
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: DELIVERING THE CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE THROUGH THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

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Purpose

This paper outlines a proposed partnership approach to promote the Cairngorms National Park as a unique learning opportunity for schools through out Scotland in delivering the Curriculum for Excellence. (CforE)

Recommendations

That the Board agree that the CNPA has a lead role to work with partners to help overcome barriers and promote more outdoor learning in National Parks that links directly to the Curriculum for Excellence and other national policy.

That the Board agrees that we work with partners to develop a co-ordinated approach to education with a main emphasis on Outdoor Learning but with the flexibility to work with other specific projects that directly deliver the National Park Plan.

That the Board endorse option three as the most effective framework for the delivery of the recommendations taking into consideration the financial implications, from a CNPA and partner perspective.

Executive Summary

There is a real opportunity for Scotland's National Parks to be leading players in delivering the Curriculum for Excellence. To maximise the impact in doing this it is important to develop a broad partnership approach that focuses on educational activities that promote the aims of the Park but also fulfil the criteria of the Curriculum for Excellence, in particular outdoor learning.

This paper proposes three options for the Board to consider and asks the Board to note the possible resource implications both internally and externally.

DELIVERING THE CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE THROUGH THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK – FOR DECISION

Background

The Curriculum for Excellence

1. The Curriculum for Excellence (CforE) aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18 years. It is underpinned by the values inscribed on the mace of the Scottish Parliament - wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity. The purpose of C for E is outlined in the four capacities – to enable each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.

Outdoor Learning

2. This new more holistic approach to learning presents a genuine opportunity for Scotland's National Parks. Particularly as a focus for outdoor learning and the elements of the new curriculum that can be delivered through it. Not just for the schools whose catchment lies within the Parks, but also for schools throughout Scotland.
3. *“Traditionally outdoor learning has been a combination of adventure and environmental activities often carried on outside school hours and linked to a range of subjects, like expressive arts, environmental education, physical and social education. Outdoor learning today, and into the future is much broader integrated teaching approach which can enhance and integrate a huge range of activities across the whole curriculum - activities that connect learners with their environment.”(LTS Taking learning Outdoors 2009)*
4. In August 2006 in the “Learning and the Cairngorms National Park” Board paper we defined Education Outside the Classroom as: drawing on the special qualities of the CNP...learning that actively encourages experimental learning through direct experience of the landscape, wildlife and people of the area.
5. In Scotland there is a renewed interest in outdoor learning, at a national level through the formation of the Outdoor Learning Strategic Advisory Group (OLSAG) and a refocusing on outdoor learning by Learning and Teaching Scotland. OLSAG's objectives include:
 - a) Producing advice for schools on how to access information on the range of outdoor learning opportunities.
 - b) Developing easy to use guidance on good practice in health and safety, risk management and related child protection.
 - c) Providing advice for ministers on outdoor learning in its widest sense.
6. Outdoor learning overlaps with various other initiatives most closely with promoting the “active schools” agenda and linking into the work of Sport Scotland.
7. Within the Park Plan there are a group of actions under the Awareness and Understanding and Promoting High Quality Outdoor Access priorities for action that require a more joined up approach these include:

- a) *“Make better use of the general education sector. CforE and other mechanisms as a path to enthusing Scotland’s young people about the Cairngorms National Park and including them in its future development”*(3.I)
- b) *“Develop a range of educational resources based on the Park’s special qualities, linked to the C for E and other appropriate learning frameworks”* (4G.)
- c) *“Broaden the range of activities included in physical education strategic in schools to include outdoor activity, working with active schools co-ordinators and outdoor education teams to identify outdoor opportunities in the National park”*(5e)

8. Within the Corporate Plan it states:
“Educational resources have been developed and a variety of formal and informal Park related opportunities have been delivered”

