct from staff and through their representatives on the Forum. The review will also change the process to

accommodate the performance related pay system as it is finalised or operation in 2006/07.

### **Developing the culture**

21. As highlighted in the previous update on this theme, building a culture that is in line with our values is a long-term task. The first steps in this have been taken with some of the elements outlined above: establishment of the SCF; establishment of user groups to consider areas such as internal communications, IT development, training and induction, and facilities (such as accommodation, transport etc.), and consideration of the development of aspects of the organisations culture at the forthcoming staff awayday. Through these various means, we are seeking the engagement and participation of all staff in the development of their organisation. This will support the workplans already in place within the Communications and Corporate Services Groups.

### **Staff development**

22. The appraisal process has given the opportunity for staff to discuss their training and development needs with their line manager and for consequent individual training plans for the year ahead to be agreed.
23. The HR Manager is also seeking to put in place coordinated training plans for developmental aspects required throughout the organisation, such as those underpinning the development of appraisal skills. Other, larger organisations have been visited to review how they distil organisational training plans from individual appraisals in order to refine our processes for this and future years.

### **Retention and reward**

24. The implementation the appraisal system early in 2005/06 establishes a basis from which a system of performance related pay (PRP) may be implemented. The Scottish Executive expect a PRP system to be implemented in time to be included in pay awards for 2006/07. There are a wide range of potential systems which may be implemented, and a process of consultation has begun with staff representatives through the SCF, following direction on policy from the Board's Staffing and Recruitment Committee.
25. We also acknowledge that terms and conditions play at least as important a role in staff retention as salary. Hence the benchmarking of the Authority's terms and conditions against those of other comparator organisation forms an important aspect of the forward workplan for both the Corporate Services Group and the SCF. This work will also be complemented by a review over the second half of this year of staff attitude of the organisation as an employer.

### **Developing Staff and the Organisation: Conclusion**

26. An increasing amount of the basic organisational infrastructure is being put in place through development of the Authority's consultative and communication mechanisms and policies and procedures. A significant amount of developmental work remains to be undertaken.
27. We continue to look toward the potential application for Investor in People (IiP) accreditation, or some independent "kitemark" of our processes, perhaps towards the end of 2006/07. Internal process and communications are designed partly with this in mind.

### **Innovation**

#### **Risk management**

28. To be an innovative organisation means having a culture which is conscious of, and supports, taking risks and which manages those risks.
29. The Board's Audit Committee approved the Authority's Risk Management Strategy at the end of March. We are working to embed the risk management strategy within the organisation and to highlight the benefits of using these risk management principles in our work, including project management and grant assessment. Through this process, we seek to support innovation by supporting staff in taking "risky" decisions by providing a framework against which risks, once established, can be dealt with rather than no action being taken in order to avoid risk.

#### **Efficient Government**

30. We continue to seek means of participating in a meaningful way with the Scottish Executive's Efficient Government Initiative. As a relatively small organisation, our participation will often depend on seeking appropriate areas for collaboration with other organisations. This may involve building on existing NDPB working groups, such as those on Staff Development, Property/Facilities Management, Specialist Services and IT to which we already contribute. However, it is fair to say that progress on these has been very limited over the last 6 months.
31. A Business Improvement Project has now been established in the Highlands, funded by the Scottish Executive's Efficient Government Fund. At present, it is expected that the project team will be drawn primarily from the local government and health sectors, although the project is being led through Highlands and Islands Enterprise. It is expected that the project will seek to liaise with the Highland NDPBs Chief Executive's Group.

### **Health and Safety**

32. A draft Health and Safety policy has been developed over the last 6 months and training needs for relevant officers identified during the appraisal process. It is now intended that consultants will be engaged to review the operations of the organisation and identify those areas most “exposed” in terms of required Health and Safety procedures.
33. A review of work/life balance of staff within the organisation remains planned for the second half of this year.

### **Technology and Environment**

34. In the spirit of innovation, we are reviewing how technology can help to improve the efficiency, economy and effectiveness of the organisation while undertaking our activities with high environmental standards. A working group of staff has now been formed to consider the environmental impact of the Authority, and has developed an action plan to address outstanding issues.
35. Following upgrades to the IT systems and to communication lines between offices in Grantown and Ballater, and a successful audit of the Authority’s IT systems by the external auditors, Audit Scotland, in May, we plan to develop an IT strategy to plan for development over the next three years.

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