

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title: CORPORATE PLAN 2005-2008**

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### **Purpose**

To seek the Board's approval to a draft corporate plan for 2005-2008 following the confirmation from Scottish Executive of the CNPA's funding for the next 3 years.

### **Recommendations**

- That the Board approve the draft corporate plan, having considered the issue highlighted at paragraph 9;
- That the Board endorse the general approach to staffing levels at paragraph 16;
- That the Chief Executive send this draft plan to the Scottish Executive for approval (paragraph 26);
- Following approval by the SE, an easy-read guide to the corporate plan and annual report (combined) is produced and made widely available (paragraph 26); and
- An operational plan for 2005/06, based on this Corporate Plan is brought back to the Board for approval in March/April, together with proposals for regular reporting back to on Plan delivery.

### **Executive Summary**

Following confirmation of our funding from the Scottish Executive, we are required to prepare a corporate plan to show how we intend to use our resources over the next 3 years. This is our second corporate plan. The first plan covered 2004-2007, so only had effect for one year before being overtaken by this second plan, which covers a critical 3 year period during which the strategic plans which guide the management of the Park – National Park Plan, Local Plan, and Core Path plan – will be consulted on, approved, and put in place.

Core funding for the 3 years of the Plan is £4.3m, £4.3m, and £4.5m. The Plan sets out how these resources will be directed to achieving 19 goals, which derive from 5 strategic themes setting the overarching framework.

The key message behind the proposed Corporate Plan is that there are many issues to deal with in the Park; we cannot deal with all of them immediately, and the proposed Plan provides a clear focus over the next three years on the crucial streams of activity that will set the direction of the Park for a long time ahead; at the same time we will be continuing to do preparatory work on a range of issues so that we can, in turn, concentrate more resources on these in a future corporate plan.

## CORPORATE PLAN 2005-2008

### Introduction

1. The organisation's first Corporate Plan, covering the three financial years from 2004/05 to 2006/07 was a bidding document, submitted in the first few months of the organisation's life and indicating what the CNPA aimed to achieve in its early years, and the resources needed. That Plan suggested core funding in the years 04/05, 05/06, and 06/07, of £3.55m, £4.7m and £5.5m.
2. The funding settlement announced for the CNPA last September did not show the same growth, and levelled out at £4.5m – funding was allocated for 05/06, 06/07, and 07/08 as £4.3m, £4.3m, and £4.5m. With the new funding allocation, we are required to (and indeed would wish to) prepare a new corporate plan setting out how we intend to direct these resources to delivering our purpose of “ensuring a collective and coordinated approach to the achievement of the 4 aims of the Park”.
3. The attached draft corporate plan, once approved by the Board is required to be approved by Scottish Ministers, who will be looking to ensure that the CNPA is using its resources to deliver its statutory purpose, in line with, and helping to deliver, national priorities set by the Scottish Executive.

### The New Corporate Plan

4. The aspirations and aims of the CNPA as set out in this second plan remain very similar to those in the first. The framework is as follows:
  - Themes – 5 strategic objectives which set the overarching framework;
  - Goals – 19 goals, specifying outcomes we are aiming to achieve in order to deliver our strategic aims (Note that goals generally make significant contributions to more than one theme; goals do not fit neatly under one particular theme);
  - Actions – the actions we will be undertaking to deliver the goals.
5. A Corporate Plan, by its nature, is a relatively high level strategic document, and can sometimes be seen as rather theoretical and removed from “real life”. It is therefore essential that we can articulate what we are doing in terms of the difference this will make in practice. Being able to do that means we can frame performance measures, so we can judge whether or not we are achieving what we set out to do. Completing an action does not of itself constitute success – actions are only a means to an end. Table 2 of the Corporate Plan sets out the actions contributing to each Goal, but Table 1 of the Corporate plan is in many ways the most important part of the Plan in that it sets out what this corporate plan is trying to achieve in the short and the long term, and how we will measure success.
6. Crucially, this Corporate Plan reflects an assumption that we will make progress on a wide range of fronts – hence the relatively large number of goals. We are, arguably, “spreading ourselves” rather thin. This contrasts with the option of focusing our attention on a smaller number of goals over the next 3 years, and acknowledging that

other goals, while important, will not feature in this current programme. Presentationally it is very difficult to in effect say that we will not do work in certain areas. On the other hand, the expectation that the CNPA will “do” everything is unrealistic.

