
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: REVIEW OF CNPA LAND MANAGEMENT TRAINING SUPPORT

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Purpose

To provide a review and update on CNPA's training and communications support for land managers and consider the future direction of this support.

Recommendation

- a) **The Board acknowledge the value of continuing to provide training support to the land management sector and the role it plays alongside other support provision.**
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REVIEW OF CNPA LAND MANAGEMENT TRAINING SUPPORT – FOR INFORMATION

Strategic Context

1. The term ‘Land Management Training’ is used in this paper to cover 2 aspects of CNPA training and communication support for the land management sector in the Cairngorms National Park. The first is ‘*Rural skills training*’ where we provide funding support for ensuring best practice and high standards in rural skills, the second is “*courses, seminars and events*” where we organise gatherings to assist knowledge exchange that is of value to land managers and importance to delivering the National Park Partnership Plan.
2. Land management training is one of the mechanisms that help support the delivery of priorities across our Corporate Plan, contributing to conservation, visitor experience, skills and jobs. A ‘thriving’ land management sector is highlighted in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan (2013-2018) as being ‘vital to the management and enhancement of habitats supporting biodiversity’. As well as supporting current delivery we seek to use training to help the sector adapt management to meet future challenges and changing opportunities.
3. CNPA provides funding and logistical support to the agricultural, estate, forestry, fisheries and wider land management sector to help ensure high standards of rural skills. Training events, seminars and conferences organised by CNPA or in partnership with others help to ensure a better understanding and knowledge of issues affecting the sector. These events encourage discussion and knowledge exchange across a range of sectors around these issues. This is an important mechanism for helping and encouraging land managers to make a full and active contribution to the aims of the national Park. From the land manager’s viewpoint it is also a tangible financial benefit of being in the Park, and generates considerable good will and contacts.

The role of CNPA alongside other Partners

4. A certain amount of training provision and funding support is available to businesses and individuals through various public and private sector organisations.

Funding

5. Some funding for training is available through [Skills Development Scotland](#). This changes year to year but at present includes Individual Learning Accounts, the Employability Fund, and the Low Carbon Skills Fund. There are specific conditions attached to these, and although they may be accessible to certain businesses in the sector, they are not sector-specific and are not used by many land managers. CNPA offers direct funding for land management training which is designed to be widely applicable, available to all and easily accessible, with as few conditions and bureaucracy as possible.

Rural Skills training

6. Training in practical rural skills, much of which is Lantra-accredited, is offered by several private training companies, with the local market dominated by the machinery

rings Highland Business Services at Tore and Ringlink in Laurencekirk. These businesses employ specialist trainers and can arrange training on demand at locations in the park, and as they cover this need well, CNPA has now opted to partially fund this type of training but not to duplicate its delivery. This frees up resources to allow us to fill gaps in provision, for example organise more specialist courses and events not already on offer commercially, offer extra funding support for particularly important courses in high demand (e.g. ones responding to new legislation and regulations), or arrange for local delivery of courses by not otherwise offered in the area.

Qualifications and career progression

7. Although there are no further/higher education establishments in the Park, UHI and Aberdeen University offer a range of land management related qualifications such as game-keeping and forestry. Some industry bodies (e.g. the British Deer Society, forestry industry) have CPD schemes. CNPA does not aim to get directly involved in this type of training but is well positioned to support and promote other providers.
8. Along with stakeholders including CNPA, Lantra have recently developed a [Modern Apprenticeship in Rural Skills](#). Candidates can opt to include the new SVQ Level 2 Estate Maintenance qualification, and the SVQ Level 3 in Estate Management is due to be launched soon. We have had input to the creation of these qualifications, which have been introduced to provide a badly needed 'rural skills ladder' for estate staff to progress their careers. CNPA can play a role in promoting them in the park.

