

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: THE EXTENSION AND FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE SPEYSIDE WAY

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Purpose

The proposal to extend the Speyside Way from Aviemore to Newtonmore has recently received Ministerial approval and this paper sets out the main steps required to take the work forwards. This paper also highlights the outputs of a review of the management arrangements for the Speyside Way and seeks guidance that will assist in shaping the future management of the route.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Approves the Project Brief for implementing the route extension and seeks views on a potential nominee to sit on Project Board in the capacity of Users;
- b) Notes the conclusions arising from the review commissioned by CNPA of the current management arrangements; and
- c) Advises staff on any further matters that should be considered in shaping future management to the route.

Executive Summary

This paper is in two parts. The first part considers the next steps in the process whereby the Speyside Way will be extended from Aviemore to Newtonmore. CNPA has a lead role to play from this point forwards and due to the complexity of the issues and the number of partners involved, formal project management arrangements are proposed. The second part concerns the wider management arrangements and summarises the results of a review commissioned by CNPA which gives helpful pointers for the future. A wider review, led by Moray Council with the involvement of all relevant partners is ongoing and there are opportunities for the Board to advice on issues that they would like to see addressed before this work is completed.

THE EXTENSION AND FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE SPEYSIDE WAY - FOR DECISION

Background to the Proposed Extension of the Speyside Way

1. On 21 May 2009 the Minister for Environment approved, in principle, the extension of the Speyside Way from Aviemore to Newtonmore. This decision, which was in line with earlier recommendations from both SNH and CNPA, was a very important step in the long process to extend the route. CNPA is expected to take on a lead role to get the extended route in place. Further background information is provided in the attached Project Brief at **Annex I**.
2. It should also be noted that final Ministerial approval is conditional on planning permission and other necessary agreements/mechanisms being in place and on confirmation of the funding package. The planning application for the route extension will be handled by the CNPA Development Management staff in the usual way.

Project Brief

3. It is proposed to use project management arrangements to see the extension of the route completed and a Project Brief has been prepared to initiate this process (**Annex I**). At this stage it is envisaged that a number of key pieces of work would be undertaken by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust. The Trust has already demonstrated an excellent track record in this area of work that is appropriate for this high priority, strategic route.
4. It is anticipated that significant progress should be made on the main issues to be addressed by early 2010 (see Next Steps at end of the paper) so that we could report back to the Board at that stage with a progress report and proposal to commit CNPA expenditure.

Recommendation

5. **That the Board:**
 - a) **Approves the Project Brief for implementing the route extension (Annex I) and seeks views on a potential nominee to sit on Project Board in the capacity of Users.**

Background to Speyside Way Management Arrangements

6. The Board considered papers about the management arrangements for the Speyside Way at meetings on 23 September 2005 and 31 October 2008. In summary, CNPA currently contributes 100% of the shared cost of the route within the National Park (through a minute of agreement) whereby Moray Council takes the lead role in route management on behalf of all relevant parties.
7. In October 2008 the CNPA Board approved the current year's funding for the route, subject to a review being undertaken of the current management arrangements which would be used to inform decision making in future years. At that meeting the Board also noted that changes were likely to be required (particularly in light of the proposed extension) and a number of principles that

should be taken into account in the review of the Development and Management Plan. CNPA commissioned consultants (P4 Projects) to undertake the review on its behalf. The full report is available on request and the key conclusions are summarised at **Annex 2**.

