
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: CAIRNGORMS GREEN RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

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Purpose

1. The CNPA Board approved the Green Recovery Plan in June 2020. This paper has been produced to update the Board on the current position and plans ahead.
2. The recovery from Covid will continue to be challenging. This paper illustrates the breadth of activity the CNPA has been delivering since the last update, provided to Board in December 2020.

Recommendation

That the Board:

- a) **Note the progress being made on delivery of the Green Recovery Plan.**

Cairngorms Recovery Plan

The Plan contains a number of specific sections. Each section has been updated with relevant information on the work that has been undertaken since the last update, provided to Board in December 2020.

Action	Update
Cairngorms Recovery Fund to be developed	<p>Cairngorms Recovery Fund was launched on 20 August 2020. The Fund comprised £100k from CNPA and 30k from The Cairngorms Trust. The Board agreed four Guiding Principles for the Fund – Green solutions, Wellbeing and Economic growth, Employment and the Long-term aims of Cairngorms National Park. The Fund was widely promoted and 27 applications were received for a total level of support of £263k. The applications were assessed against a set of evaluation criteria and decisions to fund 13 projects were made by a Panel involving external partners including business and community groups.</p> <p>Full list of projects that have been awarded funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboyne & Upper Deeside Rotary Club: Litter Picking Upper Deeside • Dalwhinnie Community Council: Ben Alder Road Carpark • Blair Atholl & Area Tourism Association: Blair Atholl Community and Business Development project • Dee District Salmon Fishery Board: Glen Muick Woodland Connectivity • Spey Catchment Initiative: River Truim Riparian Planting • Caberfeidh Horizons: Building on Our Strengths • Boat of Garten Community Hall: COVID 19 recovery & Green Events • Cairngorms Business Partnership: Building a sustainable welcome for camper vans • Glenshee & Strathardle Tourist Association: Glenshee Visitor Centre • Castle Roy Trust SCIO: Castle Roy’s Covid Crisis • Growbiz Scotland: Supporting Creative Enterprise in the Cairngorms

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSPB: Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms • Braemar Community Ltd: Tomrichton Community Wood <p>For 2020/21 the Green Recovery Fund was re-launched using the same Principles with a budget of £300k, comprising 250k for CNPA and 50k from Cairngorms Trust. 37 applications were received, requesting a total of £533,000 from the Fund. (i.e. Fund was oversubscribed 1.8 times). There was good geographic spread of applications with interest from many community bodies, business associations and individual businesses. Several small applications to encourage community groups to buy litter-picking equipment have already been approved, totalling less than £3k. The Panel making final decisions on the Fund (which is chaired by CNPA Board member Willie Munro) is meeting on 2 June. An update on the successful applications will be provided at the Board meeting.</p>
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Business

Senior Responsible Officer – Murray Ferguson

Action	Update
Support the Cairngorms Tourism Emergency Response Group	The Group has met at least monthly throughout the Winter /Spring as a sub-group of the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership, chaired by CNPA Board member Janet Hunter. There has been good representation by partners from key private and public sector bodies within and around the Park. Key topics discussed included deployment of business support; research on business confidence and visitor aspirations; the #CairngormsTogether campaign; integration of tourism, community and management for visitors, input to national tourism discussions, etc. The Board considered a formal paper on delivery of the Tourism Action Plan in March 2021.

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Attend Scottish Government Rural Economy Stakeholder Group,	Attendance ongoing throughout COVID response period. Progress has been positive in securing positive policy outlook toward some form of Community-led Local Development (CLLD) replacement to the EU funded LEADER Programme. Discussions continue about the Scottish Government and UK Government’s policy approach to the “Shared Prosperity Fund” which is intended to replace EU funding following EU Exit
CNPA to support Cairngorms Business Partnership through grant funding.	CBP, along with other destination organisations (e.g. VisitAberdeenshire and MoraySpeyside, etc.) have done exemplary work over a very challenging period. CNPA provided additional support to CBP to encourage sustained membership and to focus on business survival, recovery and marketing. In addition, CBP successfully bid for Green Recovery Fund to work on motor-home information. In January 2021 CNPA supported CBPs bid to HIE for three year destination development funding and this has now been approved. Two jobs are being advertised at present and CBP are presenting plans to the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership meeting in June.
Visitor & resident marketing to be developed at appropriate time as lockdown measures ease	Marketing support and communications has been developed with CBP and coordinated through CTERG (see above) using the #CairngormsTogether campaign.
Develop Growbiz ‘Smart Villages’ to enhance digital connectivity and business resilience post Covid.	The development of three Smart Villages was supported through Growbiz in Ballater, Braemar, Grantown and similar work was undertaken at Park-wide scale focussing on the creative sector. The work was integrated with the Growbiz work-streams on enterprise support and mentoring and has been discussed at Economic Steering Group and Digital Steering Group.
Deliver a comprehensive planning service to enable recovery	The Planning Service has continued throughout the period with revised procedures in place for holding meetings online, (including participation by objectors and communities) and to cover for the challenges in conducting site visits. Local Development Plan was approved in March and is being rolled out with meetings and training sessions for communities. Significant casework has been progressed including at Cairngorm Mountain (motor homes) and Tomintoul (affordable housing) The Developers Forum took place in April to follow on from Local Development Plan approval.

