

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

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**FOR INFORMATION**

**Title: CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 2**

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(with input by Group members and LEADER programme manager)**

**Purpose**

To inform the Board of our work to achieve the second strategic theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08.

**Recommendations**

- a) That the Board note the progress and plans for achieving the second theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08.

**Executive Summary**

The second theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 reads:

“To promote sustainable resource, land and water management; and to protect and enhance our wildlife and landscapes”

The main areas of work reported on are:

- a) Establishing the delivery mechanisms with partners for delivering the Priorities for Action in the National Park Plan;
  - b) Influencing the evolving Scottish Rural Development Programme and its delivery;
  - c) Projects related to Sustainable Land Management/Climate Change;
  - d) Support for range of specific biodiversity projects;
  - e) Development of an outcome-based land management agreement.
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## CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 2 – FOR INFORMATION

### Background

1. Main areas of work reported under this theme:
  - a) Establishing the delivery mechanisms with partners for delivering the Priorities for Action in the National Park Plan;
  - b) Influencing the evolving Scottish Rural Development Programme and its delivery;
  - c) Projects related to Sustainable Land Management/Climate Change;
  - d) Support for range of specific biodiversity projects;
  - e) Development of an outcome-based land management agreement.

### National Park Plan Priority for Action Delivery Teams

2. Delivery teams, lead by the CNPA and comprising a number of other delivery partners, have been established to drive forward the delivery of the Priorities for Action in the National Park Plan. Three are particularly relevant to this paper:
  - a) Conserving and enhancing biodiversity and landscapes;
  - b) Supporting sustainable Deer Management;
  - c) Integrating public support for land management.

### *Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes*

3. The Delivery Team has been set up with representatives from the Local Authorities, FCS, SNH, Scottish Executive, SEPA, and RSPB. A draft Action plan has been developed and passed on to colleagues in the team to initiate discussion on budget priorities for next year and for comment at the first meeting scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

### *Supporting Sustainable Deer Management*

4. No new delivery team has been set up to deliver this priority for action. Instead, existing deer management structures will be used. These existing structures are 1) regional Joint Working Committees, 2) Deer Management Groups and 3) the Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group. Agencies have established two regional Joint Working Committees covering the CNP. These committees comprise representatives from DCS, FCS, SEERAD, SNH and CNPA. Their remit is to deliver favourable condition status on all designated sites where there are adverse grazing and trampling impacts. The wide extent of designations within the CNP, and the nature of deer movements within and between those designations, is likely to ensure that most significant deer populations within the CNP will be examined in relation to their impacts on the natural heritage. Where adverse grazing and trampling impacts exist, agencies can use incentives and regulation to prevent damage and/ or enhance sites.
5. There are 7 Deer Management Groups (DMGs) within the CNP. These are well established, voluntary structures which allow deer managers to discuss collaborative

management issues and which deliver culls. These groups meet once or twice yearly and CNPA attend whenever possible.

6. The Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group (CDAG) was set up to advise CNPA on deer matters and to provide a forum for information exchange between different deer management interests. It meets 3 times annually and discusses strategic issues affecting deer management in the Cairngorms. CNPA provides the secretariat for this group and provides significant input.
7. Collectively, Joint Working Committees, DMGs and CDAG should deliver the priority for action.

