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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR INFORMATION

**Title:** CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DRAFT NATIONAL PARK PLAN

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to show members how this consultation on the draft National Park Plan fits in with our public consultations to date; explore the role of the Board during the consultation; and inform members of the arrangements which we have put in place to ensure a high level of awareness and engagement with the Park Plan.

### **Recommendations**

That the Board note the arrangements planned.

### **Executive Summary**

The forthcoming consultation on the draft Park Plan is an important opportunity to continue our discussions with key stakeholders to agree the future direction of the Park's management. It builds on the discussions we have held to date, most recently through the consultation on the draft Local Plan.

We have identified the key audiences we wish to reach through this consultation and put in place the activities necessary to engage them in the process.

The Board has an important role to play in providing leadership in the consultation and will need to provide further guidance on key policy issues relating to housing and outdoor access. It will also need to consider what the CNPA itself can contribute to implementing the Priorities for Action as part of its discussion around our Corporate Plan for 2008-11.

## CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DRAFT NATIONAL PARK PLAN– FOR INFORMATION

### Background

1. At its meeting in December 2005, the Board agreed the text of the draft Park Plan and that the formal consultation on it should last for 14 weeks, provisionally from 27<sup>th</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006.
2. The purpose of this paper is to show members how this consultation on the draft National Park Plan fits in with our public consultations to date; explore the role of the Board during the consultation; and inform members of the arrangements which we have put in place to ensure a high level of awareness and engagement with the Park Plan.

### Public Consultation to Date

3. Over the last 18 months or so, we have used the development of the Local Plan and the Park Plan to engage local people and other stakeholders about the future of the Park. Most recently, these discussions have focused on the context, policies and land allocations within the Consultative Draft of the Local Plan. As well as raising awareness about the National Park amongst local people, and the role of plans in managing change, these discussions have also produced a wealth of views to inform the Park Plan and the Local Plan.
4. These discussions with local people have supplemented an extensive engagement with other bodies and organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. These have helped to ensure that the plans we are developing have broad support and are being produced in as open and transparent way as possible.

### The Next Phases of Consultation

5. The consultation on the Consultative Draft of the Local Plan ended on 28<sup>th</sup> February. The next phase of the public engagement in future plans for the Park will begin at the start of April with the launch of the draft National Park Plan.
6. We expect the focus of the consultation to be on the 7 Priorities for Action and the emerging 5-year programmes of work to deliver them:
  - a) Conserving and Enhancing the Park's Biodiversity and Landscapes
  - b) Developing Sustainable Deer Management
  - c) Supporting Integrated Land Management
  - d) Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access
  - e) Making Housing Affordable and Sustainable
  - f) Making Tourism and Businesses Sustainable
  - g) Developing Awareness and Understanding of the Park

7. We intend the consultation to be a period of active engagement, an opportunity to develop the work programmes to deliver the 7 Priorities for Action as well as express views on our longer term vision and strategic objectives.

### **Role of the Board**

8. The Board has two distinct roles in relation to the development of the Park Plan.
9. Firstly, at a strategic level, it oversees the 5-year rolling process that culminates in Ministerial approval of the plan. In essence, the Board guides the stakeholders to a commonly agreed position, showing a Park-focused leadership. Thus, the Board agreed a draft for consultation in December 2005 and we expect to bring a final version of the Plan before the Board by the end of 2006.
10. As part of this leadership role, there are likely to be a number of issues which need further guidance from the Board to help us lead the development of the 5 year work programmes for the Priorities for Action, and the mechanisms to deliver them. At the Board in February, the Board did just this for the Priority of "Supporting Integrated Land Management". In the near future, we expect that similar guidance will be needed for some issues within "Providing high quality opportunities for outdoor access" and "Making housing affordable and sustainable". The first is the Outdoor Access Strategy and the second of these will be delivered through the Housing Action Plan, including land allocation and policies in the Local Plan.
11. Secondly, at a more operational level, the Board has to decide what the CNPA can itself deliver towards achieving the Park Plan from the resources it is allocated by Ministers. It is important therefore that Board members have the opportunity to influence the development of the work programmes for the Priorities for Action during the consultation phase itself as delivering these work programmes will be the main focus of our future Corporate Plans.
12. We envisage arranging a small number of workshops with staff in the spring to discuss the Priorities for Action within the context of our Corporate Plan for 2008-11.

