
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DISCUSSION

**Title: STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT AND
MONITORING CORPORATE PERFORMANCE**

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Purpose

This paper presents an update on the Authority's performance to the end of the 2015/16 financial and operational year, the end of the first year of the current Corporate Plan and the second last year of the current five-year Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan.

The paper presents any particular successes achieved over the course of the last 6 months, while highlighting by exception any significant constraints or shortcomings on planned delivery.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to

- a) **Review the update on corporate performance and strategic risk management set out in this paper.**
- b) **Highlight any achievements or exceptions which, from a strategic leadership perspective, Board members believe are of particular significance to the delivery of the Authority's strategic objectives.**

STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING CORPORATE PERFORMANCE – FOR DISCUSSION

Strategic Context

1. The Authority's Corporate Plan, http://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/CorporatePlan2015_2018Final1.pdf describes how we will contribute to the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP). The Corporate Plan also sets out how the CNPA will support the Government's central purpose: 'to focus the Government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth' and delivery of the Programme for Government. To this end, the plan highlights (page 13) that the work of the Authority makes a contribution to 9 of the Scottish Government's 16 national outcomes agreed within the National Performance Framework.
2. A corporate performance framework is required to measure the extent to which we succeed in delivering the priorities agreed in the corporate plan and make the desired contributions to wider national government strategies. The Board agreed the Authority's corporate performance framework at its meeting in December 2015. The information presented with this paper follows that agreed format.

National Park Partnership Plan

3. Much of the Authority's work is directed toward leadership and coordination of the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP). This has a twofold effect on our corporate monitoring framework: many indicators have reliance on partner activity as well as the work of the Authority; and there is inevitably some linkage between our Corporate Plan measures and those monitoring delivery of the NPPP.
4. Recognising this linkage, we have also integrated our reporting on delivery of the NPPP with our proposals for monitoring Corporate Plan delivery. There is some complication in our NPPP and Corporate Plan cycles not being the same. However, we have sought to retain historic delivery information on the NPPP indicators commencing in 2012, which are presented in Annex 2, while adopting appropriate baseline data – typically 2014 figures - on which to base assessment of our achievement of Corporate Plan priorities.

Strategic Policy Considerations

5. The Authority's Corporate Plan makes reference to our contribution to National Outcomes. In the future, there may also be references to our expected contribution to RAFE portfolio outcomes. While in most cases the corporate performance indicators do not present a direct measure of contribution to the specific outcomes, they are agreed to represent an appropriate "proxy" indicator, whereby our demonstration of achievement in a specific area of the Authority's operations is accepted as a reasonable measure of our contribution to wider national or portfolio objectives.

Strategic Risk Management

6. The Board considered and approved the new strategic risk register supporting delivery of the 2015 to 2018 Corporate Plan at its meeting in December 2015.
7. The strategic risk register has been reviewed and updated by both the Audit and Risk Committee and the Management Team since it was last considered by the Board. The current version of the strategic risk register is set out for consideration at Annex 3 to this paper.
8. The Board are invited at this point to review the draft of the Strategic Risk Register; identify any potential strategic risks not currently included; comment on the draft assessment of significance of risks identified and adequacy of proposed mitigation. Between the presentation of the strategic risk register to the Board in March and December each year, the oversight of the Strategic Risk register will be undertaken by the Audit and Risk Committee and Management Team.

Implications

9. Both the Corporate Performance Monitoring Framework and Strategic Risk Register have been developed with a view to managing and limiting the staff time resource required to support the administration of these processes, while ensuring that the processes themselves are fit for purpose in managing risk to which the Authority is exposed and measuring our success in achieving agreed corporate priorities. We are aiming to make best use of data already collected by ourselves and our partners and hence tap into existing work rather than create new, often costly, data collection processes.
10. Our strategic risk management process and practices build on existing methods already reviewed and approved by Audit and Risk Committee and internal and external audit.

11. Our risk management processes require staff to reference the agreed strategic risks in developing specific strategies and policies and tailor their plans accordingly, to both ensure these policies and strategies are not impacted by the recognised risks and also help manage these risks.
12. In taking forward actions and projects to help deliver Corporate Plan priorities, Directors and their Heads of Service are expected to ensure that operational plans and / or project plans where required are covered by more specific risk registers and risk management practices.