7. The draft plan presented here therefore takes the following approach. It is explicit in recognising that of the 19 goals, 7 are priorities because they will provide the strategic framework for activities in the Park over the long term; some of them are also statutory duties:

1. Duties as the outdoor access authority effectively and efficiently delivered.
2. National Park Plan in place by end of 2006, agreed by stakeholders, setting out achievable targets and indicators of measuring progress over next 10 years.
3. Local Plan for CNP adopted by spring 2007
4. Increased access to all forms of housing tenure for Park residents or people who are meeting economic or social needs within the Park
5. Plans, policies and actions developed through transparent and robust processes that engage with stakeholders.
6. Justly perceived as an open, accountable and trusted organisation
7. Effective and efficient development control service, blending planning policy and Park aims

Some progress will be made on all the goals as set out in the Plan; they are all recognised as desirable and appropriate for the CNPA to take a role in. Once the key priorities have been delivered, there will be clearer direction on how resources should be focused towards the end of this planning period, and into the next corporate planning period. At that point, resources can be focused on further progress on the remaining goals.

8. The main actions which will be undertaken to deliver these goals over the corporate plan period are set out in Table 2. While some of these actions will be undertaken by the CNPA alone, many will be undertaken in partnership with others, and some will take the form of delivery through third parties – in other words, by the giving of grants or other assistance. More detail on these actions will be set out in the operational plan for each year. But embedded in this corporate plan is the philosophy that the NPA will achieve its effects by working with and through others, maximising the effect of its relatively small limited resources by acting as a catalyst, a co-ordinator, and enabler.
9. **The question for the Board, therefore, is whether the approach set out above is appropriate, or whether we should be explicit about focusing our limited resources on a smaller set of priority goals for the next three years.**

## Operational Plans

10. We have always acknowledged that we need to flesh out the Corporate Plan with more detail. That will be done each year through an operational plans; that for 2005/06 is currently being prepared by each Head of Group. We hope to have this for the Board

in March. The operational plan will form the detailed work plan for each Group, and from it will flow each staff member's job plan for the year.

### Staffing Levels

11. The corporate plan proposes average staffing levels in the two years of the plan as shown (these refer to permanent staff, paid for direct from the CNPA budget. The CNPA also employs project staff who are funded through individual time limited project budgets, administered by the CNPA on behalf of the project funders.).
12. Allocation of staff within budget has previously been agreed as being delegated to the Chief Executive. However this paper on the corporate plan is a suitable opportunity to flag up to the board in general terms what additions we envisage to the staffing complement over the period of the Corporate Plan, given that staff represent the key resource for delivering the Corporate Plan, as well as a significant cost.
13. Since our funding has levelled off at £4.5m, the attached corporate plan shows the budget for staffing levelling off at an average 53 (without the growth to 60 which was originally envisaged). In practice, I believe this is a maximum, and is unlikely to be reached; I would expect to be able to live with staffing levels at an average of 50. Our numbers are currently only at 45 and there is still scope for additional recruitment within our budget. Indeed, additional staff are needed urgently in some areas.
14. Our staffing costs in the Plan are 45% of total budget reflecting the nature of our role; this percentage is not unreasonable, and slightly lower than other NPAs. However, there is clearly a balance to be struck between fixed costs, of which staff are the biggest element, and programme costs (which represent what we can put into grants, contracts, etc). Permanent staff are a fixed resource – in practice, the priorities of the organisation will change over time, and we must be able to respond.
15. I propose keeping average staff numbers at around 50 with consequent savings be re-deployed within the programme expenditure. We will address this through preparation of the operational plan, and seek agreement of the finance committee. We will continually consider how best to fill posts, and we will look at how best to use secondment opportunities, partly to bring in fresh skills and points of view, partly to foster good working relations with other organisations, and importantly to ensure that our staffing complement is flexible and able to respond to changing demands.
16. **Approval is sought for the Chief Executive to deploy staff resources over the Corporate Plan period in line with the budget proposals, which represent a maximum for staff costs. Management Team will continually review the need for staff resources, and how best to meet these through permanent posts, temporary posts, consultancies, and secondments. Resources released through staff savings will be considered for use in the programme and approved through the finance committee.**

### **Relationship with National Park Plan**

17. As the National Park Plan is developed over the next two years that may affect some of the CNPA's aims and objectives and how these are expressed – we would therefore expect to amend the Corporate plan to reflect that developing thinking. Nevertheless, we cannot work in a vacuum in the meantime, and this corporate plan will explain to partners, stakeholders, Ministers and the general public the priorities which will drive our work.

### **Links with National Policies**

18. The Corporate Plan echoes a number of the themes in the Partnership for a Better Scotland document. These are set out at Annex 1 to this paper.

### **Financial Implications**

19. The corporate plan reflects what we consider we can achieve within the budget allocated. We have calculated the total costs of each goal, as shown in Table 5, through a total costing method – in other words, we have allocated overheads costs (staff, Board office overheads etc) on the basis of staff time, as well as variable (programme) costs. Our recording systems and accounting systems are being reviewed so that in the future we can get a more accurate assessment of the total costs of delivering various work streams, which in turn should lead to more accurate budgeting.
20. The costs of delivering any particular goal may therefore be a mix of the cost of staff input, the cost of procuring outside advice/consultancy, and the value of money given directly to third parties (through grants etc). A detailed analysis will be shown in the operational plan for each year.
21. Given our role as essentially one of an enabler and co-ordinator, our budget is relatively small. There are still many people assuming that the CNPA will “take over” funding of particular items, and there is a danger that other public sector agencies will withdraw funding, leading to our funding having a substitution effect rather than an additive or even synergistic effect. This corporate plan assumes that other public agencies will continue to fund activities in the Park to the extent they currently do. The benefit of the National Park Plan in due course will be that it ensured more effective and joined-up deployment of those funds.
22. The plan does not explicitly reflect money that we may be able to lever in to contribute to particular projects, but it is recognised that part of our role is, like many other bodies, to make things happen by putting together jointly-funded initiatives.