8. Late in 2008 the partner organisations involved in the management the route decided that a Best Value Review should be undertaken as it was clear that, due to a number of factors (not least budget constraints), some significant changes were likely to be required. This review is being undertaken in-house, led by Moray Council. CNPA staff are participating in the Review Group and have shared the results of the CNPA- commissioned study.
9. A range of options is currently being evaluated by the Review Group and includes the following:
 - a) Option 1: Status Quo – continue with the current Minute of Agreement (modified to allow for the extension to Newtonmore)
 - b) Option 2: Development of Charitable Trust to cover the management of the whole Speyside Way
 - c) Option 3: Complete separation (i.e. each planning authority takes responsibility for all the functions associated with Speyside Way management and maintenance within its own area, as specified in the legislation)
 - d) Option 4: As Option 3 but with a pooled resource for the SW that is managed collectively by one of the partners on behalf of the others, to cover such items as:
 - i. central information provision
 - ii. delivery of marketing and interpretation strategies and visitor surveys
 - iii. coordination of major events
 - iv. contributing to national level discussions.
10. The Best Value Review is due to be complete by September 2009. Once the report is complete a paper will be taken to the full Speyside Way Management Group on which Eleanor Macintosh and Bob Grant represent CNPA. It is proposed that a further paper will be taken to CNPA Board in late October 2009.

Recommendation

11. **That the Board:**
 - a) **Notes the key conclusions arising from the review of management arrangements, commissioned by CNPA (Annex 2); and**
 - b) **Advises staff on any further matters that should be considered in shaping future management to the route.**

Consultation

12. *Proposed Route extension:* There have been three separate public consultation exercises leading up to the Minister's recent decision. There will be further opportunities for public input as a result of the planning application. The project management arrangements include consideration of communications needs with key stakeholders (**Annex 1**).

13. *Route Management arrangements:* No public consultation is planned as part of the ongoing Best Value Review but good use is being made of the Route Visitor Survey and comments previously gathered as part of Core Paths consultation.

Policy Context

14. Providing a route that encourages people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and experience the outdoor environment is a strategic objective within the National Park Plan. A specific action within the Plan is to ensure the Speyside Way is more suitable for the widest possible variety of users and this is also reflected in the Outdoor Access Strategy. Increasing the number and range of users contributes directly to the Scottish Government outcome of living longer and healthier lives and the performance indicator of increasing the proportion of adults making one or more trips to the outdoors per week.

Delivering Sustainability

15. The work proposed in the paper will contribute to a well-managed Long Distance Route which will provide a high quality facility for people to enjoy the National Park sustainably. The extended route may also be useful for helping people to travel between communities under their own steam. This will contribute to strategic objectives in the Park Plan relating to conserving/enhancing and living/working and enjoying/understanding in the Park Plan.

Delivering a Park for All

16. The work proposed in the paper will help provide a facility that caters for wide range of users, close to communities and in way that supports local businesses. The detailed design of the route extension will, as far as possible, take into account the needs of multiple users and people of all abilities.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

17. The work proposed in the paper, especially the Best Value Review, will help deliver the management of the extended route in a way that is economic, effective and efficient. The Board will have the opportunity to consider this aspect more fully once the Review is complete.

Implications

Financial Implications

18. *Proposed Route extension:* No financial commitment from CNPA is expected at this time but proposals will be prepared early in 2010 with partners.
19. *Route management arrangements:* Current financial commitments are in place up until April 2010. A further paper will be tabled once the Best Value Review is complete, probably in late October 2009.

Presentational Implications

20. *Proposed Route extension:* The extension to Newtonmore is very likely to be popular with recreational users and communities in the area. Some land managers directly affected by the proposed extension are likely to be resistant and it is possible that use of CNPA powers may be required at some stage if negotiations are not fruitful.
21. *Route management arrangements:* The Best Value Review is an endeavour to get the most out of the Route for our funding and in this respect all of the presentational messages should be positive.

Implications for Stakeholders

22. *Proposed Route extension:* Key stakeholders have been identified in the Project Brief (**Annex I**) in the project management arrangements and the project will be managed in way that keep them satisfied, as far as practically possible.
23. *Route management arrangements:* Once the findings of the Review have worked through into practice the aspiration is to see better value for money i.e. better outcomes for stakeholders and/or lower costs.

Next Steps

24. Proposed Route extension:
 - a) put in place appropriate project management arrangements;
 - b) negotiate with COAT to lead on the specification for the route, development of a funding package and preparation of a planning application;
 - c) seeking advice from Local Outdoor Access Forum; and
 - d) commencement of negotiations with land managers.