Success Measures

13. Implementation of an effective Corporate Performance Monitoring System is an essential component of enabling identification of success in delivery of the Board's agreed Corporate Plan. Effective risk management processes ensure that risks that may impact on success are identified, managed and / or monitored appropriately.
 14. The work in bringing these processes together therefore forms a key aspect of the Authority's strategic management processes.
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**Supporting Information:
Update on Corporate and National Park Plan Monitoring**

1. Summaries of the Authority's Corporate and National Park Plan monitoring information are presented in Annexes 1 and 2 respectively. More information on the highlights and issues arising in each area over the first half of 2015/16 is presented in this section of the paper.

Conservation

Habitat Restoration, Priority Species, Sustainable Moorland Management & Catchment Management

2. The Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group continues to keep an overview of conservation work by partners across the Park and to stimulate action where it is needed most.
3. Months of preparation paid off for the very successful Cairngorms Nature Festival held this May, with 340 Nature Art entries from local school children and dozens of events across the National Park run by rangers, volunteers and estate staff. The 3 big events this year were all 'sold-out'. (See also Communications below).
4. The 12.5% premium on Scottish Forestry Grant scheme in target areas within the National Park is encouraging more landowners to think about how they might expand their native woodland resource and help us meet the Cairngorms Nature target of an increase in 5000ha by 2018. A Cairngorms Nature Seminar on 28th June will help to address this and encourage landowners to look more into opportunities for expanding woodland in the most beneficial locations.
5. The East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership continues to progress with strong cohesion amongst the 6 estates currently involved with CNPA. The Partnership is taking forward a programme of work including the gathering of baseline information and developing plans to prioritise areas for habitat enhancement and species conservation. An application has been made to the SRDP Environmental Co-operation Action Fund planned to help resource this work.
6. CNPA has been assisting Deer Management Groups and land managers to meet the expectations of Scottish Government with regard to delivering public interest. CNPA facilitated working discussions between landowners and land managers where conflicts between neighbouring deer management policies occur.

7. The next phase of the Capercaillie Framework project is to obtain a major funding package to help with habitat and recreation management. CNPA is leading the preparation of an application to HLF with input from partners. This is a substantial piece of work that requires time to get it right.
8. The Strathspey Wetland Waders Initiative has been able to submit and monitor over 50 farm plans, encompassing over 3,000 of farmland which is managed for wading birds, as well as 862Ha of land managed as wetlands or floodplain. By working with farmers managing productive land, SWWI have gone beyond the remit of the SRDP and utilised other sources of funding for works, which have, on some sites increased the wading bird population to three times its level in 2005.
9. The Peatland Action Programme funding for our Peatland Officer Stephen Corcoran was instrumental in enabling peatland restoration to be both planned and enacted across 8 sites in the National park. Nearly 800ha of restoration with an estimated 11,500 tons of carbon emission savings per year, 1000 tons of increased storage, water quality improvements and flood alleviation, not to mention biodiversity benefits is a major result.
10. The groundwork started by the Cairngorms Wildcat Project has been rolled out in the National Wildcat Action Plan to 6 priority areas, three of which are in the National Park.
11. Work to minimise impacts from development and obtain proper compensatory conservation gains required considerable staff time. This was through advising on 82 planning application and pre-app cases as well as other major infrastructure projects including A9 dualling, Beauly to Denny transmission line and its restoration works. Improvements include new woodland planting, SUDS ponds suitable for wildlife, scrapes and other habitat for waders and new wildflower meadows
12. The Cairngorms Scenic Photo Posts Project with 14 fixed points across the National park is continuing to grow in popularity. After a successful launch at the Cairngorms Nature event in May we now have more than 130 participants contributing photograph records across all 14 posts. The project continues to attract support from SNH and FCS both putting financial contributions to the work. It has also attracted interest from other organisations, private and third sector, interested in monitoring landscape change.

13. The Dee Catchment Partnership and Spey Catchment Initiative are both developing new Catchment plans and alongside the South Esk Catchment Partnership continue to develop ground-breaking projects.

