
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: CAIRNGORMS OUTDOOR ACCESS TRUST – AN UPDATE ON WHAT HAS BEEN DELIVERED IN THE FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION AND PROGRESS IN THE CURRENT TWO YEAR PROGRAMME.

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Purpose

This paper details the funds secured and the work achieved in the first operational year of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust and highlights progress towards meeting the targets in the current two year programme that ends in March 2011.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a. Notes the programme of work completed in the first year and the funds secured; and
- a) Notes progress towards delivering the current business programme.

Executive Summary

The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust was created in April 2008 and was modelled on the successful Upper Deeside Access Trust. The new Trust has proved to be successful in both delivering work and securing funding. Work in the first year has seen significant projects completed and significant progress is being made with the current two year business programme.

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Background

1. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust came into effect in April 2008 and has a remit to deliver a wide range of projects related to outdoor access. The establishment of a Park-wide Trust is a priority action within the National Park Plan. The Trust has a Board of six Directors with David Cameron and Dave Fallows filling the CNPA seats on the Board. The Chair of the Trust is now Peter Ord who has succeeded Pat Chalmers.
2. The CNPA contribution to the first year's Business Plan was approved at the Board meeting on 16 May 2008.

2008 /09 funding and achievements

3. The first year of the Trust was recognised by all funders as one where reputations need to be gained in delivery and projects developed for future years. The CNPA Board approved a contribution of £150,000 towards an overall operation cost of £227,500. The CNPA contribution represented 66% of the overall costs.
4. The Trust Manager, staff and Board have worked to progress additional funding sources and projects in the year and it is notable that the final sum secured by the end of the first financial year of operation was £340,000. This has resulted in CNPA share of funding dropping to 44% of costs.
5. A number of specific projects were completed in year and these are highlighted below.
 - a) Gynack Bridge, Kingussie – a replacement bridge was constructed and installed with improved access to the bridge also being undertaken. The bridge provides an important link within the community and was opened by Roseanna Cunningham, Minister for Environment.
 - b) Strathdon school path – the new path linking the community of Strathdon to the schools was completed and attracted both Climate Challenge and LEADER funding.
 - c) Inveruglas path near Insh – repairs to an existing popular path that forms part of the Badenoch Way have been completed.
 - d) Deeside Way – work has been undertaken on improvements to the route on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council.
 - e) Health walks have expanded into Strathdon and COAT has worked with Alzheimers Scotland to produce walks for people who suffer specifically from this condition.

2009 – 2011 Business Plan - progress to date

6. At the meeting of 31 October 2008 the CNPA Board approved funding towards the two year Business Plan. The work of the Trust follows into four broad headings and these are:
 - a) Path networks around communities;
 - b) Mountain paths and strategic routes;
 - c) Associated visitor infrastructure; and
 - d) Health and well being.
7. To help deliver this the CNPA Board approved a contribution of £150,000 each year with the possibility of further funds of £30,000 and £35,000 in each year being made available for specific projects if they could be match funded by partners. This contribution was towards the planned overall costs of £1,270,000.
8. Other funding to date has been secured from LEADER (both Cairngorm and Rural Aberdeenshire), SNH, Aberdeenshire and Angus Councils, Paths to Health and HIE with grant applications submitted for European Regional Development Funding. Whilst COAT was successful in securing funding from the Climate Challenge Fund for an individual path project they were turned down for Climate Challenge Funding towards the overall package of developing path networks in and around communities.

Path networks around communities

9. COAT and Park Authority staff have prioritised a number of core paths that require repair and build. This will ensure that the vast majority of communities in the National Park will see local improvements. Funding required to deliver this aspect of the programme will be £400,000 and has been secured.

Mountain paths and strategic routes

10. Two workshops have been held with land managers and interested parties which has resulted in list of paths that require urgent repair. Path surveys have been completed on all these paths and funding application to HLF will be made shortly for what is likely to be a four year project. Discussions have taken place with land owners to secure long term maintenance.
11. COAT have been contracted by Aberdeenshire Council to undertake work on the Deeside Way and it is envisaged that they are likely to take the lead responsibility on delivering the construction element of the Speyside Way extension (subject to Board approval of the Project Brief).

Associated visitor infrastructure

12. Provision of high quality infrastructure – such as car park improvements, countryside furniture, sign posting and interpretation boards – is a powerful visitor management tool. There is a good deal of this type of infrastructure across the National Park, though standards vary markedly. Generic standards for these areas of work will be developed by CNPA and COAT staff and along with key stakeholders.

Health and well being

13. Funding has been secured to expand the current provision for health walks in Badenoch and Strathspey to reach other communities as well as continuing the schemes operating in Deeside and Donside. In addition, walks for more specifically targeted groups will be addressed such as weight loss, diabetes, blood pressure and

'Surestart' – an initiative targeted at supporting social inclusion through a positive start in young people's lives.

Conclusions

14. The Trust has made a very good start and has pulled in funding from a variety of sources. Good quality work has been completed and they are starting to build a reputation for delivery. Works planned in the current Business Plan will continue to enhance that reputation. Challenges in relation to public sector funding do lie ahead and it will therefore be vital that value for money continues to be demonstrated.

Next Steps

15. Work has already started on developing a Business Plan for the period beyond 2011 and it is likely to be a 3 year plan subject to all the necessary funding streams being available.

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