

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR INFORMATION

**Title:** Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme Update

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### **Purpose**

To update Members on the progress of the Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme, and to alert them to a recent increase in funding.

### **Recommendations**

- That the Board note the progress of the Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme and the recent award of £300,000 extra funds.

### **Executive Summary**

The Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme is administered by the CNPA on behalf of a wider group of voluntary, business and public sector interests. It has been running throughout the National Park and surrounding communities since 2002, can commit funds until the end of 2006, and must make final payments by the end of 2007.

To the end of 2004, the Programme has supported 82 projects, committing 90% of its original £1,007,000 budget. The Scottish Executive has recently awarded the Programme an additional £318,000.

The CNPA and the Cairngorms Partnership have contributed match funding to over 30 projects which help to deliver the themes and goals in the Corporate Plan, and thus the aims of the National Park.

The CNPA currently contributes £13,500 per year to pay for the administration of the Programme, approximately 22% of the total administration costs.

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## Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme Update – FOR INFORMATION

### Background

1. Background information to the Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme was set out in Paper 3 08/10/04. In brief, LEADER+ is a European grant-giving programme aimed at the sustainable development of Scotland's rural communities. There are thirteen programmes running in Scotland. The Cairngorms Programme is focused on the theme of "helping the communities to make best use of natural and cultural resources". It runs from 2002 to 2007 and can support work in the National Park and neighbouring areas.
2. The CNPA acts as the lead body for the Cairngorms LEADER+ programme. We also provide a financial contribution to administration costs, as well as in-kind support through employing the officers, providing office accommodation and management support. The Board agreed a further package of support in October 2004 to part fund the administration of the Programme until 2007.
3. Whilst the CNPA is the lead body for the Programme, its overall management is directed by a Local Action Group (LAG) comprising representatives from the public, private and community partners in the area, including the CNPA. It is chaired independently by Peter Mackay.
4. As part of this role, the LAG oversees the Programme administration, which comprises three staff based in the CNPA office in Grantown. The staff are line-managed by the Head of Strategic Policy and Programme Management. Funding for the administration is provided by the CNPA, 4 local authorities, 2 local enterprise companies, SNH and LEADER+.
5. The effectiveness of the administration is measured through a series of targets, and ultimately by the success of the programme itself. Targets include meeting certain spending deadlines set by the European Union for the Scottish Programme, known as "n+2", "n+3" etc. If these spending deadlines are not met, the amount of funding for subsequent years is reduced.

### Funding

6. The Scottish Executive made an initial allocation of £1,007,000 of LEADER+ to the Programme. We predicted that this would be matched by £1,326,000 from public funds and £107,000 from the private sector. This would deliver approximately 100 projects.
7. By the end of 2004, the Programme had approved a total of 82 projects, committing £902,953 of the original £1,007,000, about 90%. We have paid out approximately 45% of the money committed to the end of 2004.

### **Bid for Extra Funds**

8. As a result of this high level of commitment and spend, and our knowledge of the latent demand for assistance for work throughout the area, we submitted a bid for an additional £400,000 at the end of December 2004. This was part of a Scotland-wide call for bids.
9. We have recently heard that the Scottish Executive have awarded us a further £318,000, an overall increase of 32% on the original allocation. This additional money is subject to the same conditions and must be committed by the end of 2006 and spent by the end of 2007.

### **Targets**

10. The Programme has exceeded most of its original targets and an additional set has now been suggested, but not yet confirmed, for the new funds. These are listed in Annex 1.

### **Projects**

11. Projects supported by the Programme cover a wide range of community-based activity seeking both to make more use of the natural and cultural resources of the area, and to build capacity within communities to take advantage of these opportunities. A full list of projects approved to the end of 2004 is attached at Annex 2.
12. As well as being the Lead Body for the Programme, the CNPA and the Cairngorms Partnership have made extensive use of the Programme to part fund activities in and around the Park. Of the 82 projects approved, the CNPA has contributed to over 30, including the John Muir Award in the Cairngorms, the Small Grants Scheme, and the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils.

### **Issues**

13. At the start of 2004, the LAG conducted a mid-term review. This concluded that for the remaining years of the Programme, we needed to put even more emphasis on women and young people – asking both groups directly what their needs are - and the environment – focusing particularly on projects linked to Natura 2000 sites, and green tourism.
14. Looking further ahead, both the LAG and CNPA have begun to consider how the Park can best benefit from the new arrangements being considered for the next Structural Support Period 2007-13.