### *Integrating Public Support for Land Management*

8. The Internal Co-ordination Team has met and work has been mainly focussed on the first action within this priority:
  - a) "Identify the various public benefits that are priorities in the National Park and tailor public support mechanisms to deliver them."
9. This action is deemed to be an early priority in order to develop an initial list of public benefits priorities in time to feed into the developing implementation of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). The SRDP implementation process will involve the regionalisation of national priorities that will act as a basis for assessment of applications under Tier 3 – Rural Development Contracts (see update in section on SRDP below). This list of priorities for the National Park will draw on work done so far as part of the National Park Plan (NPP) process.
10. The initial membership of the Delivery Team for this Priority for Action will comprise the members of the three Regional Project Assessment Committees (RPACs) that will cover the National Park. This will ensure that NPP priorities are reflected in the selection of the regional priorities for the three areas. Indeed in practical terms, this group will represent the RPAC for the National Park *if* the area had been considered as one region. This is a pragmatic and workable resolution to the issue of fragmentation given the membership of the three RPACs will initially comprise our partners in the 'On the Ground' group of public bodies, namely SNH, Scottish Executive Rural Payments and Inspectorate Directorate (SERPID – formally known as SEERAD).
11. As time goes on it is intended to widen that membership to other stakeholders and so provide a mechanism to update and refine the public benefits priorities as well as focussing on the other actions, especially 6.2.1f) "Establish an effective advisory mechanism to support land managers to deliver priority public benefits". Action on this may include an 'outreach' service, (see below) as well as tailored advice and support from partners and training through the development of the Land based Business Training Project (please refer Paper 3). The LBBTP represents an effective mechanism to give land managers and other rural business and relevant advice and training to enable the development of high quality applications for RDCs or the new LEADER programme.

## Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP)

12. The latest update from the Scottish Executive which gives a summary of the stage the process is attached to this paper as Annex 1. The main points to note are:
- a) *Five key outcomes* for the programme; improving business viability, enhancing biodiversity and landscape, improving water quality, tackling climate change and supporting thriving rural communities.
  - b) *Delayed submission* of the SRDP means 31 October 2007 is no longer being used as the planning deadline for delivery of the SRDP
  - c) *The budget* for the new programme will be approximately £1.6 billion with the majority of the funding, around 70%, coming from the Scottish Government. The balance of the funding will come from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and voluntary modulation (13.2% of budget). The Cabinet Secretary has announced that the new rates of voluntary modulation are 5% in 2007, 8% in 2008, 8.5% in 2009 and 9% in each year from 2010 to 2012
  - d) *Tier 1* is the *Single Farm Payment* – Farmers and crofters are eligible for SFPS if they received payments under any of the direct support schemes in calendar years 2000, 2001, or 2002.
  - e) *Tier 2* is now called *Rural Development Contracts (RDCs) - Land Managers' Options (LMOs)* this element of the new Programme was piloted as LMC Menu Scheme and the principal difference between the Menu Scheme and LMOs will be the expanded list of available options. LMOs will be aligned with the Single Application Form (SAF) and applications submitted by 15 May 2008.
  - f) *Tier 3* is now *Rural Development Contracts (RDCs) - Rural Priorities*. Rural Priorities brings together a range of formerly separate support schemes including those covering the farming, forestry and primary processing sectors. This tier is competitive and only proposals considered best able to help deliver the priority outcomes set for a region will receive funding.
  - g) *Tier 4* is *New LEADER*. The Minister issued the first call for expressions of interest in the new Programme on 22nd June from possible Partnership areas. All rural areas in Scotland are eligible to apply, whether or not they had a LEADER Programme in the past. The aim is to have areas selected and ready to operate as soon as the SRDP is approved by Europe. Now that the National Park has been recognised as an area for LEADER funding an initial planning meeting has already taken place with Partners in the Park. A brief submission will be made by this Partnership to SERPID by the deadline of 22nd August. New LEADER will provide community based funding but will also be targeted at land based activities for the wider benefit and the new Partnership will involve community members, agencies, community planning partnerships from the "On the Ground" areas, rural development officers (RPAC areas) and representatives from all land based activities. The final New LEADER Strategy & Business Plan required by October 2007 will incorporate the priorities of the Regional Project Assessment Committees.

- h) *Support* through RDCs - Rural Priorities and New LEADER will be available to land managers *and* other rural businesses and community groups