Co-ordination and Information

9. Considerable effort is being put into co-ordinating development of rural skills and improving training opportunities by the Grampian Rural Skills Partnership and the Tayside Rural Skills Partnership. The ultimate aim is to expand this approach across north east Scotland to form a 'Scottish Rural Skills Network' though this is in its early stages. CNPA is maintaining links with these initiatives, and can play a role in support their development and ensuring the park is positioned to gain maximum benefit.
10. We have also provided funding and staff support for the [Cairngorms Learning Partnership](#). Based in Kingussie, CLP currently provides a good range of 'leisure/hobby' courses and basic skills training such as food hygiene and computer skills, and has ambitious plans to establish training hubs in four other communities across the park, tailoring the training offered to local needs. Their research along with other surveys has revealed a clear need for a single, central information source and co-ordinating function for all training and related funding opportunities in the area, and if bids for Cairngorms LEADER and lottery funding this summer are successful, they will dedicate a part-time post and web-based information service to meeting this need. We will ensure that our land management training is embedded in CLPs project as it progresses.

Knowledge Exchange and Networking

11. An essential role for CNPA is to run events which provide opportunities for group discussion, peer interaction and knowledge exchange amongst land managers in the Park. Topics can be chosen to reflect the objectives of the Park Plan and to respond to pertinent issues affecting the sector, and there is a need for both open invite events and more focussed meetings gathering together key players. From 2016 CNPA will

play an important role in linking the outputs from Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme with land-based businesses managers in the Cairngorms to whom the research topics are relevant.

CNPA Land Management Training Support 2014 – 2016

12. The programme consists of two strands, a grant towards *rural skills training* arranged independently by trainees, and a series of *courses, seminars and events* organised or supported by CNPA.

Rural skills training

13. Demand for certified training in specific practical land management skills (eg Lantra-accredited courses in agriculture, forestry and estate management skills) is consistently high, and this is supported by offering a 30% cost subsidy. Trainees arrange training independently with a provider of their choice, apply for the subsidy, and if it is approved, claim the reimbursement once the training is completed. A set of conditions and eligibility criteria is in place (**Annex I**) with the aim of ensuring that the funding is allocated to businesses with meaningful involvement in land management within the Park boundary, and is distributed as fairly and widely as possible.
14. During 2014/15 there were sufficient funds in the Land Management Training budget to cover all eligible applications. In 2015/16 the budget was reduced, and was fully allocated before the end of the year, so at the end of December 2015 the scheme was suspended for the remainder of the financial year.
15. The most common courses subsidised tend to be those which are legally required for employees and the more expensive ones, and also reflect what is available reasonably locally. These include:
 - a) Chainsaw/tree felling qualifications (various levels)
 - b) Pesticide use
 - c) ATV driving, tractor driving, trailer use
 - d) Forest machinery and other plant operation
 - e) Property maintenance
16. Applications come in from a wide range of estates, farms, forestry and other contracting businesses, fisheries boards and trusts, conservation charities and individual professionals such as consultants. However, there are clearly a large number of land management businesses in the Park who are not using the scheme. Amongst those who are, there is a high rate of repeat applications, and some of the larger estates account for a large chunk of the funding.

Courses, Seminars and Events

17. The second strand of support is a series of courses and seminars organised by CNPA and/or partner organisations, on a variety of topics of interest to the sector. These are usually free of charge and open to anyone involved in land management in the CNP. A list of the courses and seminars which have run between April 2014 and March 2016 is provided in **Annex 2**.

18. The choice of topics for courses and events is flexible and responsive to issues arising and specific demand. So far the training events offered have been chosen for a range of reasons including:
- a) Need to address current issues arising in sector
 - b) Fit with CNPA policy and projects (NPPP, Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, etc.)
 - c) Joining up with courses, events and initiatives being run by partners/other organisations
 - d) Need highlighted by CNPA staff
 - e) Direct requests from land managers
 - f) Findings of Grampian and CNP Rural Skills Audit (2014) and Training in the Cairngorms National Park, Audit and Recommendations, Donald McKenzie (2012)
19. Overall there has been a good level of engagement for the events offered and so far all have had sufficient uptake to go ahead, with a number being over-subscribed.
20. Topics attracting large audiences have included sessions on Gaelic and Gaelic/Doric/Scots in the landscape (around 60 and 45 respectively), and ticks and Lyme disease (120). Other popular courses are those focusing on specialist skills which are not otherwise available locally, e.g. bridge surveying, tree inspection, sheep shearing, lambing and deer stalking qualifications.
21. Several events have been organised either in partnership with other organisations, or entirely by them, with CNPA contributing financially and/or assisting with publicity. These have the advantage of drawing in audiences from the networks of both parties, and strengthening CNPAs working relationship with partners. Examples include farm woodland and rush control events with the Soil Association, and ancient woodland restoration with the Woodland Trust.

