
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CEO REPORT

Prepared by: Grant Moir, Chief Executive

Purpose

- I. To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Conservation:

- a) **East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership** - The East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership currently comprises six estates (Mar Lodge, Mar, Invercauld, Balmoral, Glenavon and Glenlivet) and the Cairngorms National Park Authority. The Partners have agreed a 'statement of purpose' which summarises the outcomes we wish to achieve.
- b) **Capercaillie HLF bid** - CNPA are co-ordinating a bid to HLF's Heritage Fund to provide a major funding boost for helping to increase Capercaillie productivity, assist recreation management and boost community engagement.
- c) **Deer Management** – There has been a further meeting of Atholl, Glenfeshie, Mar Lodge and Dalnacardoch Estates to agree actions around deer management in that area of the Park.
- d) **Catchment Partnerships** - The Spey and the Dee catchment partnerships are both reviewing their Catchment management plans. CNPA has inputted positively, promoting Natural Flood Management alongside other important conservation measures to improve habitat and water quality.
- e) **Land Management Training** - We have organised and co-organised 13 training days/seminars on subjects as varied as wood ant conservation for foresters, safe use of pesticides, deer stalking, sheep shearing and lambing attended by over 250 people. We have also provided a 30% grant towards the cost of skills development courses for 271 places attended by land managers in the National Park.

Visitor Experience:

- a) **Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy** – The three month public consultation closes on 8th March. To date there has been a good level of response with over 80 people attending a business breakfast and the public drop-in. The latter event elicited 88 written comments. Results of the consultation will be presented to the Board in June.

- b) **Active Cairngorms: Active Places - Storm Frank** brought devastation to the Deeside and other areas of the Cairngorms National Park. This damage to paths, bridges and the access infrastructure has now been assessed, and CNPA and Aberdeenshire Council will approach Scottish Government in an attempt to secure funds to reinstate the damage. Nevertheless, Deeside remains open for business and recreation and we are working with partners to continue to promote access and update information and leaflets.
- c) **Active Cairngorms: Active Places – Speyside Way**, work is scheduled to start on building the new section of path from Kincaig to Ardgael in March. Planning consents for the sections beyond Ardgael will be submitted this Spring. Newtonmore community are developing proposals for a Speyside Way start/finish marker.
- d) **Active Cairngorms: Volunteering-** Following the Board decision we have registered interest with the Leader Programme for a three year project to develop a volunteering programme centred on Volunteer Rangers.
- e) **Active Cairngorms: Active Promotion- Health Walks and Schools Nordic Walking Project** – both are progressing well with three GP practices ready to refer patients to health walks, and staff and senior pupils in secondary schools undertaking training as Nordic walk leaders. On 26th April a one day event at Glenmore Lodge will celebrate the work of Health Walk Volunteers in the Cairngorms as well as providing useful updates and information exchange.
- f) **Active Cairngorms: Active Promotion-** In order to promote physical activity and celebrate walking CNPA will be co-ordinating the **Cairngorms Big Walk Weekend on 9-11th September** encouraging all Health Walking Groups, Ramblers Clubs, schools, youth groups and clubs, and groups of friends to go for a walk on the second weekend in September.
- g) **Snow Roads Scenic Route** - CNPA has secured funds from this Scottish Government project to develop the 'Snow Roads Scenic Route' from Glenshee to Grantown-on-Spey with three sites being upgraded via the competition process. Planning consents were granted in February and we anticipate that work will start in the Spring. We will be working with partners this year to promote the route.

Rural Development:

- a) **Development Management** – At the March Planning Committee we are due to consider applications for Kingussie housing site and deferred Nethy Bridge horse livery (following a site visit). Housing application at Beachen Court, Grantown has been called in and application for former Tesco site and Travel Lodge, both in Aviemore, are awaited. Application for Ballater Station (Visitor Info. Centre, Heritage Centre and Restaurant) expected in May 2016.
- b) **Local Development Plan** – working to establish Development Briefs for Aviemore and Carrbridge. Carrbridge work to dovetail with the Carrbridge Community Conversation (review of community action plan) in March 2016.
- c) **Planning Review** - evidence was given by the CEO to the Independent Review of Planning on 23 February in Glasgow.

