

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CEO REPORT

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Purpose

- I. To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Conservation:

- a) **Woodland expansion** – We have been engaged in a number of new woodland creation consultations in which we have ensured agricultural interests, peatland protection, wading birds, landscape and access issues have been accounted for alongside the benefits of woodland expansion. We have begun discussion with FCS, SNH on updating the Cairngorms Forest and Woodland Framework, addressing a wide range of issues including the pros and cons of identifying key areas for promoting woodland expansion.
- b) **Moorland Management** – The East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership continues to progress well. We are still awaiting a contract confirming arrangements with the Environmental Co-operation Action Fund (ECAAF). In the meantime we have been progressing discussions with the six estates including how we can monitor and care for key species such as raptors, black grouse, capercaillie, ring ouzel, wading birds and mountain hare.
- c) **Peatland restoration** – Additional funding from the Scottish government via ‘Peatland Action’ has allowed us to increase the hours of our Peatland Officer, Stephen Corcoran and to fund further restoration projects.
- d) **Deer Management** – SNH have very recently published their review of Deer Management to Scottish Government. This is a significant review and will provide good information for finalising the NPPP.
- e) **Catchment Partnerships** – The Spey Catchment Initiative has just published its new Catchment Management Plan, an important and comprehensive document covering the water environment, flooding, communities, economic development, fisheries, farming, forestry and woodland and habitats and species. In collaboration with the Dee Catchment Partnership and other partners from across Scotland we recently chaired a discussion exploring methods for mapping where Natural Flood Management measures could potentially most effectively be deployed across the

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Paper 1 9th December 2016

National Park. The Pearls in Peril project comes to an end in March 2017; we are working with partners to try and secure additional funding to continue this good work which embraces a wide range of positive benefits for both the land and water environment.

- f) **Designated sites** – We have been in discussion with SNH how we can integrate broader regional conservation objectives alongside protection of qualifying features in designated sites.
- g) **Cairngorms Scenic photo posts** – This project was short-listed for the Innovation Award category of the 2016 Nature of Scotland Awards but unfortunately did not win.
- h) **Plantlife - Cairngorms Project Officer** – With funding from LEADER and CNPA, Plantlife Scotland are now recruiting for an officer dedicated to Important Plant Area conservation in the National Park. Over the next three years the officer will be increasing knowledge on status and distribution, working with land managers to improve habitat and developing a volunteer and community based approach, making a valuable contribution to the delivery of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.

Visitor Experience:

- a) **Long Distance Routes** - The planning application for Speyside way Extension from Ardgael to Inshriach is due to be submitted in December. Pre-application discussions have raised no significant issues. We are seeking funding to improve the existing route between Nethy Bridge and Grantown to make it more accessible to cyclists and are likely to know the outcome in mid-December. Scottish Enterprise has agreed 50% funding towards the development of Deeside Way from Braemar to Invercauld Bridge. We will be aiming for a Spring 2017 planning submission but this will depend on whether we need to commission any specialist habitat surveys – some are seasonally dependent for obvious reasons. It is worth noting that once we have the detailed path specification, cost estimates and planning consent we will need to find build funds and reach agreement with the landowners. However, this second stage can overlap with the development phase.
- b) **Mountains and People** - The first cohort of Cairngorms Trainees ‘graduate’ on 15th December at Balmoral. The second group will be recruited in early 2017.
- c) **Active Cairngorms** - The February meeting of the Active Cairngorms Partnership will be jointly facilitated by senior staff from Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Public Service Reform (Community Planning Partnerships). It will aim to refine the partnerships work to support active lifestyles for health improvement.
- d) **Volunteering** - Mike Woolvin has started as volunteer coordinator and we aim to have the first project steering group in early 2017 with volunteer recruitment starting in spring 2017.
- e) **Information and Interpretation** - Next year marks 300th anniversary of Pack Horse Bridge in Carr-bridge and we are working with the community to celebrate this in print and on web as well as upgrading the community information point in the village. New community information and interpretation is being installed in

Newtonmore in the panels in the village centre. Upgrades to community information in Dalwhinnie and Grantown are also planned for year end.