### **Presentational Implications**

23. This Corporate Plan is prepared, as required, for a specific audience, and not aimed at the general public, although they will clearly have an interest. We therefore propose

to prepare an easy-read guide, covering the essential points in the last annual report as the new corporate plan.

24. Although essentially a strategic plan, it is essential that the Corporate Plan reflects clarity of vision as to how we will actually make a difference in practice. Table 1 is therefore central to this Plan.
25. Expectations are high, and there is a widespread assumption that the National Park Authority will “do” everything. However, we have very limited resources, and need to be clear internally and externally, what our role is and what we are focusing our efforts on. There is always liable to be criticism that we are not putting enough resources in to a particular issue. The key message behind the proposed Corporate Plan is that there are many issues to deal with in the Park; we cannot deal with all of them immediately, and the proposed Plan provides a clear focus over the next three years on the key workstreams that will set the direction of the Park for a long time ahead; at the same time we will be continuing to do preparatory work on a range of issues so that we can concentrate more resources on these in a future corporate plan.

### **Next Steps**

26. If the Board is content, and subject to any minor revisions, I propose that I should submit the revised and final corporate plan to Scottish Executive sponsor division. Once approved, we will publish and publicise the plan in ways that are effective but also efficient given that large expenditure on a glossy publication may not be appropriate for a document in its current form is not designed for communication with the wider public.
27. In addition we will (following the Board’s earlier approval of the Annual Report) be developing an easy-read guide to the CNPA covering the annual report and the corporate plan. We would be placing the emphasis on finding ways of promoting a broader understanding of what the CNPA is and what it is trying to do, and reaching people who would not generally read a corporate plan. We will in any event put the corporate plan in full (and annual report in due course) on the CNPA website.

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**1 February 2005**  
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## **Relevant Themes from Partnership for a Better Scotland (May 2003)**

### **ENTERPRISE**

*We will streamline the support and practical help government offers to business and extend the one stop support for business throughout Scotland through the business gateway.*

*We will work with agencies supporting business to manage the transition to the new Structural Fund landscape post 2006.*

*We will work with tourism businesses to improve tourism marketing and infrastructure...we will build on our cities' many attractions and the natural resources of our countryside to turn Scotland into a year round destination. We will ensure that tourist offices and agencies promote the opportunities for outdoor recreation across the country. We will work with the tourism sector to introduce an industry-led national tourism registration scheme to guarantee quality service and facilities across Scotland.*

*We will assess economic development policies against their impact on targets set through the Scottish Executive's sustainable development indicators.*

### **TRANSPORT**

*We will support demand-responsive transport initiatives particularly in rural areas.*

### **RURAL**

*We will provide practical support for innovation and enterprise in our rural communities. We will promote better collaboration between agencies with expertise in rural development, including the SAC and the Enterprise networks.*

*We will develop the core path network to promote and provide access to the countryside and mountain areas throughout Scotland.*

*We will maintain our protection for the rare bird species found in Scotland through our moorland management schemes.*

*We will encourage localised food distribution systems involving more local processing of produce.*

*We will encourage more sustainable agricultural activity on 13,500 farm businesses in Scotland's remote hills.*

*We will implement Land Management Contracts to deliver reformed CAP support which takes account of the diversity of Scottish Agriculture and its economic, social and environmental impact.*

### **EDUCATION**

*We will develop curriculum materials to promote environmental awareness.*

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

*We will improve the planning system to strengthen involvement of communities, speed up decisions, reflect local views better, and allow quicker investment decisions.*

*We will deliver good quality sustainable affordable housing for all... we will provide an additional 18,000 new and improved homes for social rent and low-cost home ownership by 2006. We will take forward plans to increase the availability of affordable housing in rural areas.*

*As part of our commitment to sustainable economic growth we will require public bodies to conduct waster minimisation audits to reduce the amount of waste produced.*

*We will examine the mechanisms required for pre-application consultation and mediation in the planning process, including where appropriate, involvement of local councillors, revising the councillor's code of conduct to assist this so communities can engage with developers over controversial applications.*

### **SPORT, CULTURE & THE ARTS**

*We will develop a new focus for Scotland's languages recognising both our heritage and our diversity.*

*We will support the Scottish Year of Highland Culture in 2007*