25. Route management arrangements:
- a) completion of Best Value Review (led by Moray Council);
 - b) CNPA consideration of recommendations from above review and agreement of future funding arrangements from 1 April 2010.

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Annex I: Project Brief

Project

Extending the Speyside Way from Aviemore to Newtonmore

Background

1. There has been a long held aspiration of the communities in Badenoch and Strathspey to extend the Speyside Way south from Aviemore to Newtonmore. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) are empowered in legislation to draw up proposals for official Long Distance Routes and to seek approval from Ministers for new, or significant changes to existing, Long Distance Routes.
2. The CNPA Board gave support for the extension of the Speyside Way, in principle, at a meeting in September 2005, subject to outstanding issues being resolved. In December 2006, following two public consultation exercises about the various route options, CNPA agreed to advise SNH on the line of the route. SNH then undertook a further public consultation and prepared a report which was submitted to the Environment Minister in January 2009. Approval in principle was given by the Minister in May 2009, subject to satisfactory completion of the planning and path order processes. The Minister's approval is for the route option favoured by both CNPA and SNH.

Project Definition

3. This Project Brief highlights who has responsibility for each component of delivery and how the extension will be implemented. The Project will contribute to the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Plan by providing an extended Speyside Way. The **Aim** of this Project is:

To extend the Speyside Way from Aviemore to Newtonmore, providing a new section of path that meets the needs of both residents and visitors for both recreation and travelling between communities.

Objectives

4. The Project Objectives are:
 - a) The construction of the route extension will commence in spring 2011.
 - b) The standard of the route extension will be suitable for a wide range of users and will be barrier-free as far as is practicable.
 - c) On completion, the route extension will have an agreed long-term management and maintenance programme in place.
 - d) The route extension will be marketed and promoted as part of the Speyside Way to encourage use by both residents and visitors.

Organisation

5. The key roles and responsibilities involved in delivering this Project are shown in the table below.

Stakeholder	Responsibility
<p>Project Sponsor CNPA Board</p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Agreeing to take forward the Project; b) Agreeing CNPA funding contribution; c) Resolving any issues taken forward by the Senior Responsible Owner.
<p>Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) Murray Ferguson</p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The success of the project; b) Being sure there is a valid business case at the start and as the project progresses; c) The direction and progress of the project; d) Supporting the Project Manager and finding the resources needed; e) Signing off project documents; f) Making sure that the work of the Project is fit for purpose; g) Reporting to the Project Sponsor.
<p>Project Manager Bob Grant</p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Managing the Project day-to-day. b) Planning, monitoring and controlling the work. c) Reporting progress through Highlight Reports. d) Making sure the Project's products are delivered.
<p>Supplier Dougie Baird, COAT</p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Agreeing objectives for specialist activities; b) Ensuring supplier resources are made available; c) Approving product descriptions for specialist products; d) Undertaking tendering processes and resolves supplier requirements and priority conflicts; e) Contributing opinions on proposed changes; f) Briefing non-technical management.
<p>User To be determined</p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensuring desired project outcome is specified; b) Promoting and maintains focus on the desired project outcome; c) Ensuring user resources are made available; d) Approving product descriptions for user related projects; e) Resolving users requirements and priority conflicts; f) Contributing opinions on proposed changes g) Briefing and advises user management.
<p>Project Support To be determined</p>	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Administration of Project Board meetings; b) Maintaining files and document control; c) Collecting and collating actual and forecasts

Scope

6. Project is complete when the route extension is in place, launched and a long-term management and maintenance programme is in place as part of the Speyside Way.

Key Deliverables

7. The key outputs of this Project will be:
 - a) A path specification agreed and funding package secured;
 - b) Planning permission granted;
 - c) Owners' permission, Path Agreements or Path Orders in place as required;
 - d) Route construction complete to agreed specification;
 - e) Future management and maintenance in place;
 - f) Route officially opened and marketing and promotion plan in place;
 - g) Project Review Report completed.