### **NPAs and Delivery of SRDP**

13. The National Park Authorities are actively contributing to the development of the Implementation Programme for the delivery of competitive "Tier 3 or Rural Development Contracts (RDCs)" under the SRDP. The development process is being led by the new 'On the Ground' initiative which is aimed at maximising effective and collaborative working between Scottish Executive, SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland and other SE Non Departmental Public Bodies. The boundaries of the 'On the Ground' regions are shown on the map in Annex 2.
14. So far, we have been able to influence the programme with respect to the role of the NPAs to ensure the integrated delivery of National Park Plan priority actions within the framework of the SRDP. As part of that process we now have agreement that NPAs can have membership of the RPACs for development of regional priorities and consideration of applications from within the National Park areas. As mentioned above we are also working on the delivery of the actions within the Priority for Action on 'Integrating Public Support for Land Management' to ensure that National Park priorities are embedded in the formation of regional priorities that will form the context for assessment of applications.
15. We also wish to ensure that these priorities are promoted and delivered consistently across each National Park and are currently in negotiations with SERPID to consider piloting an approach within the Cairngorms National Park that will provide an 'outreach' service to ensure that land managers, rural business and communities know what support is available and how to get it, and also to initiate applications that will deliver key actions within the National Park Plan. These discussions are at an early stage but there will be an update on the developments in a full information paper at the next board meeting in October.
16. As part of the process of developing implementation of the SRDP within the National Park and delivery of NPP actions, we intend to develop a strong coordination between New LEADER and Tier 3 (RDCs). The New LEADER Partnership has to incorporate the many interests of the Land Based sector, therefore with a view to co-operation and integration it would be best use of time and resources to integrate the needs of both in one Partnership group. Perhaps creating sub groups to address the specific issues of area development and recognising that many of those involved in the New LEADER will also be involved in the new Rural Development Contracts. This work is in progress and will be reported on in more detail in October when the work to produce the New LEADER Partnership Strategy & Business Plan is complete.

### **Sustainable Land Management**

17. The development of the partnership with the Macaulay Institute is continuing successfully and will not only deliver the baseline report on the carbon footprint of the National Park (currently in draft form), but will also act as a mechanism for knowledge transfer on current research being done on sustainable use of resources by developing demonstration sites to promote sustainable land management. The Carbon Footprint Baseline Report will form one of the monitoring indicators for delivery of action on climate change through the delivery of NPP, but is also being used to develop a scrutiny methodology for work now being done on the 'Sustainability Fund' following approval at the last board meeting. Progress on the 'Sustainability Fund' will be reported to the Board in October.
18. Following on from the April Board paper on Climate change, negotiations have been continuing with regard to the opportunities for the Cairngorms National Park by being part of the 'Clim-ATIC' Project. This project is being led by The Centre for Mountain Studies (UHI) in Perth and is a multi-partner strategic project, currently being developed as a bid to the European Commission's Northern Periphery Programme (NPP). The proposal for a main project will be submitted to the NPP in October 2007.
19. "The Clim-ATIC project will explore the potential for rural peripheral communities to adapt to the likely direct and indirect impacts of climate change. Community stakeholders from five regions across the Northern Periphery will work in partnership with regional public sector and academic partners to build local adaptation capacity and deliver local adaptation activities that will provide local economic and social advantages, and new knowledge from the practical evaluation of the opportunities for, and barriers to, the specific activities carried out to adapt to climate change impacts." (*Extract from CMS project bid*)
20. The whole of the National Park will be covered by the project (if approved) with the following three themes for development with communities:
  - a) Local transport demand project
  - b) Local community wood fuel supply project
  - c) New tourism ideas for snow sports venues

### **Integrated Land Management Advisory Forum**

21. The forum held its last meeting (before adapting into the forum for Conserving and Enhancing the Park) in June. Whilst CNPA forums do place a demand on people's time, the review of the ILMAF at that meeting indicated that they are a worthwhile means of ensuring broad discussion of important issues.

## **Rothiemurchus Interim Agreement**

22. Through the Rothiemurchus Concordat Steering Group, an interim agreement has been made with Rothiemurchus Estate for the period 1 March 2007 until 29 February 2008. This is a preliminary to negotiating a longer term agreement for future years. The interim agreement builds on previous management agreements between the Estate and SNH, and concentrates on setting a sound foundation in place for the future. Unlike the previous SNH agreements which were based on inputs and their costs, the interim agreement depends on the achievement of specific outcomes and key performance indicators. For the interim year these concentrate on maintaining and enhancing ongoing public benefits through revenue type support. These outcomes relate to biodiversity and habitat management; proactive as well as reactive provision of visitor information, orientation and interpretation; outdoor access provision and the maintenance of paths and other visitor infrastructure. In recognition that FCS and SERPID grants are in abeyance at present, there are really only two bodies available to give support for a reduced programme this year but other signatories to the Concordat are able to fund capital projects (such as Off Road Cycle Route). The foundation is thus to be laid in this year by CNPA and SNH, with anticipation of a more comprehensive programme and a greater range of funders in the coming years.