### **Audiences and Objectives**

13. Our overall objective is to develop a Plan for the future of the National Park which is widely supported by key partners and opinion formers. The next stage of this process is the formal consultation. For this, we have identified the main audiences that we wish to target through the consultation, what level of engagement we expect, and how best to ensure this happens. This ranges from general awareness raising amongst the Scottish public so that they know we are seeking views and how they can be involved, through to detailed discussions with key delivery agencies.
14. Our specific objectives are:

- a) To contact identified partners and opinion formers and provide them with clear information on the proposed draft plan and an easy mechanism to contribute their views to the process ;
- b) To ensure everyone living and working in the Park has an overview of the proposed draft Park Plan, is aware of the consultation and is aware of how to get involved via the website, at 'open' meetings or directly with CNPA staff or board members; and
- c) To raise public awareness of the Park Plan consultation and invite comments/feedback via the website, at 'open' meetings or directly with CNPA staff or board members.

## Communication Tools

15. We are presenting the draft Park Plan in two documents. "Looking to 2030" contains the vision and strategic objectives; and "Priorities for Action 2007-12" outlines a work programme over the next 5 years. Alongside these two documents, we have prepared the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the State of the Park Report.
16. We have also prepared a summary version of the draft Plan, focusing on the longer term vision and the more immediate priorities.
17. We have put in place a number of activities to meet the objectives of the consultation set out above. The key features are as follows:
  - a) Advance warning to all main stakeholders about forthcoming consultation asking them how they want to engage and seeking opportunities to promote the consultation through their website and events they are holding
  - b) Briefing with staff and Board in early March
  - c) Press launch with the Minister
  - d) MSP reception
  - e) Summary of the draft Plan delivered to every house and business in the Park, and made available to visitors through main hotels, visitor attractions, TICs and ranger bases
  - f) Direct mailing of full documents to all main stakeholders
  - g) All documents available on our website
  - h) Full documents available for inspection at libraries in the Park and main urban libraries in Scotland
  - i) Possible advertising through national evening newspapers and local radio
  - j) Open offer to meet with stakeholders on their terms
  - k) Open meetings through the Park in April to June, focusing on the Priorities for Action
  - l) Workshops with interested young people from around the Park

## Monitoring

18. During the consultation we will monitor a range of inputs and outputs related to the objectives such as the number of mentions in the press, summary documents distributed, attendance at meetings and responses received. These will help us assess the level of activity but do not in themselves indicate the success or effectiveness of the consultation. That will ultimately be tested as part of the whole process when the key stakeholders are asked to endorse the final Plan, including a commitment to the work programmes for the Priorities for Action, and Ministers are invited to approve it.

## Consultation

19. We have planned the consultation jointly with the Communications Group, and have sought the input of several Board members, the Management Team, other specialist staff, and the community liaison co-ordinators.

## Policy Context

20. The completion of the Park Plan by the end of 2006 is one of the 7 priority goals within the Corporate Plan for 2005-08. It sets out the strategic direction for the Park for the next 25 years and suggests priority for action for the next 5 years.

### *Delivering Sustainability*

21. In planning the consultation, we have sought to minimise the number of full draft Plans produced given their size and short shelf life, using the website as a focus point for further information.

### *Delivering a Park for All*

22. We are intending to raise awareness of the consultation as widely as possible and provide diverse opportunities for all to be involved.

### *Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency*

23. Whilst we are seeking high levels of awareness about the consultation, we are focusing our resources on in-depth engagement with certain key stakeholders and opinion formers. Thus we have discounted some consultation options, eg open meetings in major cities, as not being the most cost-effective way to reach key audiences.

## Implications

### *Financial Implications*

24. This work is spread between two financial years. The design, publication and distribution of the consultation materials and the launch fall into 05-06; and the costs of meetings and workshops, and compilation and analysis of responses will fall into

06-07. The cost for 05-06 is covered by existing budgets, and there is £30,000 allocated within the 06-07 Operational Plan.

### *Presentational Implications*

25. The consultation is a good news story for the CNPA. It shows the culmination of several years work and provides us with a key tool to lead the development of the Park in the future.
26. We have developed the draft Plan in a very open way, involving stakeholders on numerous occasions, and have ensured that key phases have been put in the public domain through Board papers.
27. The launch of the consultation, and associated publicity, will put a spotlight on the Park at a national level, and thus provide a good opportunity for us to put across core messages about the Park.

### *Implications for Stakeholders*

28. This is an opportunity for all stakeholders to continue their engagement in planning the future of the National Park. Informal feedback suggests that they will welcome the clear vision and prioritisation that the draft provides.

### **Next Steps**

29. The consultation will take place throughout April, May and June. We expect that the Board will wish to play an active role in many of its activities, fulfilling both of the roles identified for it above. The first opportunities will be the MSP reception and press launch, and we will advise members of other opportunities as precise dates are fixed.
30. Following the consultation, we expect to present a report of the responses received to the Board in September 06. We will then put a revised Final Plan for the Board's approval later in the autumn.

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