Conservation – Exception Reporting

14. There are no exception reports to raise regarding the conservation priorities within the Corporate Plan at this time, other than the pressure on staff resources from major project initiatives highlighted as an escalating risk in the risk register.

Visitor Experience

15. Detailed survey work was undertaken on the Speyside Way extension from Ardgeal to Kingussie to allow planning and funding applications to be made this year.
16. Following Storm Frank a full audit of the damage to paths and associated infrastructure was undertaken on Deeside. We are working with Aberdeenshire Council to make a case to Scottish Government for investment to reinstate the damage to the vital part of the visitor experience.
17. The HLF funded Mountains and People Project, covering both National Parks, started in summer 2015 with path improvements in the year being undertaken on Lochnagar, and Jocks Road & the Glittering Skellies paths in Angus Glens. Work will continue on mountain paths in Deeside, Angus and Highland Perthshire for next four years along with education and public engagement work.
18. 'Newtonmore Paths', the last of the 'easy read' community path leaflets was published. There are now 17 community path leaflets covering the whole of the National Park, and two leaflets on barrier free paths covering the eastern and western Cairngorms. All are available for easy download on our website.
19. New visitor facilities were opened at Abernethy Dell Wood National Nature Reserve (Nethy Bridge Visitor Centre) and Craigellachie National Nature Reserve (Aviemore Youth Hostel). Work is underway on the information and interpretation content for the rebuilt Ballater Station facility.
20. The Scenic Routes design at Corgarff was installed along with associated lay-by improvements, and planning consents obtained for the Tomintoul and Glenshee sites, with work scheduled to start on the remaining two sites in June.

21. The 13 week consultation on Cairngorm and Glenmore ended in March. Some 43 individuals responded on line, 17 NGO's, groups and agencies responded and about 50 people attended a public drop-in in Aviemore. A consultation response and revised strategy are being prepared.
22. Some 2,956 John Muir Awards were presented in 2015 including the 25,000th Award in the Cairngorms to Grace Moir by Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Dr Aileen McLeod. Some 65 young people completed five day Junior Ranger programmes and three young people went to European camps in Finland and Spain.
23. Six primary teachers started a GTC approved Teaching in Nature course funded through CNPA by Education Scotland. They will complete the course this spring.
24. We awarded 42 travel grants encouraging some 1400 people from priority groups to visit the National Park.

Visitor Experience – Exception Reporting

25. We have seen a significant downturn in volunteer activity supported by partner ranger services. We are addressing the issue by developing our own proposals to support volunteering across the National Park.
26. We have seen a slight downturn in health walk participants but anticipate that this will increase in 2016 as the Newtonmore group is re-started and the GP referral schemes start to operate.

Rural Development

27. The Make It Yours project has delivered a number of interactive sessions with visitor facing businesses to raise their knowledge and awareness of the National Park. The feedback to date has been very positive and the sessions will be rolled out to other businesses later in the year. Working in collaboration with VisitScotland and the Cairngorms Business Partnership we have also delivered successful visitor facing marketing campaigns with the spring campaign focussed on Aberdeenshire.
28. Working with partners and local business and groups in Tomintoul and Glenlivet we have completed a review of marketing and web activity for the area. We are now working together to improve collaboration to develop and deliver strong and consistent messages for the visitor and maximise marketing opportunities associated

with partner campaigns, the Landscape Partnership Bid, Snow Roads Scenic Route and more.