- f) **Snow Roads Scenic Route** - Cairngorms Business Partnership are finalising the funding agreement with Scottish Enterprise to support the development of the route and will aim to recruit a two year part time development post, based in CNPA Ballater Office, in early 2017.

Rural Development:

- a) **Local Development Plan 2020 – 2025** – A ‘Call for Sites and Ideas’ was issued on 24 November (until 3rd February 2017) inviting land owners, developers and local communities for their ideas for potential development sites in the Park. The responses will feed into the Local Development Plan 2020-2025 (LDP). The Main Issues Report which will go out for public consultation in 2017 once the final NPPP has been approved by Ministers.
- b) **Design Awards** – A very successful Design Awards event was held on 14 November with around 110 people attending the ceremony in Boat of Garten Hall. Winners and commendations were given in five categories with the overall winner of the competition was a new build property – Strathdon House, by Brown + Brown Architects. Full details at <http://ow.ly/t0aQ306AtCs>
- c) **Development Management**
Significant cases approved in the last few months include:
- Creation of 53 residential plots (including 10 affordable units), Grantown-on-Spey
 - Reinstatement of Royal Station and Visitor Information Centre, Ballater
 - Six new houses (4 affordable units) using innovative combination of cross-subsidy policy plus Rural Housing Burden, Rothiemurchus, Aviemore
 - Conversion of hotel to form seven residential units Grantown-on-Spey
 - Conversion of derelict shooting lodge to hostel accommodation at Derry Lodge, Braemar
 - Micro Hydro System Glenmuick, Glen Muick, Ballater
- d) **Mountainbike Conference and legacy event**– CNPA staff worked with Highland Council colleagues to bring the 2016 Scottish Mountain Bike Conference to the Park. It was a really successful conference and we supported and subsidised local businesses to attend. The conference, focussed on innovation, attracted over 170 delegates from as far away as Australia, Cyprus and the USA. The key aims of the conference were to highlight Scotland’s success stories, discuss key issues facing MTB in Scotland, hear examples of innovation and good practice from around the world, and to highlight the excellent MTB which exists in the Highlands and across Scotland. The conference provided a superb opportunity to promote the National Park to an international audience and included contributions from Mark Tate (CBP) and Pete Crane who delivered a very well received talk on how CNPA has worked with partners to develop a path network that meets the needs of walkers and cyclists and the challenges of future development. There were also field trips to Ballater & Glenlivet. Working with the Cairngorms Business Partnership we are developing a

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Paper 1 9th December 2016

legacy event with those local businesses to look at how we can grow Mountain Biking in the CNP, collaboration between businesses, and how we can work together to look after and develop our fantastic infrastructure in the longer term. The next Scottish MTB Conference will take place in 2018 and initial discussions have already been held to look at bringing it back to Aviemore.