Exclusions

8. Exclusions are as follows:
 - a) This Project will only consider tasks associated with the extension of the current route and not over any other sections of the route.
 - b) The Best Value Review (led by Moray Council and planned for completion in September 2009) will not impact on the construction phase of this project but will influence ongoing management programmes.
 - c) This Project will be developed discretely from other path developments in the rest of the National Park.

Constraints

9. The following constraints on the Project exist:
- a) The quality of the route is the key constraint on this project. To meet the requirements of the Outdoor Access Strategy for low ground paths, it must be constructed to a standard that permits use by wide range of people with minimal barriers that will ensure the route will be used by as wide a range of users as possible.
 - b) Availability of funding sources may require the Project timeframe to be extended to ensure the quality of the route delivered meets the aim of the project.

Project Controls

10. The Project will be subject to the following controls:
- a) Monthly Highlight Reports to the Project Board.
 - b) Exception Reports to the Project Board where an issue arises that cannot be resolved directly by the Project Manager.
 - c) Regular checkpoint meetings with relevant team members working on the project.
 - d) Monthly report from COAT to Project Manager to inform highlight report.
 - e) Project Review.

Communications Plan

11. A Stakeholder Analysis was carried out and used to develop a communications plan for the Project. The table below identifies the key stakeholder groups with an interest in this Project, what their interest are, the information they require and how this will be communicated.

Stakeholder	Interest in the Project	Information required and method of communication
CNPA Board (Project Sponsor)	Effective delivery of the Project.	Board Papers required seeking approval to proceed and fund. Updates on progress with developing the Project will be required through the life of the Project.
Project Board and Project Manager	Ensuring that the Project has adequate resources and is successfully delivered.	Thorough project planning and good communication. Highlight Reports will be produced on a monthly basis to provide a Project progress report.
Land owners and tenants	Works required to be undertaken on their ground.	Initial contact needs to be made at outset of Project and detailed discussions on land management issues and timings agreed. Early one to one meetings offered to develop good working relationships and encourage effective dialogue. Regular updates on progress will be given and any changes to project timeline will be subject to negotiation.

Stakeholder	Interest in the Project	Information required and method of communication
Statutory Agencies (e.g. SNH & SEPA)	Will be statutory consultees during the planning process.	Pre-planning application meetings required to ensure clarity over what is required regarding natural heritage and water interests.
Community Councils	Have been keen to see the route extended.	Information letter required explaining the process that will be followed and regular updates on progress through the development phase of works.
Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust	Will play a pivotal role in the development of the project.	Initiation meeting required to ensure common understanding of roles and checkpoints meetings required to ensure project is on track.
Speyside Way Management Group (Moray & Highland Councils, SNH and CNPA)	Advise Moray Council as managing agent on matters affecting the existing route. Parties are also potential co-funders of the extension.	Speyside Way Management Group can helpfully advise on funding sources, assist in development of funding packages and maintain wider connections with relevant stakeholders. Updates will be required for each meeting of the SWMG and copied into monthly highlight reports.
Potential objectors (land owners and residents)	Have been opposed to the route following the Wade Road.	Need to offer initial contact as soon as the project plan is agreed to clarify any outstanding issues and ascertain whether or not they plan to sustain their objection. Need to be kept informed and updated on any changes to the project.
Residents along the route	Diverse opinions on the proposal.	Information letter required explaining the process that will be followed and regular updates on progress through the development phase of works.
Media	Interested in any developments within the National Park	Press releases required at key stages of the developments e.g. project approval, planning permission approval, path agreement / order agreed, work commencement, key section completions and overall completion and opening.
Funders	Critical to the route being constructed.	Funding bids tailored to key outcomes required for each funding source. Regular progress reports with clear funding audit trail. Publicity required to demonstrate value added by each funder.

Stakeholder	Interest in the Project	Information required and method of communication
Local Outdoor Access Forum	Will provide advice on access and sound knowledge of recreational, community and land management interests.	Regular updates required with advice sought at critical project milestones.
CNPA Staff Groups (Communications, Natural Heritage, etc)	Role to play in providing advice and guidance throughout the life of the Project.	Regular updates on progress and early warning to allow adequate resource planning within each section.
Planning and Development Management staff	Responsible for considering the need for call-in of application and, if necessary, advising Planning Committee.	No specific communication needs as planning application will be handled in the usual way.
General public	Many people were engaged in the rounds of public consultation and were generally very supportive of the proposed extension.	Press releases required at key stages of the development. Set up an update page on this topic on the CNPA website.