Barriers in Engaging with National Parks

9. In the past two years two parallel pieces of work have been developed that should inform how we might best promote the Cairngorms National Park as a mechanism for delivering the Curriculum for Excellence. These are:
- a) The two-year Joint National Parks/SNH action research project **“Scotland’s National Parks and NNRs – overcoming barriers to engagement”**
The case studies for this research have included: schools, and the groups where the CNPA have identified that they would want to give particular attention to: youth groups (16-24), people with disabilities and people living on low incomes.
 - b) Work progressed with Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and Educational Authorities within the Park to use the CNP as an effective delivery mechanism for the CforE.
10. The Joint National Parks/SNH research has reaffirmed many of the barriers that schools and many other groups face when trying to engage with the outdoors. These barriers were confirmed by teachers that attended the LTS/CNPA “Cairngorms in the Curriculum” planning meeting in June 2008 and helped to create a starting point for the seminar that was held in October 2008. These identified barriers included.
- a) Diminishing education budgets: costs for transport, equipment, teacher cover, activities etc.
 - b) Teacher confidence, health and safety issues in particular too much paper work and fear of litigation.
 - c) Lack of information about the National Parks specifically aimed at schools
 - d) Lack of packaged activities within National Parks that clearly deliver the CforE.

Recommendations to Address Barriers

11. The key recommendations from the schools work coming out of the two projects overlap in places but they are as follows:
- a) National Park co-ordinating a Learning Network that brings together a range of outdoor educators (teachers, rangers, etc). The Network would promote peer support, building confidence in taking young people outdoors, sharing of best practise, make best use of existing resources that support outdoor learning (equipment, transport, facilities, residential accommodation, risk assessments)

- b) Support the Education Authorities within the Park to deliver the action plans developed through the LTS/CNPA “Cairngorms in the Curriculum” seminar (see Annex 1).
- c) Develop resources/information for schools to access the CNP more effectively.
- d) In partnership with LTS, map educational activities available within the National Parks, and make the links with the curriculum for excellence. Package these activities to make it easy for schools to use the Park for outdoor learning.
- e) Build on the success of the John Muir and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards as a way of improving engagement with groups that do not usually have the opportunity to take advantage of the Park.
- f) Develop projects that address the barriers to schools and other groups (young people, people with disabilities and those on low incomes) wanting to experience the National Park (e.g. mobile outreach bus for schools and youth groups).

Recommendation

- 12. **That the Board agree that the CNPA has a lead role to work with partners to help overcome barriers and promote more outdoor learning in National Parks that links directly to the Curriculum for Excellence and other national policy.**
- 13. Please note that if the Board agree to this recommendation it effectively rules out Option 1, continuing the ‘status quo’, presented later in this paper as we would be unable to fulfil this role without a change in our approach.
- 14. **Other areas that the Local Authorities wish to promote the “Cairngorms in the CforE” agenda are:**
 - a) Rural skills projects (based on the Breadalbane Academy model) taster training for young people on a wide range of topics: agriculture, forestry, developing businesses based on the special qualities of the National Park, environmental conservation.
 - b) Developing educational resources that support outdoor learning in the National Parks through GLOW (schools intranet) and other educational websites.

Options for Delivery

- 15. A view from the Board is sought as to what the best approach to delivering the Curriculum for Excellence through the Cairngorms National Park should be?

Option One – ‘Status Quo’

Currently the CNPA engages with schools and other education providers on a fairly “scatter gun” basis raising awareness and understanding on a range of issues that are connected to the special qualities of the Park (see Annex 2).

The CNPA have been taking the lead in resourcing various educational projects that relate to Park Plan delivery (in particular raising awareness of the priorities for action). Educational projects have been developed without consulting with the educational services to ensure they are a priority for them in delivering the

curriculum. In spite of this more informal approach many of the projects have been very well received, although there has been some disappointment when they have come to an end and not been renewed.

They include:

- The Schools Media Project, including this year's Clim-Atic project where schools are imagining the effects of climate change on their communities in 2050 and how they might adapt to these changes.
- Venison in schools project
- The moorland project.

Outdoor learning is currently delivered mainly through the very successful John Muir Award project. Now that the John Muir Award is established with outdoor learning providers in the CNP we consider that it will be possible to support the delivery of the same number of awards with a reduced input from the Award Manager. The CNPA has also supported outdoor learning through the Leader project eg wildlife gardens, pond creation, squirrel cam, outdoor classroom and Forest Schools.

In addition it is important to note that there is a great deal of outdoor education work happening in the schools that does not take place in the National Park or has little direct CNPA involvement, eg Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Forest Schools etc.