- e) **Marketing Strategy and Photos** – VisitScotland have produced their first Regional Marketing Strategy for the Cairngorms National Park. A draft was developed in conjunction with partners on the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership and is now being finalised. It will inform future campaign activity by all partners in the area. The current campaign has been focused on creating digital content. On behalf of partners, VisitScotland contracted photographers to capture key aspects of the Cairngorms National Park and its offering. We are starting to receive these images and they have the ‘wow’ factor. We are now working to introduce the images into campaign activity and you will see more and more of them over the next few months.
- f) **Tourism Action Plan** – the Action Plan has been produced in conjunction with the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership and will be submitted to Europarc for re-accreditation in December. A verifier’s visit will take place in the Spring and if successful the Charter will then be re-awarded to the CNP for the third time.
- g) **Make it Yours** – We distributed ‘tear off map pads’ to a range of businesses over the summer months. We are now seeking feedback from businesses about the maps, how useful they were and any improvements they would like to see. Feedback to date has been very positive and we will use this to inform a re-designed map to go out in the Spring. We are also organising interactive presentation events with key businesses and visitor facing staff over the coming months. A full update on Make it Yours activity is available as an annex to this report.
- h) **The Tomintoul and Glenlivet Regeneration project** – The Regeneration Project has been nominated and shortlisted for a SURF (Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum) Award. This project was led by the CNPA in its early stages and thanks to a solid partnership approach and a great deal of hard work by the community, public and private sector alike has seen some excellent results. In particular, the regeneration project laid the foundations for the successful Landscape Partnership Bid. The awards ceremony takes place in early December.
- i) **Building Stronger Communities Project** – The four pilot communities have now completed their questionnaires and initial discussions. Feedback events for the community will take place in mid-late January. Community groups will receive an interim report and information about the session before Christmas and again afterwards.
- j) **A9 Dualling** – All of the Stage 2 consultations are now complete and Transport Scotland are finalising route preferences with Ministers. We expect to receive Projects 5 & 6 (Killiecrankie to Glen Garry) early in the New Year detailing Stage 3 information about how the preferred option might be implemented.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) There have been a series of meetings held with stakeholders around the development of the NPPP. The CEO has also met with the Minister for Local Government and Housing.
- b) The CEO will also be attending the ECCLR Committee to discuss deer management in December.
- c) The CEO has also attended the NDPB CEO Forum, Scottish Leaders Forum, RAFE Delivery Board, CoHI and Highland Community Planning Partnership

Communications:

- a) **National Park Partnership Plan & Local Development Plan** - Meetings with partner organisations have been arranged for early 2017 to discuss the final draft National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) which will be brought to the Board for approval in April 2017. Communications support given to LDP “Call for Sites and Ideas” process including development of video and website content.
- b) **Cairngorms Nature Campaign** - The Cairngorms Nature Young Presenter competition overall winner will be announced at the RSPB Christmas Reception at the Dynamic Earth on 6th December with Roseanna Cunningham as the keynote speaker. The Cairngorms Nature Weekend will take place on 13th & 14th May 2017 and will again have Nick Baker support events – this time in Blair Atholl. Interviews for a part-time Event Management Support Officer will take place on 9th December with the intention that someone will start with the CNPA in January on a 6-month contract. An application for LEADER support has also been submitted to develop a sustainable model for taking the Cairngorms Nature Weekend Festival forward.
- c) **Active Cairngorms** - Cairngorms ‘Wee Walks Week’ was a great success with 455 people undertaking at least one short walk (1-4 miles) during the week 5-11 September which resulted in a total of 1,199 miles being walked. Many people shared their experiences via social media and Active Cairngorms has over 1,800 social media followers. This is an excellent first year to build on in 2017. Also the *Step Count Challenge* was actively promoted with businesses and groups across the CNP throughout November. The results will provide an excellent baseline for further work in 2017.
- d) **Corporate Communications**
 - Digital Communications: website statistics continue to improve moving towards our year-end target of 180,000 unique users and our 5 social media accounts have over 16,000 followers. A digital campaigns officer is being recruited to help deliver more through our digital communication activities as this is a cost effective means to reach and engage with our target audiences.
 - *Year of Innovation, Architecture & Design 2016*– to support the Scottish Government’s ‘Homecoming Years’ campaign we ran the Cairngorms National Park Design Awards (32 entries) and the new Snow Road ‘Scenic Route’ to be officially opened in spring 2017.