Table 1 – Summary Training Support Delivered 2014 - 2016

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 (to date)
Rural skills training places subsidised	274	294	65 (allocated, some claimed, at 18 th May)
Number of training courses/events offered	11	13	4 (at 24 th June)
Number of attendees at courses/events	243	250	13 (at 18 th May)
Total number training places	517	546	
Expenditure on rural skills subsidy	£15,211	£16,160	
Expenditure on courses/events	£5861	£6268	
Total expenditure	£21,198*	£22,428	
Land Management Training budget allocation**	£20,000	£15,000	£19,000

- * £3500 contributions to CLP feasibility study, £1187 on press ads, £115 on Low Carbon Cairngorms website not including in total
- ** Shortfalls made up from other budgets, e.g. land management support

CNPA Land Management Training Programme for 2016/17 onwards

22. Following a brief review, a few alterations have been introduced for the current financial year to align the programme more closely with the Operational Plan.

Rural Skills Training

23. The eligibility criteria and conditions for the Rural Skills Training subsidy have been tightened up with the aim of reducing the overall spend, spreading the funding more equitably among businesses and restricting it more strictly to practical land management skills which contribute to the aims of the National Park.
24. Specifically:
- a) A firm limit has been set in our budget for total expenditure on rural skills training support – £10,000pa.
 - b) The limit payable to one business per year is £1000.
 - c) The limit payable for each individual training place is £200.
 - d) Training that is a statutory requirement for many businesses (e.g. first aid) is not eligible for CNPA funding.
 - e) Retrospective applications for training which has already taken place are not considered.

Courses, Seminars & Events

25. The scope of events has been widened to incorporate the networking, learning and discussion opportunities which were previously covered by the Land Management Forum and the Farmer's Forum. To this end there is a commitment to including at least one or two large scale, open-invite events on one or more pertinent issues each year, with the aim of attracting a large, diverse audience of land managers, NGOs, agencies and related businesses connected to conservation and land management. This will provide an essential forum for regular engagement and contact with and between members of the sector in and around the Park.
26. The format and subject matter of events will be broadened beyond 'training' to cover other types of events as they arise. Examples already on the programme for this year are the Cairngorms Nature seminar on woodland expansion (28th June) and the 'Spey Catchment Initiative – the next 5 years' review/consultation event (20th June).
27. Reflecting the National Park research strategy, we will also include events on particular topics to reflect the focus of the Scottish Government's new Strategic Research Programme, the intention being for CNPA to facilitate links between land managers and up to date, relevant research findings from the scientific research sector. We intend to partner with research institutions to bid for additional funds from the new SRP Centre for Knowledge Exchange to provide further events directly related to research outputs.
28. The current programme of events planned so far for 2016/17 is provided in **Annex 2**. The programme will continue to develop through the year.

Strategic Risk Management

29. The CNPA Strategic Risk Register includes the risk (C1) that, “Conservation partnerships, crucial to delivery of priorities across land owned by others, are not formed or sufficiently developed to deliver conservation priorities”. CNPA’s support for training for the land management community mitigates this through providing clear benefit to land managers and helping build relationships and contacts that benefit our wider delivery. The training programme provides regular lines of communication by email, phone, web and often face to face with land managers in the Park. Events and training sessions are a valuable opportunity for networking, relationship building and knowledge exchange between attendees.

Success Measures

30. Our training support is always intended to be linked to our corporate plan objectives and the NPPP. We also aim to be responsive to specific local needs. We maintain a record of the number of individuals and businesses assisted with training. At all events we ask for feedback from attendees in order to ensure we are using our resources wisely. Feedback from applicants indicates that the funding is a useful contribution to the considerable cost of staff training and appreciate the straight forward application process.

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