
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CEO REPORT

Prepared by: GRANT MOIR, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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) **Cairngorms Forest & Woodland Strategy** – An open meeting to initiate the review of the Cairngorms Forest and Woodland Framework is to be held on 15th March. The new strategy is to be completed by the end of 2017 and will provide more detailed guidance beyond the Partnership Plan on woodland expansion, management and strengthening the forest sector.
- b) **Capercaillie Framework** – A bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund is in preparation. The funding is to deliver community engagement, recreation management and habitat/species management. The timetable for submission is dependent on identifying realistic levels of match funding.
- c) **Moorland Management** – After successfully applying to the Environmental Co-operation Action Fund (ECAAF) we have been advised that the fund has been suspended for the time being. We are continuing to progress East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership but it will be more challenging without the resources we would have had through the funding.
- d) **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. Eight estates in the National Park are now in advanced stages of planning peatland restoration projects.
- e) **Deer Management** – SNH have published the review of Deer Management to Scottish Government and a series of hearings with the ECCLR Committee in the Scottish parliament will guide the Government's response. We have been following up on responses to the NPPP consultation with partners to develop our proposed approach to deer management in the National Park.
- f) **Catchment Partnerships** – A meeting is scheduled for 29th March to discuss natural flood management opportunities in the Dee Catchment. 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.

- g) **Wader management** – With the British Trust for Ornithology, we are jointly holding a workshop on 3rd March to explore the potential for better co-ordinating wading bird conservation in the National Park.
- h) **Plantlife - Cairngorms Project Officer** – With funding from LEADER and CNPA, Plantlife Scotland have now recruited Gwenda Diack who now has a role dedicated to Important Plant Area conservation in the National Park. Over the next three years she 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.
- i) **Rare Invertebrates officer** – we are awaiting the response from LEADER on 28th February for the funding for this post, which will be taking forward projects to protect rare invertebrates in the National Park.
- j) **Cairngorms Scenic photo posts** – The project is moving into the next phase. The work is being consolidated with additional posts; we have had requests from communities and land managers for new post locations. These include Balmoral, Glenlivet and the Angus Glens. An engagement strategy is being developed which will allow stronger links to other work such as Health walks.
- k) **Planning** – there are a number of large consultations on going including Dorenell Windfarm PLI and An Camas Mor. We are being asked for direct advice from Highland Council on more applications in the last year than previously. The team is also working with the forward planning team on the NPPP and LDP with policy and Natura Assessments.
- l) **Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership** – We have been recruiting the project team funded through the programme and are very pleased so far to have:
 - Programme Manager - Jackie Webley employed by CNPA
 - Land Management Officer - Lynn Cassels, employed by CNPA
 - Communications and Interpretation Officer - Elspeth Grant to be employed by the Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust.

Visitor Experience:

- a) **Long Distance Routes** – The planning application for Speyside way Extension from Ardgael to Inshriach has been submitted. Funding is agreed to replace the ‘ranger gates’ on Speyside Way between Nethy Bridge and Grantown making it more accessible to a range of users. Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) is taking forward design and planning consent for Deeside Way Extension from Braemar to Invercauld Bridge.
- b) **Mountains and People** – Repairs to mountain paths are progressing well with 30% of the work scheduled for the Cairngorms now complete. A more detailed paper forms part of today’s Board meeting. COAT is also recruiting for the second group of Cairngorms trainees.

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Paper 1 10 March 2017

- c) **Ranger Services** – The two day annual gathering of ranger services was held in Ballater in February with workshops provided by Mountains and People project, Backbone and on volunteering. A meeting was held on 1st March with ranger employers to look at the future direction of the ranger partnership.
- d) **Active Cairngorms** – Active Cairngorms Partnership is developing with input from Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Public Service Reform (Community Planning Partnerships). An application to Sustrans Community Links Fund has been made for funding to support an active travel audit of Aviemore specifically considering access to the proposed new hospital. The CNPA have now taken on the role of coordinating the Health Walk groups across CNP with support from Paths for All.
- e) **Volunteering** - Work is progressing on developing procedures for recruiting and managing volunteers, and partners have been invited to form the Volunteer Reference Group to guide and support the work.
- f) **Education and Inclusion** – We are working with Backbone and a range of partners to deliver a second 'Festival for All' at Atholl Estate on 24th September. With our direct support three teachers (Newtonmore Primary School, Aboyne Academy and Hazlehead Academy) completed a GTC accredited Teaching in Nature course to encourage them to deliver more outdoor learning.
- g) **Information and Interpretation** Work has started on the rebuild of Ballater Station Visitor Information Centre and the refurbishment of Tomintoul Museum. As part of the Year of History, Heritage and Archeology we are supporting the Association of Heritage Interpreters and Interpret Europe Conference in Inverness and we will be leading two field trips to Tomintoul and Glenlivet and Cairngorm and Glenmore. We are working with COAT and Scotways to update and reprint the popular Hill Tracks leaflet. New information has been installed in community notice boards in Newtonmore and Carrbridge. Highland Wildlife Park is finalising plans for a major refurbishment of this important attraction, and we are in discussion with Heather Centre and Landmark over opportunities provided by rebuild and Natural Retreats over improvements to CairnGorm Mountain.
- h) **Snow Roads Scenic Route** - The final installation at Tomintoul is due to be completed in March. Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) is advertising for a two year part time project officer to take forward the Scottish Enterprise funded Destination Development Project for Snow Roads. The steering group held its first meeting in February.