29. The Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership is on track for submission of bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (due 31st May 2016) to fund the 'delivery phase' of the scheme. If we succeed in our application 20 projects with a total budget of £3.6Million will go ahead in the area. The submission contains a detailed Landscape Conservation Action Plan has been prepared by the Partnership. We should know in September whether or not our HLF application is successful.
30. Strathdon launched its first Community Action Plan in May after a great deal of work over the years by the community, CNPA staff, Marr Area Partnership (MAP) and partners. Nine key priority themes were identified for the area including tourism and visitor attractions, housing, telecommunications, access infrastructure and transport, and the environment. All of the communities of place in the National Park now have a Community Action Plan in place, 20 in total. There is no Community Action Plan for the Angus Glens and it is not proposed to develop one given the low population numbers with the National Park in this area.
31. Carr-bridge community also have a new Action Plan having completed a review of their existing one in May with support from VABS. Top priorities for the community are the Struan Hotel and Housing.
32. We have provided feedback and advice to Transport Scotland to inform the A9 Dualling project which has helped to inform final route options. We have responded to three Stage 2 projects to date from Killecrankie to Pitgowan, Pitgowan to Glen Garry, and Dalwhinnie to Crubenmore. We are also working with TS on visitor experience opportunities.
33. The Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) held a meeting of the Cairngorms Economic Forum in May to review progress with delivery of the Economic Strategy and to discuss the consultation on the National Park Partnership Plan. CBP continue to deliver effective business networking events, the Business Barometer and a CNP presence at VisitScotland (VS) Expo with support from CNPA and partners. CBP have been successful in getting Growth Fund from VS with match funding from the Caledonian Sleeper and their own income streams for a £60k collaborative marketing campaign.
34. CNPA have supported the development of a Community Broadband Scotland aggregation scheme for the Cairngorms National Park. A Steering Group has now been formed and a project plan developed.

35. A separate update on the delivery of the Cairngorms LEADER programme is presented to the Board elsewhere on the agenda.

Rural Development – Exception Reporting

36. There are no exception reports to raise regarding the rural development priorities within the Corporate Plan at this time

Communications

37. Over the last 6 months considerable effort has gone into the Cairngorms Nature Campaign with a very successful Cairngorms Nature Young Presenter competition promoted across the UK in partnership with RSPB, the Cairngorms Nature Festival 2016 gaining considerable buy-in and support from the ranger services and community groups and an expected increase in visitor numbers and digital communications activity increasing our reach by 50%.
38. Active Cairngorms has launched the GP referral scheme and promoted the Health Walk initiative and will be the theme at the RAFF tent at the Royal Highland Show. A 'big walk' weekend is also being planned for September 2016 in partnership with Ramblers Scotland.
39. The 'Make it Yours' campaign has been rolled out to over 100 visitor facing staff across the Park along with the online Communicating Cairngorms toolkit for local businesses to use.
40. The National Park Partnership Plan consultation will be launched on 27th June to run until 30th September. Support materials, webpages, media and social media activity and an engagement programme have been prepared to ensure the consultation is accessible to all who have an interest in the future management of the Park. The final plan will be finalised for ministerial approval in March 2017.
41. A new website was launched in August 2015 which gives us greater flexibility to manage the site in house. Staff training has resulted in the site being much more dynamic and more responsive to our customer needs and continual monitoring of website performance allows us to continually improve the content and web-user experience. Latest statistics on our digital engagement activities shows a slight dip in performance following the launch of the new website with an expectation that we will meet or exceed the performance of the old website by August 2016. Our social media activity has grown considerably over the last year with an overall increase of around 50% across our five corporate accounts.

Communications - Exception Report

42. Following the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2016 we will need to consider how we can build a strong and positive relationship with the 28 MSPs with responsibility for the Cairngorms National Park area and the newly appointed Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers. An MSP opinion survey will be carried out in December 2016 as a benchmark of the new Scottish Parliament.

Corporate Services - Finance

43. Draft accounts for 2015/16 were submitted to Audit Scotland for external audit at the beginning of May, in line with timetable agreed by the Audit and Risk Committee. The accounts show a result which meets our target of a net income position for the year of £182,000 as agreed with Scottish Government. These accounts remain subject to final audit verification, with the Audit and Risk Committee due to consider the accounts and report on the external audit at its meeting on 1 July.
44. The Board agreed the budget for 2016/17 at its meeting in March 2016 and the Finance and Delivery Committee received their first update on the position for the current year at their meeting on 10 June.
45. Looking forward, we are likely to be developing various strategic financial planning scenarios to discuss with Finance and Delivery Committee and then Board in responding to the Scottish Government's forthcoming budget and spending review.

Finance - Exception Report

46. The uncertainty over future levels of funding from 2017/18 onwards represents the only, albeit significant, exception and high risk area within the Authority's financial KPIs.