The advantage of this approach is:

- Flexibility and an ability to change emphasis on topics as and when schools or the CNPA require.
- Potential additional capacity identified in the JMA manager post could be utilised on an ad hoc basis to support complementary projects and initiatives.

The disadvantages continuing with the status quo are:

- This option does not allow CNPA to fully take on the role requested by partners in helping to overcome barriers to using the National Park for Outdoor Learning.
- The feedback from schools from the recent LTS Outdoor Learning conference is that they feel that there are too many projects on offer, from too many organisations and they find it confusing.
- Schools would prefer to have a clearer point of contact with CNPA staff.
- It is important that the CNPA focus its energies on what the National Park has to offer that is truly unique and special, rather than spread itself thinly over many subject areas.
- Time in the curriculum to deliver additional projects is at a premium particularly in secondary schools. Schools see the National Park primarily as a mechanism to get pupils outdoors connecting with the special qualities. They also see the CNPA taking the lead in consolidating and packaging educational opportunities that are already in existence rather than introducing too many new initiatives.
 - Partnership contribution is based on a project by project basis with no guarantee of on-going funding. A more strategic pooling of resources should improve impact and sustainability.
- The Parks would diminish their national profile in delivering the CforE for all the schools in Scotland by taking this route, and the ability to make impact on some of the broader outdoor learning barriers would be reduced. e.g. health and safety, teacher confidence etc.
- Using ad-hoc capacity within the JMA managers post is likely to produce less focused delivery.

Financial implications

As we will lose SNH funding support for JMA Project in December 2009 the cost implications to CNPA in retaining the status quo would be some £10,000 per annum over the next two years.

If solely engaged in JMA promotion and development it may be possible to reduce the JMA Managers post to three days per week and this would result in a net saving to CNPA of some £5,000 per annum over the next two years. However, a compulsory reduction in this permanent post is likely to present considerable challenges to staff retention and productivity. It will also be perceived by partners as CNPA 'withdrawing' from the delivery of JMA.

Option Two- Develop a co-ordinated approach that focuses solely on promoting Outdoor Learning

This option would involve narrowing the focus of our schools activity to promoting solely the Outdoor Learning agenda, ie, Building on the work of the John Muir Award, and giving more support to initiatives like Forest Schools and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

In addition, developing a pilot outreach project that would engage with schools that cover catchment areas with higher levels of deprivation (Dundee, Inverness, Aberdeen city).

There would be a focus of addressing with our partners the barriers identified in recent research that prevents schools (and other groups) engaging with the outdoors e.g. risk assessment, teacher confidence, funding, accommodation, transport etc.

The advantages of this option are;

- It keeps a clear focus on one key area: branding the National Park as an exceptional place for outdoor learning.
- Most of the overlap between the actions that the Local Authorities want to take forward (see recommendations) and the actions within the Park Plan are focussed on Outdoor Learning.
- There is real political will behind promoting outdoor learning so perhaps this narrower approach would have more sustained impact.

The disadvantages are:

- We would lose the capacity to educate young people on a wider variety of issues that are perhaps more subject based than experiential, but essential to deliver key messages about the Park.
- Projects often create new interest, excitement and good PR opportunities, and raise the profile of the CNPA and its partners, and there are certain areas that schools wish to deliver (rural skills, climate change projects) that they also see as a priority.
- The approach is based largely on experiential learning, which reduces opportunities for wider involvement by schools.

Financial Implications

Over the next two years this would result in a cost of £24 – 26,000 per annum to CNPA coming from funds available within the existing staffing and programme budgets. However, partnership support for a Learning Teaching Scotland post will also result in an additional £22,000 being directly targeted toward developing outdoor learning in the Cairngorms National Park.

Option Three- Develop an approach that works with partners to develop a co-ordinated approach to education with a main emphasis on Outdoor Learning but with the flexibility to work with other specific projects that directly deliver the National Park Plan.

This option centres on developing a more joined up approach that primarily focuses on promoting outdoor learning. It would also develop a focussed set of educational projects that **a)** help to promote outdoor learning **b)** are areas of interest that are identified by the educational authorities themselves **c)** deliver actions within the Park Plan where schools are clearly stated as a partner (links to physical education and sport).