- d) **A9 dualling project** – The Planning Committee have now considered the Stage 2 Design proposals for half of the projects that fall within the National Park with the remaining three sections to come over the year ahead; the next is likely to be Glen Garry to Dalwhinnie with the Crubenmore to Kincaig, and Dalraddy to Slochd sections coming later in the year. Recent public consultation on the Dalraddy to Slochd sections attracted a lot of public interest, especially the options for junctions in Aviemore. Transport Scotland continue to convene a Business and Community Forum and recent discussions have focused on the need for a Tourism Strategy, provision of enhanced lay-bys and a proposed “Blueprint” to tie in the very significant investment in the A9 with all of the other major investments in the area.
- e) **Cairngorms Community Broadband Scheme.** Following approval of the Board paper in December an initiation meeting was held with representatives from communities across the Park, the Cairngorms Business Partnership and the Scottish Land and Estates, the LEADER Local Action Group and Communities Broadband Scotland (CBS). The group agreed that a new organisation was required and that the proposed Cairngorms Trust (to be established by the LEADER Local Action Group) should form a trading arm that would wholly own and manage the infrastructure, with assistance from CBS. This is likely to take several months and in the meantime a Steering Group, chaired by CNPA, has been formed to keep the work moving.
- f) **Tourism and Marketing** – The Cairngorms Tourism Partnership now meets four times a year with two meetings of the full partnership and two meetings of a smaller delivery group. The delivery group met for the first time in February and focused on Training, Deeside flood recovery and marketing. VisitScotland have recently launched ‘Spirit of Scotland’, their first worldwide marketing campaign which presents opportunities to promote the Cairngorms through the provision of seasonal targeted online content. It should also be noted that the new Visit Aberdeenshire organisation is about to be established and the CEO will be Steve Harris (current VisitAberdeen CEO).
- g) **Tomintoul & Glenlivet** – The community-managed Smuggler’s Hostel has seen a further 15% increase in bed-nights over the last year and the Visitor Information Centre (VIC), also managed by the community, a 30% increase in visitors. The Landscape Partnership is on target for submitting a Landscape Conservation Action Plan to the Heritage Lottery Fund at the end of May. CNPA staff along with representatives from the Crown estate, Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust and Historic Environment Scotland met with HLF for a mid-development phase review meeting in Edinburgh recently and have received encouraging feedback on progress.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) There have been a series of meetings held with stakeholders including HIE, Albyn Housing Association, SE, UHI, RZSS, Aberdeenshire Council, Highlife Highland, CBP & GWCT. Stakeholders have also attend the NPPP Delivery Group.
- b) The CEO and/or Convenor have also met with Dave Thompson MSP, John Swinney MSP, Graeme Dey MSP, Alex Neil MSP.
- c) The CEO has also attended the NDPB CEO Forum, Scottish Leaders Forum, UKNP AGM, RAFE Delivery Board, CoHI and has given evidence to the Independent Review of Planning. The CEO also chaired the After the Flood tourism Seminar in Glentanal.

Communications:

- a) **NPPP Consultation** - a design agency has been appointed to support the National Park Partnership Plan and Local Development Plan Main Issues Report consultations which will take place during 2016/17. An engagement programme, communication materials and mechanisms will be delivered by June and the NPPP consultation will run from June to September.
- b) **Cairngorms Nature Festival 14 & 15 May** - a programme of events is in place focusing on four locations; Ballater, Tomintoul, Aviemore and Blair Atholl. The programme includes a 'celebrity' event with Nick Baker to take place in Deeside.
- c) **Cairngorms Nature Young Presenter Competition** - a joint UK-wide competition with RSPB aimed at 10-16 year olds has been extremely successful. Media coverage reached a combined readership of 775,000, 9000 visits to the CNPA web page and 20,200 visits to the CN Facebook page. RSPB and Speyside Wildlife are keen to run the competition in 2016/17 launching by September following a review on any lessons learnt.
- d) **Make it Yours Campaign** – major visitor-facing organisations have been identified and a MIY presentation with support pack has been prepared. Invitations to give a presentation to senior managers and/or visitor facing staff to inspire them about the Park are being sent out with the first presentations being rolled out this spring. The first round of training includes: ranger services, the Highland Folk Museum, RSPB Osprey Centre Staff, Glenlivet Distillery and Visitor Information Centres in and around the Park. Support materials are also available via the CNPA website.
- e) **Collaborative Marketing Campaign** - Marketing Campaign for 2016 confirmed with a focus on Aberdeenshire in the spring. Autumn 2015 delivered by VisitScotland: 86K visits to campaign web page, 50K entries to prize draw of a stay in the Park, [Press advertising](#) circulation of nearly 300,00, online emails & impressions of over 3.5 million, direct mail to nearly 25K households.
- f) **Digital Communications** – the new CNP website was launched in September. Statistics after six months show: **50,622** unique users, **2.83** average pages visited, **2:28** average time on site, **53.64%** bounce rate. Currently we have 5 social media accounts – 3 twitter and 2 Facebook accounts. Each has a clear purpose and is managed by specific individuals who receive social media training, guidance and advice. At the end of 2015 the 5 main accounts had 8,833 followers and 32% of the *Cairngorms News* content was re-tweeted. We also produce various e-bulletins for specific audiences with over 2000 subscribers.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Organisational Development Strategy:** - CNPA entered the "Sunday Times Best Places to Work in the Not For Profit Sectors". We were listed at 67 in the top 100 organisations. The survey itself produced excellent and detailed results regarding staff engagement across eight different factors of Leadership; My Manager; My Company; Wellbeing; Giving Something Back; Fair Deal; Personal Growth; My team. Following analysis of these results, an action plan has been developed, consulted and agreed with staff and will help refresh the Organisational Development Strategy.
- b) **LEADER** – the Local Action Group (LAG) has now commenced consideration of Expressions of Interest from potential applicants as the first stage in delivery of the

