

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 1

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Purpose

To inform the Board of the work undertaken in recent months to achieve the first theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 and to describe plans for future activity.

Recommendations

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

Executive Summary

The first theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 is:

“To enable current and future generations to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the Park in a way that fosters those qualities and supports the activities of others.”

This report has been structured around key policy areas. A brief progress report and consideration of future plans is given under the following headings:

- a) Sustainable tourism
- b) Outdoor access
- c) Ranger services
- d) Visitor information and interpretation
- e) Entry point markers and other signage
- f) John Muir Award

CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 1

Background

1. The first theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 is:

“To enable current and future generations to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the Park in a way that fosters those qualities and supports the activities of others.”
2. Delivery of the first Corporate Plan theme is primarily the responsibility of the Visitor Services and Recreation Group and the Economic and Social Development Group, although other staff also make important contributions. This report has been structured around key policy areas. A brief report of progress since July 05 and a summary of future plans is given under each heading.

Sustainable Tourism

3. The work associated with delivery of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy runs across two Corporate Plan themes. The work that is not covered under the headings below will be reported on under Corporate Plan Theme 3. In addition, an annual update on progress implementing the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan will be presented to the Board in May 06.

Outdoor Access

4. The Park Authority has been the access authority for just over one year now. Good progress has been made in fulfilling each of the four key duties:
 - a) The *Local Outdoor Access Forum* (LOAF) is now fully established and has elected its own Convener (Dick Balharry) and vice Convener (Andy Wells). The Forum has provided advice on a small number of cases and will discuss the draft Outdoor Access Strategy in early March.
 - b) A project plan for *preparation of the Core Paths Plan* will be presented to the Board in April. Strategic direction for completion of the Plan will be provided through the Outdoor Access Strategy which should be complete by autumn 06. A successful community-based pilot exercise on Core Paths Planning has taken place in Newtonmore and another, more limited exercise, is on-going in Strathdon at present. The outdoor access team of staff has recently been strengthened to by addition of a third access officer, Adam Streeter Smith who will join CNPA in early April from the Paths for All Partnership.
 - c) A considerable amount of work has gone into *publicising the new Scottish Outdoor Access Code* and promoting awareness and understanding of it. A joint programme of activity has been prepared with SNH and advice taken from both the relevant advisory Forums. Activity has included giving presentations to special interest groups (in conjunction with Land Based Business Training Scheme), placing adverts in relevant publications,

producing displays for use at events and shows and posting a copy of the Code to all accommodation providers in the Park. Further work is required to ensure that local retail outlets and other places that visitors frequent have visible material relating to the Code.

- d) The Park Authority has a duty to *uphold access rights*. Around 60 different issues have been brought to the attention of CNPA, the vast majority from recreational users. Procedures for dealing with these issues were agreed by the Board. Periodic updates on progress resolving these issues are given to the LOAF.

5. A number of specific projects relating to improving the infrastructure for outdoor access have moved forward in recent months, as summarised in the table below:

| Project | Progress report | Future plans |
|--|--|---|
| Speyside Way | CNPA contributed to interpretation in the new visitor centre at Aberlour and now provides core funding for that part of the route in the Park. | Ongoing management through Speyside Way Management Group. Review of route for multiple use where possible. |
| Proposed Speyside Way extension to Newtonmore | Board approved route extension in principle but further work to discuss route options near Aviemore is ongoing | Once a satisfactory line has been identified and stakeholders informed and consulted, SNH will take responsibility for seeking Ministerial approval. Further Board paper in September 06. |
| Upland path repair and bridges | CNPA has contributed towards Monega bridge, near Glenshee and upland path repairs at, for example, Bachnagairn | Plans for strategic review to be taken forward through Outdoor Access Strategy. Further Board paper in October 06 |
| Low ground path repair/enhancement | CNPA has contributed towards improvements to Deeside Way, Ballater Golf Course all abilities path, Glenmore off-road Route and plans for expansion of Laggan Wolftrax. | Plans for strategic review to be taken forward through Outdoor Access Strategy. Further Board paper in October 06. |
| Integrated Grants Programme strand on Outdoor Access | Various small scale maintenance works have been funded | Continuation of scheme with enhanced contribution from SNH |

6. In the medium term, the work on outdoor access will be taken forwards as one of the seven proposed Priorities for Action in the Park Plan.