### **Policy Context**

15. The Programme is an important mechanism for achieving the first three Themes of the Corporate Plan, and in particular Goal 17 “Improved Community capacity to help deliver the 4 aims of the Park”.

16. The Programme helps to deliver the three Cross Cutting Themes in the Corporate Plan as follows:

**a) Delivering Sustainability**

- i) Sustainability is a key thread running through the LEADER+ programme. At a national level, the aim of the Scottish Programme is “to pilot and communicate innovative approaches to rural development that will promote the sustainable economic, environmental and social development of Scotland’s rural communities”.
- ii) Within the Cairngorms Programme, the LAG considers a wide range of sustainability criteria for each project seeking funding. This focuses on the likely impacts of the project on the local economy, environment and community; as well as the long-term viability of the project itself.

**b) Delivering a Park for All**

- i) The Programme is targeted specifically, but not exclusively, at women and young people. Across Europe, these groups are seen as being particularly disadvantaged within rural communities.
- ii) The Programme, using match funding from the CNPA, has supported a number of projects to help these target groups as well as insisting that broader schemes, such as the John Muir Award, also make a particular effort to reach women and young people.
- iii) More broadly, the Programme aims to support as wide a range of activity as possible within the Park and beyond that will stimulate rural development. The Programme is designed to be flexible and accessible so that support reaches all areas. To that end, the Programme Manager is proactive in bringing together groups of people to explore different ideas and proposals, and provides a high level of on-going support to applicants.
- iv) Taken together, this overall inclusive and supportive approach, as well as a focus on disadvantaged groups, will help to deliver a Park for All.

**c) Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency**

- i) The Programme is a very efficient and effective way of delivering European support to rural communities. Feedback from applicants has consistently welcomed the ease of application, speed of decision-making, and simplicity of claiming and reporting.
- ii) From the CNPA’s perspective, the Programme is a very economic way of delivering financial support for rural development – the Programme provides up to 45% of the costs of each project, and due to high levels of match funding from the Programme and other public bodies, only costs the CNPA £13,500 to administer, about 22% of the total administration costs.
- iii) The Programme is tightly monitored by the Scottish Executive and we have met their audit and spending requirements.

**Implications**

17. The implications for the CNPA and the Park are as follows:

**a) Financial Implications**

- i) There are two financial implications for the CNPA of the additional funds. As a potential applicant, this is good news as it is additional money available to help match fund our activities over the life of the 05-08 Corporate Plan. As the administrator and Lead Body for the Programme, the implications are less certain at the moment. Our initial assessment is that we can administer this increased level of funding within existing resources but we are unable to confirm this until we have discussed this with the other funding parties on the LAG.

**b) Presentational Implications**

- i) The new money is a good news story for the Park as a whole, and particularly its communities, as well as for the CNPA. It is a successful example of our role as an enabler, working with other interests to secure and then deliver funds to achieve the aims of the Park.

**c) Implications for Stakeholders**

- i) Implications for all our stakeholders are positive. This is an opportunity to fund more activity across the Park and its neighbouring communities. In particular, it means that we can speed up the rate at which these activities will take place. For the public sector it means making match funding available to support projects; initial indications from LAG members are that much of the match funding is in place and has been waiting on this additional allocation of European money.

**Conclusions**

18. The Programme has been very successful to date in supporting a wide range of projects in the Park and beyond. The additional money which we have recently been allocated will enable the Programme to continue this work, and in so doing, help achieve the 4 aims of the Park.

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<b>Making the best use of natural and cultural resources</b>	<b>1 Original Approved Targets</b>	<b>2 Revised Targets</b>	<b>Total to end 2004</b>
No of awareness raising events held	3	0	16
No of environmental projects	32	0	38
No of tourism projects	35	0	27
No of sustainability projects	38	0	27
No of marketing plans undertaking	5	0	5
No of sites of natural heritage interest with interpretation introduced, access improved	0	0	11
No of Natura 2000 sites with improved management	0	0	14
No of individuals trained, gaining new skills or re-skilled	90	100	660
No of training days provided	0	25	46
No of training courses delivered	0	25	42
No of jobs created/safeguarded	0	5	10
No of businesses advised/assisted	45	100	206
No of community groups advised/assisted	40	30	268
No of women assisted	22	100	215
No of young people assisted	22	100	376
No of under-employed assisted	0	100	7
No of micro/small businesses assisted	45	100	97
Other target groups assisted	0	12	35