## **RaptorWatch Project**

23. In this, the second year of the project, a further six estates in the Grampian Police force area have agreed to cooperate with the project's aims, bringing the total for the project so far to nineteen. The co-operation of these estates means that the populations and breeding success of golden eagles, peregrine falcons and hen harriers is now being monitored by the project officer, members of the local raptor study group, and some estate personnel over a large area of north-east Scotland, much of it in the Aberdeenshire and Moray portions of the National Park. The aim is to extend the project over the remaining areas of the National Park covered by Northern Constabulary and Tayside Police.

## **Water Vole Project**

24. The water vole project has been expanded owing to the successful bid for funds from the Tubney Trust. This has allowed the employment of two additional water vole officers who have been in post since April 2007. The original officer is still based at Grantown. One of the new staff is based at Ballater and the third at the Game Conservancy Trust office at Dalwhinnie. The officers are continuing the work of surveying the remnant colonies, evaluating their viability and collaborating with keepers and other land managers to deploy mink control apparatus and positive habitat management. The deployment of 3 staff provides much better coverage of the Park. Results to date have been encouraging. Water vole populations first surveyed in 2002 appear to be maintaining their viability, and no signs of mink have been found in the upper catchments near the main colonies so the predation pressure upon them at the moment is not as great as feared. This has allowed the mink

trapping effort to be concentrated on the main stems of the rivers where most breeding occurs. The reduction of mink in these lower areas will reduce the opportunity for mink to spread up the hill, and conversely will create more favourable conditions for water voles to re-colonise lower ground.

### Hill-Tracks Survey

25. Jointly with SNH and the North East Mountain Trust we have initiated a pilot study to assess the current extent and condition of vehicle hill tracks in the NE Cairngorms. The detailed data is currently being collected by volunteers and will be placed onto GIS.

### Deer

26. Progress to date on delivering favourable condition on designated sites within the CNP is tabulated below. More sites within the CNP may be considered for action as the results of Site Condition Monitoring carried out by SNH becomes available.

Site	Action
Caenlochan	DCS assisted reduction cull complete. Target population largely achieved. Habitat monitoring ongoing.
Upper Deeside	Pinewood monitoring complete. Blaeberry monitoring data collected. Analysis ongoing.
Drumochter Hills	Baseline survey complete. Agencies are determining whether current deer management plans are likely to deliver favourable condition.
Kinveachy	Annual seedling survey showing positive growth in 2007.
Glenfeshie	Annual seedling survey showing positive growth in 2007.
Monadhliaths SAC	Blanket bog monitoring ongoing.
Creag Meagaidh SAC	Baseline monitoring carried out. No further action required.
Ben Alder SAC	Preliminary discussion with owners re SCM.

27. The Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group has recently discussed how to progress inclusive deer management planning, communication between deer management interests, the socio-economic impacts of deer reductions within the CNP, increasing the value of the deer resource through eco-tourism and increasing access to stalking within the CNP. Further work is ongoing on all these topics.

### Agri-waste

28. Whilst farmers and crofters are encouraged to minimise waste as much as possible, the agri-waste project continues to offer some assistance with recycling waste which is difficult to avoid. This initiative, started last year in partnership with Ritchie's recycling plant in Aviemore, has now been expanded to include a partnership with Solway recycling so that farmers across the entire Park may benefit.



29. Although fairly modest, the scheme has been widely welcomed by the farming community who appreciate that whilst CNPA has a strong strategic role, it can also take practical action that provides more immediate assistance.

### **Inbye Grassland Survey**

30. A survey of inbye grassland on farms and crofts in Badenoch and Strathspey is to be completed this summer. This will provide us with a comprehensive record of the grassland and wetland vegetation communities, further emphasising the value of continued active conservation management on farms and crofts in the National Park. The remainder of the National Park will be surveyed in 2008.