Rural Development:

- a) **Tourism Action Plan** – The Action Plan has been submitted to Europarc to meet the requirements of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Two Verifiers, from Spain and Latvia, are scheduled to visit at end of May and, if successful, the Charter will then be re-awarded to the CNP for the third time in Autumn.
- b) **Economic Strategy** – discussions have taken place with CBP and HIE about the implementation of the Strategy and the role of the Economic Forum. The Business

Support Group has reconvened and is taking forwards range of actions to help smaller businesses and relating to skills.

- c) **Marketing Strategy** - The Spring focus is on taking more photographs to support marketing campaigns. We are supporting the CBP stand at Expo in Glasgow. VisitScotland has arranged six familiarisation trips for overseas buyers to the Cairngorms and we are working with CBP to support these itineraries.
- d) **Make it Yours** – Our focus for 2017 remains visitor-facing staff and the short presentation continues to be popular with visitor attractions with Royal Lochnagar Distillery and RSPB Loch Garten the latest to request inputs to staff training. We are also in discussion with CBP about the opportunity to make a presentation at their spring conference. 'Tear off maps' are being reprinted and distributed again this year with the addition of 'Tread Lightly' messaging on responsible access included on the reverse side of the map.
- e) **Community Planning and Growth deals** – staff have fed into discussions about Community Planning, notably in Badenoch and Strathspey and Aberdeenshire but also contributing to discussions about proposed Growth Deal in Moray.
- f) **Local Development Plan 2020-2025** – The 'Call for Sites' for the next Local Development Plan (LDP) ended in early February 2017. More than 90 sites were suggested across the National Park for a range of uses. The planning team are reviewing the sites in preparation for a Main Issues Report (MIR) later this year. As part of this process a useful discussion took place with the Developers Forum in Grantown. The planning team have also been working with Highland Council housing staff, the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT), Albyn Housing Association and four pilot communities in Badenoch and Strathspey doing 'walk-about' with community council members to identify potential sites for community housing projects.
- g) **Development Management and Enforcement** – There have been few planning applications determined during the past three months but some significant applications have been called in, including a Section 42 application associated with An Camas Mòr and a hotel proposal at the southern entrance to Aviemore. Work has now commenced on a number of applications that were recently approved (including renovation of Ballater Station and retail units at Aviemore) and work is about to start on new nursing home in Grantown on Spey. A number of tracks developments are being investigated and proposals for enforcement will be brought back to Committee in due course.
- h) **Cairngorms Community Broadband** - The founding Directors of CCB Ltd. have continued to work with Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) and CNPA in order to take forward the proposal to implement a superfast broadband provision in the hardest to reach parts of the Park. The full CCB Board will meet for first time in March to finalise the preferred operating model prior to procurement commencing. Tender documents are being prepared over the course of March 2017 and public procurement process is programmed in April 2017. This leads into a timetable of build through winter of 2017 and spring of 2018, with the first customer connections in summer 2018.
- i) **The Tomintoul and Glenlivet Regeneration project** – The Regeneration Project won the community-led regeneration category at the annual SURF Awards in Glasgow,

with judges being particularly impressed by the strong and broad partnership overseeing the project. The Landscape Partnership is making rapid progress with the Programme Manager; Landscape Officer; and Interpretation Officer now all in place.

