

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

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**FOR DECISION**

**Title: A Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism**

**Prepared by: Debbie Strang, Sustainable Tourism Officer**

**Purpose: For Decision**

This paper presents the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan to the Board for endorsement and recommends that the strategy forms the basis of an application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism.

**Recommendation**

That the Board:

- endorses the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan; and
- approves that the strategy forms the basis of an application to Europarc for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

**Executive Summary**

The paper summarises the work that has been undertaken on the preparation of the sustainable tourism strategy since early 2004 and describes the application process to Europarc. The Strategy and Action Plan are attached.

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## A STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

### Introduction

1. In January 2004, the Board endorsed the production of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy to meet the requirements of the Europarc Federation European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, and authorised expenditure to commission consultants to undertake the majority of this work at the February 2004 Board meeting.

### Background on the European Charter and Link to Strategy

2. The European Charter has been specifically designed to provide a framework to manage sustainable tourism in protected areas, and it is the Park Authority that applies for the accreditation, by submitting a Strategy and Action Plan (see Annex 1) that has been developed with the involvement of all relevant interests. This Charter is not an accreditation scheme for individual tourism operators. It is likely however, that the private sector will be a key beneficiary of such accreditation when the Action Plan is implemented.
3. The first UK Protected Area to receive the Charter was the Mourne Mountains AONB in 2003, and other UK Protected areas have registered as candidate Charter Parks (including the Norfolk Broads and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park). It is likely that, if successful, the Cairngorms National Park will be one of the first UK National Parks to receive such accreditation.
4. The aims of the Charter are elaborated in 12 principles that indicate the structures and actions required for the management of sustainable tourism in protected areas and these are outlined in section 3.2 of the strategy. Clear cross referencing between these principles and the strategic objectives set out in the strategy is given in section 3.5.

### Involving Tourism Stakeholders

5. The Charter places great emphasis on engaging with all tourism stakeholders in both the development of the Strategy and Action Plan, and the on-going development and management of sustainable tourism in the protected area (Principle 3). The creation of the Visitor Services, Information and Tourism (ViSIT) Forum is seen as an extremely positive step in this regard, to facilitate the coordination of tourism management throughout the Cairngorms.
6. The development of the Strategy and Action Plan involved a postal survey of all tourism enterprises, a series of in-depth telephone interviews with key stakeholders, a workshop last October to discuss a key issues paper.
7. Members of the ViSIT Forum were consulted on the draft Strategy and Action Plan. Many members submitted written comments and the Strategy was considered at the meeting on 16 February. The comments received indicated that the general response was overwhelmingly positive with several members commenting that this was an excellent piece of work. The only significant exception was the response from the Cairngorms Campaign. They claimed that there had been insufficient analysis in the

formulation of the strategy, a lack of attention to international experience and inadequate integration of the strategy with other economic, social and environmental issues within the Park. Staff have considered all the responses received from consultees in finalising the strategy and have specifically responded to the Cairngorms Campaign. Further detail on the local consultation is provided in section 1.2 and annex 3 of the strategy.

### **Role of the CNPA in tourism**

8. It is worth highlighting the role that is envisaged in the strategy for the CNPA as outlined in section 3.2:

“The key role for the CNPA in tourism is in environmental management, access management, information, interpretation and support for specific initiatives. It can also engage in marketing and support for tourism enterprise, but in doing so it should play an enabling, strengthening and coordinating role rather than duplicating the functions of others”.

### **Priorities for Action**

9. The strategy is based around nine strategic objectives and identifies an associated range of actions that should be pursued during the next five years. These actions are reproduced in a summary table in chapter 5, with an indication of the level of priority of action (high, medium) and an initial indication of the level of financial resources required.
10. The CNPA will coordinate actions in the priority action table once they have been agreed. However, it is important to emphasise that this summary table of actions is a working document that will evolve and develop. Further prioritisation of these actions will be required in discussion with the ViSIT Forum. At this stage, only the potential delivery partners have been suggested because further investigation is required to determine which other partners will be involved.
11. Clearly the CNPA will not lead and undertake all of the actions, but may be instrumental in identifying and initiating actions or activities which key partners will undertake and which fall within the strategy framework. Significant progress has already been made on the majority of actions by both the CNPA and through partnership arrangements with key partners. The production of the Visitor Guide 2005 is a good example of this, where for the second year the CNPA has worked together with the three Area Tourist Boards to produce a high quality guide for visitors.
12. The Strategy and Action Plan is now in a form that can be submitted to Europarc.

### **Application Process and Timetable**

13. The application process to Europarc is as follows:

Mid March 2005	The Application Report, (a short summary report with appropriate cross references to the Sustainable Tourism
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Strategy and Action Plan), and supporting documentation reaches Europarc.

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| April/May 2005 | An expert verifier will be appointed and will visit the National Park for two days. This will involve interviews with personnel involved in tourism and representatives of tourism enterprises. The verifier will then submit a report to the Europarc Evaluation Committee, and provide a short feedback report to the NPA. |
| July 2005      | The full application will be considered in July and the result will be one of the following outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To award the Charter</li><li>• To defer the award subject to specific changes being made</li><li>• To reject the application</li></ul>   |
| September 2005 | Should the CNPA be successful then official signing of the Charter certificate will take place at the Europarc conference.   |

14. The Strategy and Action Plan will be subject to a mid term review in 2007, and a new Strategy and Action Plan will be prepared and form the basis of renewal of the Charter in 2009.

### **Publication of Documents**

15. Once finalised, the Strategy and Action Plan will remain a practical working document that is easy to update and take account of the many emerging strategies of both the Park and key partners. It will however, be widely circulated, placed on the website and made available to anyone who requests it. In time it will also be integrated with National Park Plan.
16. In addition, the production of a shortened version of the report for wide circulation is currently planned. This will be an A5 booklet, approx 16-20 pages with photographs and graphics and will also include visitor survey information that will be of use to tourism enterprises. It is envisaged that this will be distributed to tourism enterprises across the Park to raise awareness of the Strategy and Action Plan, and the current members of the ViSIT Forum. It may also provide a list of Park staff with contact details for all those who have an involvement in tourism and visitor services.

### **Recommendation**

17. **That the Board:**
- a) **endorses the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan; and**
  - b) **approves that the Strategy forms the basis of an application to Europarc for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.**

**Debbie Strang,**  
**13 February 2005**

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