### **Aspen Survey**

31. The CNPA is supporting a project being run by Scottish Native Woods to map the stands of Aspen in the Forest of Spey area. This involves aerial photography, converted to GIS and establishing the potential for enhancing the habitat network for aspen dependent species.

### **Golden Eagle Tracking**

32. The CNPA has funded the purchase of satellite tracking devices for two eagles nesting in the National Park. This will enable monitoring of their movements within the National Park area and promotion of the golden eagle as a national icon.

### **Cairngorms LBAP**

33. The CNPA's contribution to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan project officers and Biodiversity Grant scheme is helping to ensure that the grant scheme gets spent right across the National Park. Approximately 70% of the funds are committed so far. The focus is on encouraging community based projects on priority species and habitats. Several projects are under development including twinflower, woolly willow, pine hoverfly, etc. and various themes are being promoted through awareness raising and training e.g. swifts, dragonflies, butterflies, amphibians.

### **Forestry**

34. CNPA, FCS, SNH and RSPB are working together to develop a Forest Habitats Networks Project for the Cairngorms National Park. This was the subject of the recently very well received ministerial visit from Mike Russell.

### **Local Plan/Development Management**

35. Advice on the natural heritage and land management aspects of the draft local plan and on planning applications is on-going, and contributes to promoting sustainable resource, land and water management, and protecting wildlife and landscapes.

## **Wild Land**

### ***Public Attitude Survey***

36. An investigation into public perceptions of the value of wild places and landscapes is being carried out with a specific Cairngorms focus as part of a national survey being undertaken by SNH. This aspect of the work has recently been let to *Market Research Partners*.

### ***Mapping***

37. Some form of mapping is necessary to define what we mean by wild land and the important sense of wildness that many people enjoy in the National Park. We are not seeking to provide a single map showing a precise delineation of wild land. Instead we intend to create a GIS database tool which incorporates a wide range of "wild land attributes" e.g. remoteness, apparent naturalness, ruggedness etc. Combining these attributes will give a clear indication of which areas of the National Park are most sensitive and most highly valued for the sense of wildness that they convey. This aspect of the work is to be put out to tender in the very near future.
38. In all this work we are ensuring with SNH that the methodologies that are being developed could also be applied in other areas.

## **Landscape Scenarios Project**

39. This project will provide CNPA and other partners with information as to how people will react to various potential landscape changes in the National Park while also helping to develop a revised methodology which can be applied throughout Scotland. (This work builds upon a pilot Scenarios project run by SNH with Ayrshire Council).
40. The proposed scenarios include housing and afforestation and infrastructure works outwith the Park boundary such as wind farms. The scenarios will also explore the reaction to improvements in upland areas from for example hill track removal. It is intended to go into more detail than the previous pilot-study by presenting a variety of approaches to the development scenarios, for example, various housing development patterns (concentrated, clustered or dispersed).
41. The objectives for the project are to test reactions from the communities around the Park to the illustrated developments. Whilst it may be common sense to know how people feel about some changes it is not possible to second guess the level of opinion or indeed the relative response between quite different changes in the landscape. In addition the views on cumulative change will be measured.

42. The results of the study will be of value to the Park Plan and Local Plan by highlighting people's preferences in development form based on landscape and visual impacts, and could feed into the preparation of the sustainable design guides.
43. The scenarios dealing with woodland form could feed directly into the implementation of the Forest and Woodland Framework and the formulation of the forthcoming landscape plan. In addition the data on afforestation and upland improvements will enhance our ability to negotiate Land Management Contracts based on desired outcomes.
44. Currently there are no data available from within the Park area on such landscape changes other than through responses dealing directly with individual plans and the development control process. This information is too varied and *ad hoc* to collate into a coherent assessment of public opinion and preferences.
45. *Land Use Consultants* have been contracted to carry out the contract and are expected to complete the work in January 2008.

### **Development Control**

46. Natural heritage and land management staff continue to contribute advice to the planning department on planning matters development control in order to ensure any impacts on landscape and wildlife are minimised. In particular the Beauly Denny transmission line public inquiry has taken up a considerable amount of time.

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