- j) **Building Stronger Communities Project** – All four pilot communities have now gone through the facilitated meetings stage. Draft reports have been produced and shared with all those taking part. An overall project report, including recommendations will be produced by the end of March and results will be shared through informal discussion with the Board.
- k) **Social Enterprise Summit** – a Social Enterprise Summit, targeting existing and potential social enterprises from across the National Park has been organised for March 28th in the Richmond Hall, Tomintoul. A number of social enterprise support agencies will be in attendance and a strong turnout of community representatives is also anticipated.
- l) **A9 Dualling Project** – Transport Scotland's plans for the project between Dalraddy to Slochd will be set out at public exhibitions on March 2 and 3. The preferred option for dualling a further section of the A9 between Crubenmore and Kincaig will also be set out a week later at further public events on 8 and 9 March. Staff are continuing to advise on a range of detailed issues to do with implementation. The consultations on the EIAs at Stage 3 will begin in May. Meanwhile, along with the two relevant local authorities, we are pressing for further consideration of the implications of the project for tourism and visitor management.
- m) **Mountain bike Conference and legacy event** – CBP is facilitating a new cycling group that is developing in the National Park as a legacy from this conference.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) As we finalise the NPPP we have met with RSPB, SLE, GWCT, Scottish Moorland Group, Aberdeenshire Council, Cairngorms Business Partnership, HIE, Highland Council, land owners and will shortly meet Scottish Environment LINK.
- b) Pete Crane met with Stuart Donaldson MP to update him on the Snow Roads Scenic Route and our plans for the extension of the Deeside Way. Meetings are in the diary with Kate Forbes MSP & Alexander Burnett MSP.
- c) In January we met with the new CEO of the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) Paul Cackett.
- d) Peter Argyle and I both gave evidence to the Highland Commission for Local Democracy and I gave evidence to the ECCLR committee on deer management.
- e) We are finalising an MOU with UHI about joint working between the two organisations.
- f) Peter and I will also be attending the SCNP AGM on 17th March in Stirling.

Communications:

- a) **National Park Partnership Plan & Local Development Plan** – the final draft National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) which will be brought to the Board for approval in April 2017 is being prepared and a communications plan to keep all interested stakeholders informed is in place. Once the plan is approved by Ministers we hope to launch it as well as the Snow Roads Scenic Route in May/June 2017.
- b) **Cairngorms Nature Campaign** – Alex Bayley the [Cairngorms Nature Young Presenter competition](#) winner will come up for a family holiday provided by Speyside Wildlife in April. The Cairngorms Nature Weekend will take place on 13th & 14th May 2017 with Nick Baker supporting events in Blair Atholl. A programme of around 60 events will be launched in early April to be promoted by social and local media. An application for LEADER support has also been submitted to develop a sustainable model for taking the Cairngorms Nature Weekend forward to be considered by the CLAG on 28th February.
- c) **Active Cairngorms** - *Step Count Challenge* and *Wee Walks Week* will be supported and promoted in 2017. We will agree September dates for 'Wee Walks Week' by Easter to allow promotion to start over the summer period.
- d) **Corporate Communications**
 - Digital Communications: website statistics continue to move towards our year-end target of 180,000 unique users and our 5 social media accounts have over 17,000 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 History, Heritage & Archaeology 2017* – to support the Scottish Government's 'Homecoming' years we are supporting the European Conference on Heritage Interpretation 3-6th October in Inverness. Two study tours are planned as part of this conference to Tomintoul and Glenlivet, and Cairngorm and Glenmore. We are also encouraging ranger services to run public events that celebrate the theme year.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Office Extension Project** – Tenders are now in, and the Estate are in the process of appointing the successful contractor. Although work was scheduled to start early in 2017, there has been a small delay (e.g. groundworks required to relocate BT cables), and the work is now scheduled for April/May.
- b) **Staffing update** – Event Management Support Officer (to co-ordinate the Cairngorm Nature Festival 2017), and a TGLP Programme Manager have been recruited and both appointments are now in post. We are currently recruiting the TGLP Land Management Officer and the Digital Campaigns officer. Forthcoming recruitment identified is for the TGLP Admin Support Officer.
- c) **Equalities** – The new set of Equality Outcomes for publication in April 2017 have been approved, following consultation with staff, S&RC and Inclusive Cairngorms. Gender Pay Reporting has been done, and will also be published in April, together with the mainstreaming report and update on current Equality Outcomes.

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Paper 1 10 March 2017

- d) **Organisational Development Strategy 2** – ODS 2 has been approved following consultation with staff and S&RC. We have identified officers to lead each of the 4 work streams, and are in the process of setting up the work streams, and identifying actions for the next 12 – 18 months.
- e) **Apprenticeships** – The CNPA supported apprentice, Emma Grant has completed her SVQ level 3 in business administration. She will now consolidate this qualification with continued on-the-job training. We continue to support employability events at the local schools.

Future dates for diary

- 30th March – Count for bye-election in Deeside
- Pre-election period for Local Authority elections begins on 13 April. Elections take place on 4th May. LA's will then have to nominate to Scottish Government who they would like to sit on the CNPA Board.

Grant Moir
February 2017

Board Member Update – Eleanor McIntosh

- a) **Developers Forum** - Usual lively discussion around call for site and planning performance. Reasonably good turnout but only Badenoch and Strathspey area represented. If anyone wants the note of meeting just ask.
- b) **Environmental Futures SE Link reception Holyrood** - Good networking opportunity. Main focus was poster completion promoting climate change challenges. The entries had come from college art class students and the posters on display had all been professionally reproduced and they all looked well on the night. Roseanna Cunningham and Graham Dey made speeches. Both of which focused on climate change and their support for SE Link which as a group celebrate their 30th anniversary this year.