Outline Case

12. The Outline Case for this Project was laid out in a paper to the CNPA Board on 23 September 2005 at which the principle for the extension was approved. The proposed line for the route was included in CNPA's advice to SNH in the paper of 1 December 2006.

Customer's Quality Expectations

13. The customer of this project is the public who will use this route. The route must therefore meet their needs and aspirations by ensuring that the route provides for multi-use, barrier free, ensuring a high quality experience. There is some tolerance within the project towards slippage in time if funding needs to be secured over a longer timeframe to ensure quality expectations are met.

Acceptance Criteria

14. The project outputs will be logged in the quality log which will show who has lead responsibility for signing-off completion of each output. The Project Board will be asked to approve the quality log including the individual identified as having responsibility to sign-off satisfactory completion of each output.

Known Risks

15. The following potential risks to successful delivery of the project have been identified and logged in the Risk Register to be managed as the Project develops:

- a) Path specification not fit for purpose
- b) Planning permission refused
- c) Planning permission delayed
- d) Funding insufficient or refused
- e) Detailed Ministerial approval not granted
- f) Unacceptable planning conditions imposed
- g) Refusal of owner's permission or not reaching a path agreement
- h) Protracted negotiations with owners
- i) Path order objections
- j) Protracted negotiations on path orders and subsequent local inquiry providing uncertainty for funders
- k) Ministerial decision on Local Inquiry favours objector
- l) Exceeding budget for legal advice
- m) Route not constructed to agreed specification
- n) Other partners do not "buy-in" to a shared responsibility for funding on-going maintenance.
- o) Delays in opening of route
- p) Funding applications refused
- q) Relevant financial information incomplete or inadequate for purposes of audit

Cairngorms National Park Authority, June 2009

Annex 2:

Summary of Review of Management Arrangements, Commissioned by CNPA

1. A review of the Management of the Speyside Way within the Cairngorms National Park was carried out during Spring 2009 by P4 Projects (Andrea Partridge).
2. The purpose of this review was to explore the most effective options for delivering a high quality long distance route that offers both value for money and meets the needs of all potential users. There were two aspects to the review:
 - a) Examine the tasks currently undertaken by Moray Council (eg. promotion and marketing) and the costs of providing this service and, where possible, separately identify the costs that are associated with the management of the whole route and that part within the Cairngorms National Park;
 - b) Propose costed options for management models of the route within the National Park, highlighting both advantages and disadvantages of both.
3. In relation to part a) the main conclusions drawn are:
 - a) The route has been managed by The Moray Council and partners for a considerable period of time, giving a consistency of management approach along the whole length of the route.
 - b) The route would benefit from revision of the Development and Management Plan (DMP) in the light of the revised national standards and a refreshed assessment of priorities so that improvements can be planned appropriately. The revised DMP should have specific and measurable targets to assist in monitoring of progress;
 - c) The overall management approach on the route seems to focus on day-to-day maintenance of the path and the overall route management costs seem high for such basic provision;
 - d) In addition to the above point, the returns received within the National Park seem low when compared to the inputs from the Park Authority – especially with regard to certain themes such as ranger activity, interpretation, and provision of visitor information;
 - e) For a long, linear route the benefits of locating so much of the interpretation and staff resource in one location is questionable and it may be worthwhile examining whether this function can be delivered more effectively through working through a number of information and interpretation centres that are already in place along the route;
 - f) There is significant local demand for improvements to the route to make it more suitable for a wider range of users – such changes are entirely in line with national policy for LDRs.
4. In relation to part b) a number of options were considered in terms of advantages and disadvantages. This material is currently being fed into the ongoing Best Value Review which is being led by Moray Council.

Ends