Corporate Services – Governance

47. We have completed the current phase of Board training on the Code of Conduct, and also run an internal training session for the Finance and Delivery Committee on the role of the Committee and our financial processes.
48. We have continued to support the CLAG's incorporation as a charitable entity with the application to establish a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) currently with the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). We have also supported the design and implementation of governance arrangements supporting

COAT's The Mountains and The People project, with a Project Steering Group now in place as a full sub-committee of COAT Board.

49. The Authority has participated in a joint procurement process, led by SNH, to appoint internal auditors. As a result, BDO have now been appointed internal auditors to the Authority from 1 April 2016, replacing KPMG who undertook this service for five years. The Auditor General has also indicated that the Audit Scotland in-house team will be replaced by Grant Thornton as our external auditors with effect from the audit of the 2016/17 accounts.
50. A long running Freedom of Information request focusing on the status of correspondence with the Royal Household was resolved following a decision by the Scottish Information Commissioner on another similar case with a third party organisation. The decision notice issued by the Commissioner provided useful information and formed a precedent for the case the Authority was dealing with and the matter has now been resolved through release of information, with agreement of the Royal Household, without the need for a further decision by the Commissioner.

Governance - Exception Report

51. We reported six months ago on some weaknesses identified in the Authority's complaints handling processes. A significant amount of time has now been invested by the Head of Organisational Development in reviewing and refining these processes; in promoting the processes and heightening staff awareness; and in putting revised monitoring systems in place. This aspect of delivery remains an exception for the time being in terms of our KPIs. We now expect the operation of the complaints handling systems to meet targets and the KPI measure to meet expectations.

Human Resource Management

52. We have resolved a number of HR cases within the organisation over the last year.
53. We conducted the 2015/16 staff survey, the fourth such staff survey, which was open for staff input during October 2015 and from which results have now been received and analysed. This was the Authority's best ever result, with positive improvement seen across all eight assessment factors compared with the previous survey position two years ago, and with a result that the Authority was placed 67th within the top 100 companies participating in this year's survey. A report on the staff survey results was made to the Staffing and Recruitment Committee in January.

54. We have continued to coordinate and implement a wide range of projects toward delivery of the Organisational Development Strategy, with new staff induction and appraisal processes a significant highlight over the first half of this year. Staff consultative processes have been reviewed and amended in conjunction with staff representatives. We have also delivered a management development programme for our “middle managers” in conjunction with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NPA; as well as a leadership programme for our directors and heads of service.

Human Resource Management - Exception Reports

55. The number of staffing issues escalating to formal HR caseload under appropriate HR policies rather than capable of informal resolution has continued to be higher than we would wish.
56. We also continue to see a few stress linked causes of absence which causes an exception report as a consequence of our target of zero cases.
57. Staff turnover also has remained higher than our accepted thresholds, which has continued a pattern of staff change over the last 12 to 18 months. While as a small organisation we only need a few staff leaving the organisation to cause an exception in this KPI, the indicator does highlight some ongoing churn in staffing and consequent risk of disruption in service delivery and achieving goals.
58. Overall, the Management Team supported by HR continues to give close attention to these matters to ensure risks associated are managed and seek to identify any underlying causal factors which may need resolution. We have also reported on these matters to the Staffing and Recruitment Committee in May. The staff survey results were helpful in informing the wider morale of the organisation and suggest that the current position gives an indication of the tail end of a few more historic issues.

Cross-cutting Indicators

59. We have included two cross-cutting indicators in the corporate performance management framework through which to monitor our performance as an organisation in making a reduction in carbon emissions and hence contributing to climate change goals, and also to equalities work.
60. With regard to the carbon emissions measure, we have taken the opportunity of a new Scottish Government reporting framework to evolve our internal measures from one focused on vehicle based business travel and emissions from that to a more holistic model encompassing electricity, oil and biomass consumption. Future

development will seek to incorporate other factors such as rail and air travel into the model. The model shows a significant reduction in emissions since the adoption of the 2007/08 baseline for the Authority's original carbon management plan which is far in excess of our original 3% per annum target.

61. Our equalities indicator focuses on the work we undertake and previously highlighted as best practice on equal pay audit and analysis.
62. There are no exceptions to report at this time on the cross-cutting indicators