Ranger Services

7. A consultant's report has been prepared to evaluate the various options for structural change to the management arrangements for ranger services. Meetings have been held with ranger service managers, Scottish Natural Heritage and with the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association to discuss the findings. A discussion session is planned with the Board before a decision paper is presented in early summer. It should be noted that the decisions to be made on this issue are not for CNPA alone and therefore an incremental process, involving further discussion with partners will be required.
8. Plans to upgrade the ranger base at Angus Glens have been delayed due to a shortfall in funding from European sources. Angus Council, as lead partner, is investigating options. A new programme of countryside events is currently at the printers for the 2006/07 season.

Visitor Information and Interpretation

9. Projects and plans for promoting CNP as a destination, developing and reinforcing a sense of place for visitors and enabling communities and organisations to communicate the special qualities of their locale in the context of the National Park are outlined in the table below:

| Project | Progress report | Future plans |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Visitor Information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Guide for 2006/07 is at printers • The special qualities of CNP are promoted in editorial space in bedroom folders distributed to accommodation providers within the National Park • New introductory leaflet with Park brand is with the designers/printers. Distribution throughout Scotland is expected in time for Easter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal review of visitor oriented publications will commence shortly for discussion with ViSIT Forum • VisitScotland are attending ViSIT Forum to discuss Sales and Information Review |
| Visitor info distribution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans are being made with Landmark Press to co-ordinate distribution. • Pilot project with branded leaflet holders is with the designers/manufacturers. Delivery of 12 holders is expected in time for Easter. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branded leaflet holders will be available at key strategic locations throughout the Park |
| Tourist Info Centre and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All TIC's will have branded panels with | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNP panels will be installed in remaining |

| Project | Progress report | Future plans |
|---|---|---|
| ranger base branding | <p>interpretation themes in situ in time for Easter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cairngorm Mountain, Glenlivet and Glen Muick ranger bases will have CNP panels installed in time for Easter | ranger bases, key visitor attractions and community notice boards as part of rolling programme |
| Integrated Grant Scheme on Interpretation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CNPA has funded a seminar which looked at the role of the arts in interpreting our natural and cultural heritage, and CCTV equipment at Loch Garten Osprey Centre | 14 other projects are at various stages concerning leaflets, panels and interpretive plans for villages |

Entry Point Markers and other signage

10. Considerable progress has been made with preparation of the 21 permanent entry point markers on non-trunk roads. Contracts have been let for landscape architects, land agents and design advice. The markers are currently being manufactured in Oldmeldrum, using granite sourced from the Park. Negotiations are ongoing with land managers and a final programme of installation will be available shortly, once the installation contractors have been appointed.
11. Work with the Scottish Executive on Phase 2, involving the four trunk road sites, is progressing. The Executive have commissioned a detailed feasibility study of the Drumochter A9 lay-by improvements. The Executive are keen to progress works at both A95, Mains of Dalvey and A86, Laggan. Forestry Commission Scotland has indicated a willingness to be involved in the upgrading of the car park at Laggan. A further Board paper reporting on progress and seeking approval for expenditure on Phase 2 is programmed for May 06.

John Muir Award

12. The John Muir Award Project has met and exceeded all of its targets for calendar year 2005 and is preparing for another very successful year in 2006.

| | 2005 - target | 2005 - actual | 2006 - target |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Awards | 600 | 831 | 1000 |
| Providers of the Award in the area | 30 | 43 | 30 active |

13. In 2005 17% of all participants were from socially excluded backgrounds. The aim for 2006 is to raise this to 25%. All of this activity involves direct outdoor experiences

and the awards are offered making a strong link between the experience and the National Park.

14. In addition, over 80 people have attended training events organised by the John Muir Award. A recent event focussed on effective conservation activities; staff from CNPA and local Ranger Services assisted in the delivery. Such events highlight the ability of the John Muir Award to create successful working partnerships. Participants come from all sectors of the community including schools, youth organisations, women's groups and socially excluded groups.
15. Future priorities for the John Muir Award include:-
 - a) Meet targets and maintain quality of award provision.
 - b) Linking into Park Plan priorities for action.

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