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Paper 1 9th December 2016

- An MSP survey has been carried out and the final results show a third of MSPs know the CNP very well/a fair amount, 43% of MSPs are very/mainly favourable with 98% either positive or neutral about the Park. 42% of those interviewed were newly elected in May 2016. These results are comparable with the results for Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park.
- Corporate publications: CNPA's Annual Review 2015/16 has been submitted to Ministers and a Gaelic Language Plan progress report has been submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Both are available on our website. A Gaelic Language Plan implementation plan for 2016 is in place involving 12 members of staff and an application for £2.5K support funding from the GLAIF has been successful.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Office Extension Project** – Tenders are now in, and the Estate are in the process of appointing the successful contractor. Work is likely to start early in 2017.
- b) **Staffing update** – LEADER Manager and Volunteer Coordinator posts now appointed with both officers having joined in November. Currently recruiting an Event Management Support Officer (to co-ordinate the Cairngorm Nature Festival 2017), and a TGLP Programme Manager. Forthcoming recruitment includes the TGLP Land Management Officer, TGLP Admin Support Officer, and a Digital Campaigns Officer. The restructure consultation has now closed, and responses are being considered.
- c) **Equalities** – The new set of Equality Outcomes for publication in April 2017 has been drafted and is currently being consulted with Inclusive Cairngorms.
- d) **Organisational Development Strategy 2** – ODS 2 has been drafted and will be consulted on with staff in the new year, after which we will set up workgroups to identify and implement actions to deliver the ODS2
- e) **Social Impact Pledge** – 10 young people from the two local secondary schools attended the November Planning Committee meeting as part of the Social Impact Pledge. This was very successful, and it is likely that we will repeat this every 6 months.

Grant Moir
December 2016

Board Member Update – Eleanor McIntosh

Planning Convenors Meeting 26th October 2016 – The Minister for Local Government and Housing (with responsibility for planning), Kevin Stewart spoke to the Convenors about the planning review and current performance across the country. There were discussions around fees, DPEA, land assembly, retrospective planning applications, LDP's etc.

NFUS Autumn Conference Battleby 28th October 2016 - I attended the NFUS conference on my own account. The morning speakers were Edward Mountain MSP, Chair

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Paper 1 9th December 2016

of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, and Graeme Dey MSP, Chairman of Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform Committee. The Chair's outlined their committee's current work plan for the foreseeable:-

RECC

- Forestry and Land Management Bill
- Islands Bill
- Crofting Review
- Draft budget in particular forestry planting and broadband
- CAP & IT
- Brexit

E,CC&LR -

- Climate Change specifically areas where it was considered not enough was being done and he mentioned Transport and Agriculture
- Wildlife Crime
- Reintroductions
- Deer Management
- Draft budget in particular SEPA, SNH and Marine Scotland
- Scottish Water performance
- Air Quality
- Future use of the Uplands

Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 8th November - Great event, especially when CNPA won an award in the Place Category for the Speyside Way Extension which demonstrated partnership working & innovation. A huge thank you to Gavin and Pete and their teams both current and past members.

Make it Yours – Update

Project Objectives

1. To develop materials and programmes of activity for each target audience (visitors, businesses, communities, partners, Board, and staff);
2. To deliver annual campaigns focussed on specific audiences;
3. To establish mechanisms to enable ongoing relationships with audiences to enable continued brand development.

Summary of Project Activity

Activity	Progress and Forward Look
Business Engagement	
Make it Yours Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIY information Packs • CNP pin badges 	Presentations to 126 staff from 15 businesses. Bookings ahead for December and January
Visitor Survey Infographic	Visitor Survey results promoted widely
Support Materials	
Pilot Tear-off map pads designed and printed	A pilot using a 'tear-off' map of the Park to use with visitors well received by businesses – reprint scheduled for 2017.
Visitor Marketing	
VisitScotland, CBP, and the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership developing a marketing strategy for the Cairngorms National Park.	Finalised by the end of 2016 for 'roll out' in 2017
Events attended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TravMedia Event in London • Expo Edinburgh 	CBP have benefitted from a range of contacts and is working to maximise these.
Visitor Information & Infrastructure	
Craigellachie NNR Centre at Aviemore Youth Hostel opened. Snow Roads Scenic Route – installations nearing completion. Community projects at Newtonmore and Carrbridge in development.	CBP secured funding to develop Snow Roads with local businesses and communities.
Web	
Website page on Tourism prepared to promote the visitor survey results, STEAM data, Park Brand, MIY e-Bulletin and the Communicating Cairngorms Toolkit	127 Brand Charter Holders

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Paper 1 Annex 1 9th December 2016

MIY e-bulletin	E-bulletin sent out Dec 15 and Jul 16. 149 now signed up to receive MIY e-bulletin
Seek £2.5k Gaelic Language Act Implementation funding for online <i>Gaelic as an Asset</i>	Funding acquired now to implement.