This approach would impact on both a local and national level:

Nationally with key partners such as LLTNP, SNH, LTS, through OLSAG and Sportscotland. We would be strengthening links between the National Parks, the delivery of outdoor learning through the CforE, and collectively addressing the barriers to outdoor learning (see Para.9) that cannot be tackled locally, eg risk.

Locally through developing a Cairngorms Learning Network, that promotes outdoor learning. Supporting the delivery of the Local Authority action plans through the development of local activities/projects. Piloting activities that could be rolled out to the rest of Scotland, and marketing Scottish National Parks as a total learning package that schools find easy to use.

The advantage of this approach is:

- That we would create a clear framework with which to deliver the CforE, showcasing the National Park, that has a clear focus on delivering outdoor learning with a wide range of partners.
- We would also have much more political weight in addressing national issues with partners that prevent schools from engaging with National Parks.
- Our approach to developing educational projects would be more focussed so we can direct funding and staff time in a more effective manner.

The disadvantage of this approach is

- keeping so many partners on board in a co-ordinated fashion.

Financial Implications

Over the next two years this would result in the same costs as Option2; a cost of £24 – 26,000 per annum to CNPA coming from funds available within the existing staffing and programme budgets. However, partnership support for a Learning Teaching Scotland post will also result in an additional £22,000 being directly targeted toward developing outdoor learning in the Cairngorms National Park.

Expanding Resources to Deliver Options One, Two and Three

16. Option one would not require additional resources to deliver it, but it should be noted that delivering individual projects requires high levels of staff time, not always covered through agreed targets.
17. Options two and three would require additional resources to make impact on both a local and national level, and the proposal to do this is:
 - a) To create a post with Learning and Teaching Scotland, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the educational authorities (that cover both Parks) that helps to embed National Parks as a way of delivering the CfE (see annexe 2). Financial contribution from the CNPA would be between £10-15K (over two years) with the remainder from partners.
 - b) To build on the role of the John Muir Award manager to create a Cairngorms Learning network and expand an outreach programme (schools in Inverness, Dundee and Aberdeen) based on the success of the JMA, using the existing connections.
18. To summarise:
 - a) **Option 1** does not move us forward, make best use of CNPA resources or indeed allow us to effectively address the barriers to outdoor learning.
 - b) **Option 2** gives clear focus in outdoor learning which is a growing national priority, and something that National Parks are very well placed to deliver, but is perhaps too restrictive in delivering other projects with the schools .
 - c) **Option 3** gives us the clear focus in outdoor learning but still allows a bit more flexibility as long as it is clearly focussed to the NPP.

Recommendation

19. **That the Board agrees that we work with partners to develop a co-ordinated approach to education with a main emphasis on Outdoor Learning but with the flexibility to work with other specific projects that directly deliver the National Park Plan. (Option three)**

Delivering Sustainability

20. Focussing more on outdoor learning raises awareness and understanding about the special qualities of the Park and hopefully encourages the next generation to take on the messages of care and conservation, vital for the future management and use of the Park.

Delivering A Park for All

21. Several of the recommendations contribute to delivering a Park for All: building on the work of JMA to engage with schools that are less likely to engage with the CNP. Developing information that will enable a wider range of schools and non school groups to engage with the Park. Recommendations will provide a resource for schools not just within the Park but throughout Scotland and beyond.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

22. A more joined up partnership approach to delivering the Curriculum for Excellence through the National Park means a more streamlined targeting of resources, and less duplication of effort. It also brings together a wide range of partners who can contribute to addressing long identified barriers to outdoor learning such as

transport, teacher confidence, budgets etc. Expanding the role of the JMA manager to support learning networks and outreach builds on existing contacts and networks and avoids duplication of officer time.

Implications

Financial Implications

23. See options

Presentational Implications

24. Much of the background work that has informed this paper has been done in conjunction with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and Scottish Natural Heritage. The CNPA have been encouraged through the Parks Strategy Review to work more closely with LLTNPA where appropriate, and the development of a combined Parks post highlighting outdoor education with Learning and Teaching Scotland will raise the profile of both Parks, and increase the impact of addressing national issues collectively.

Next Steps

25. Assuming that the Board endorses option three the next steps would be to:
- a) Reframe the job description for the JMA Manager post.
 - b) Confirm final funding negotiations on the Joint Parks LTS post
 - c) Set up a monitoring group (staff and Board) to check progress.

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June 2009