new programme. We continue to rely on central government finalisation of guidance on technical and operational matters before we can open up approval of applications. More progress does appear to have been made on that in the last two months and we are hopeful of guidance being resolved by the end of March. The LAG has agreed a round of small grant awards from funds made available through the Authority in the year. The application to form a charitable organisation is with the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) and we hope to have a response on this application by the end of March. Some initial questions have been received and responded to on the proposed activities around investment in economic development and the fit of these with the charities' public interest test.

- c) **Staffing** – Staff recruited in the last quarter, including David Berry, Planning Manager (Forward Planning & Service Improvement); Adam Howarth (Leader Supervisor); Mark Pocock (Facilities Officer); Emma Grant (Business Administration Apprentice).
- d) **Facilities** – Work will commence shortly on the Ballater office – a partition wall is being built between the Reception area occupied by VisitScotland, and the main office. This will give VisitScotland a more functional TIC, and should be ready by Easter. We have fuller designs in place for remodelling of the Ballater office, however we do not intend to progress these until the end of the current period of agreement with office users in 2017 to avoid disruption of relocations of staff. With regards the Granttown on Spey extension, planning permission has been approved, and the contractors are due on site towards the end of August. We anticipate a 9 month construction period, with occupation by May 2017.

Upcoming Issues of Note:

- a) There are now two 'purdah' periods for the CNPA to take note of; the first starting from 24 March for the Scottish Parliament election on 5 May; then from 27 May for the EU Referendum on 23 June.

Grant Moir February 2016

Board member Update – Paul Easto

The new VisitScotland Spirit of Scotland brand campaign was launched on 10 February. This is the first time that VisitScotland has adopted a single global campaign across all markets. The campaign will be built upon the promotion of compelling digital content (video, images, blogs, storytelling) with an emphasis on social marketing channels such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. This approach is well suited to the story of the Cairngorms and the next steps for destinations and businesses within the Park is to fully understand how this content can be shared using Visit Scotland's reach. I would recommend reviewing the press release and supporting video content available here <http://mediacentre.visitscotland.org/pressreleases/have-you-scotspirit-1313656>

The Cairngorms Tourism Partnership ("CTP") working group kicked off its first meeting in Granttown on 22 February. The objective of the smaller working group is to support the delivery of key tourism actions agreed by the wider CTP. The initial focus for the working group is national park awareness and customer experience training plus 2016 marketing campaign activity. The group also considered how the members of the CTP could best

support the Deeside flood recovery from a tourism standpoint. In essence, delivering clear communications that a) Upper Deeside is very much open for tourism business and b) when visitors arrive they are aware of what happened and the remedial works which are underway.

Scottish Tourism Week takes place from 11-18 March. In addition to the 2 day conference in Edinburgh, there is a series of regional events taking place across the country. These events offer the opportunity to meet a range of organisations from the private and public sector and learn more about what is currently happening with tourism in Scotland. Details of all the planned events can be found here <http://www.scottishtourismweek.scot>