
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DISCUSSION

**Title: NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2017-2022
DELIVERY UPDATE FOR 2020/21**

**Prepared by: DAVID CAMERON, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE
SERVICES
VICKY WALKER, GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING
MANAGER**

Purpose

This paper presents an update on delivery against the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022 outlining progress for the year 2020/21.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- a) Review the update on delivery against the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022 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.**

NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2017-2022 DELIVERY UPDATE – FOR DISCUSSION

Strategic Context

1. The Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) for 2017-2022 is approved by Scottish Ministers in 2017 as the management plan for the Cairngorms National Park. It sets out how all those with a responsibility for the Cairngorms National Park will co-ordinate their work to tackle the most important issues. This current NPPP is the third such 5-year plan coordinating work in the Cairngorms.
2. The Cairngorms NPPP provides strategic direction for five key strategies and plans which support its delivery and are also supported by close partnership working with different sectors:
 - a) Active Cairngorms: the outdoor access strategy for the National Park;
 - b) Cairngorms Nature: setting out the National Park’s conservation priorities;
 - c) Economic Action Plan: sets out the economic priorities for the National Park;
 - d) Local Development Plan: sets out the policies for land use planning within the National Park; and
 - e) Local Development Strategy: sets out the priorities for promoting Community Led Local Development (CLLD) to support a sustainable rural economy in the National Park.

Strategic Policy Considerations

3. The Cairngorms NPPP:
 - a) Sets out the vision and overarching strategy for managing the Park;
 - b) Guides the work of public bodies and all other partners to deliver the aims of the Park;
 - c) Provides the strategic context for the Local Development Plan;
 - d) Sets out the regional land use framework for the Park;
 - e) Provides the strategic context for managing the Park as a sustainable tourism destination; and
 - f) Shows how the Park will contribute to the Scottish Government’s core purpose and national outcomes.

Strategic Risk Management

4. The National Park Authority is responsible for leading various partnerships and stakeholder groups with interests and responsibilities for delivering services within the Cairngorms, to ensure priorities established in the approved NPPP are achieved and that various stakeholders each make their expected contributions.
5. This update is for year 2020/21 and includes the impact on delivery to the end of March 2021 of the current COVID-19 pandemic on delivery during the previous year. The impact of COVID-19 on delivery had been highlighted to the board throughout 2020-21. The impact this is broadly in line with the anticipated effect of national restrictions on the delivery of the NPPP throughout 2020-21.

Partnership

6. The table set out in appendix I shows the breadth of work that is ongoing in the National Park and also that the vast majority of the work is on target. The fact that this has been achieved in a year in which Covid-19 was a huge factor is a credit to all the organisations working in the National Park.

Success Measures

7. The 5-year outcomes set out within the NPPP approved by Scottish Ministers establish the success measures against which delivery of the NPPP will be assessed.
8. Milestones have been established to identify, where appropriate, interim outputs or points expected in the work toward successful delivery of these outcomes. While the outcomes will be static over the period of the Cairngorms NPPP, milestones will be reviewed by the Authority and partners and may be modified and adapted to fit with changing circumstances.

Supporting Information:
National Park Partnership Plan 2017/2022 Delivery Update

1. A summary of the Authority's NPPP delivery and monitoring information is presented in Annex 1. More information on the highlights and issues arising over the course of 2020/21, is presented in the following sections of this paper.

Impact of Covid-19

2. The impact of Covid-19 has impacted across every area of the NPPP, although overall the NPPP is broadly on track to deliver its outcomes by 2022. The indicators which have been most affected are highlighted further in this paper. This has been due to a range of factors; inability to complete work on site due to restrictions, availability of contractors or delays in supply chains.

Conservation

Significant Highlights And Points Of Note 20/21

3. CNPA was successful in its bid to the Heritage Horizons Fund and attracted £12.5 million in National Lottery Heritage Funds to the Park, plus significant additional match funding from a wide range of partners. Much of the focus of work during 2020-21 focussed on developing and submitting this bid alongside key partners.
4. Woodland expansion remains likely to exceed its target with early indications, based on draft woodland creation proposals on various estates across the CNP, suggests a target of 1000 ha/yr will be easily achieved.
5. During 2020-21 only 131ha of peatland restoration management was achieved largely due to Covid restrictions and inability to access sites. The position at the end of 2020/21 is highlighted as a "red" delivery risk at that point. The Project team have 955ha of peatland restoration at various stages of development that could be delivered during 2021-22, together with a significant increase in capital funding over a multi-year period which is now allocated to the Authority for direct management of funding awards supporting Peatland restoration in the Cairngorms to 2023/24.
6. Report on deer numbers and habitat impacts across CNP indicates that average deer densities across the Park are around 11 deer/km². This represents a significant reduction over the last 20 years. Planned work on low ground deer counts has fallen behind originally expected schedule and is now highlighted as a "red" risk in delivery status.
7. The delivery on wildlife crime is also flagged as at red status in line with previous updates to the Board on ongoing incidents.

Visitor Experience

Significant Highlights And Points Of Note 20/21

8. The CNPA has taken forward the development of a permanent Ranger Service supplemented by seasonal rangers (5 permanent rangers & 9 seasonal staff), and increasing grant in aid to partner ranger services by ten percent.
9. Improvements to visitor infrastructure with the Glenmore path now complete with four 'slow road' crossing points. Plans were approved for Campervan facility at Coire Cas Car Park. Sustrans is now actively promoting NCN7 as 'local experience' along sections of the route within western Cairngorms. New Local Information Centre open at Glenlivet Mountain Bike Centre
10. Volunteering Project has trained 38 Volunteer rangers with most re-engaging post Covid-19 with potential for a wider range of work supporting CNPA rangers.
11. The Junior Ranger, health walks and John Muir Award programmes have been affected by Covid restrictions and seen their status move from green to amber since the previous year. There was a significant drop in activity across these three programmes however all are planned to recommence back to full capacity during Autumn 2021 and we anticipate engagement being back at pre-Covid levels for the latter half of 2021-22.
12. COVID19 has significantly impacted on the delivery of plans for park wide visitor giving. The Cairngorms Trust recognises the need of businesses to rebuild and that participation for many may not be a priority, while for some involvement in a voluntary giving scheme is seen as a positive positioning of their business development. Despite COVID interruptions, the Trust has raised donations in the order of £5,000 to £10,000 in the year.

Rural Development

Significant Highlights And Points Of Note 20/21

13. The Local Development Plan was approved in March 2021 and includes a number of measures to support affordable housing including a requirement for 45% affordable housing in new development in Aviemore, Ballater, Braemar and Blair Atholl, and 25% in other communities.
14. Cairngorms Green Recovery Plan was approved in June 2020. The Economic Steering Group has met regularly to focus on economic recovery during and post-Covid. 2 rounds of Green Recovery Fund developed and delivered funding across the park.
15. There has been continued support for community groups in long term planning during 2020-21. VABS, MAP and TGDT continuing to provide excellent service to community-led projects in their respective areas. These are reviewed annually. TGDT are developing new opportunities in Glenlivet area & Laggan Forest to improve outdoor facilities at Wolftrax.

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16. Badenoch Great Place Project project due to complete October 2021. Area destination with associated marketing tools and visitor products developed (Badenoch: The Storylands). National level promotion & travel trade engagement underway.
17. The setting up of Covid response groups in each community in the National Park was a huge success during 2020-21 with a fantastic volunteer response to pandemic.
18. A specific action in the NPPP to support the Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC) is also now flagged as at red risk of delivery with key personnel stepping down from roles with that entity and COVID19 related interruption to its operations over an extended period of time.