<p>Seek resources to research, investigate and plan for how we build resilience, sustainability and diversification into Cairngorms economy and communities as part of the next iteration of the National Park Partnership Plan</p>	<p>Taken forwards through discussions about Heritage Horizons project and preparations for next National Park Partnership Plan. Several Green Recovery Fund projects have promoted new investment in the Park – for example, Skills Development Scotland are providing additional support to Growbiz to undertake skills deployment workshops within the Cairngorms NP.</p>
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Communities

Senior Responsible Officer – Murray Ferguson

Action	Update
<p>CNPA to support Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS), Marr Area Partnership (MAP) & Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust through Grant in Aid funding</p>	<p>Enhanced direct support has been provided. Regular meetings took place with network of Community Liaison Officers over autumn and winter. Assistance was provided in securing and deploying additional funds through local-authority led schemes. VABS and MAP staff are directly involved in making decisions about deployment of Green Recovery Fund.</p>
<p>Develop a new approach to community engagement (e.g. citizen’s assembly) at National Park level to build on the work undertaken through Covid response.</p>	<p>This work is a significant part of the Heritage Horizons bid and outcome will be known by late June. New approaches to community engagement are being considered for consultation on the NP Partnership Plan.</p>
<p>Cairngorms Dark Skies Observatory Project</p>	<p>Crown Estate Scotland decided not to take forward the application for funding with NatureScot. Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust and Cairngorms Business Partnership are promoting the Dark Skies Park. There are relevant Green Recovery Fund projects proposals awaiting assessment (see above).</p>

<p>Request funding from Scottish Government for LEADER network to support community and business development. Potential to update LDS as part of preparing for next NPPP</p>	<p>Attendance ongoing throughout COVID response period. Progress has been positive in securing positive policy outlook toward some form of Community Led Local Development (CLLD) replacement to the EU funded LEADER Programme, with Options Paper now in circulation for comment, supported by £3 million to consider and trial future CLLD approaches. Remaining and considerable dependencies on the overall Scottish budget position and UK Government’s policy development around the “Shared Prosperity Fund” which is intended to replace EU funding following EU Exit</p>
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Land Management, Climate Change and Conservation

Senior Responsible Officer – Pete Mayhew

Action	Update
<p>Support woodland expansion & peatland restoration work in the Cairngorms National Park</p>	<p>Woodland work is on target with 1000ha of woodland expansion being delivered each year Uptake of the Woodland Challenge Fund in its second year (2020/21) was significantly greater than in the first year, when there were just two successful applications. In Year 2 there were seven successful applications for projects that varied in scale from 1.4 ha to 135 ha.</p> <p>A 3 year peatland programme for the Cairngorms National Park has been agreed with Scottish Government to increase capacity and ensure over 1000ha per annum is delivered. The Programme Manager is tying up all administration for the legacy projects that we are taking over the funding from NatureScot. New staff are currently being recruited to CNPA. CNPA has coordinated meetings on the need for considerable further work on skills development with HIE, NatureScot and Skills Development Scotland.</p>

<p>Biodiversity Challenge Fund delivery.</p>	<p>Delivery underway and on track. Works include support for the Rare Invertebrates Cairngorms project, wader habitat improvement in the Eastern Cairngorms Moorland Programme, fresh water pearl mussel reinforcement, aspen planting and pine hoverfly translocation.</p>
<p>Catchment Management & river restoration delivery</p>	<p>Riparian planting underway on the rivers Truim and Muick. Plans being developed with land managers and community bodies for re-naturalisation of the Sluggan burn, surface water management in Kingussie (Gynack burn and confluence of the Calder/ Spey), Milton burn, extension of the Alt Lorgy re-naturalisation, removal of embankments on the Dee floodplain at Mar Lodge and plans for linking upstream management in the S.Esk catchment with the downstream communities of Brechin and Kirriemuir.</p>
<p>Stage 2 of Capercaillie Project submitted to NLHF</p>	<p>Application was submitted successfully for delivery phase and project is now underway to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve and create more habitat for capercaillie. 2. Help communities to create and deliver their own community-led actions for capercaillie. 3. Raise awareness of the plight of capercaillie and how people can help. 4. Research the genetic diversity of capercaillie in the National Park to help inform action. 5. Strengthen current capercaillie monitoring to enable more informed decisions.
<p>Developing Heritage Horizons bid to NLHF</p>	<p>Bid was submitted and awaiting outcome in late June 2021.</p>

Visitor Management

Senior Responsible Officer – Pete Mayhew (to April 2021) and Murray Ferguson (post April 2021)

Action	Update
Develop an easing of lockdown visitor management plan for the Cairngorms	Visitor Management Plans were developed with assistance for the Managing for Visitors Group which has met regularly throughout the period - there are specific plans for Western Cairngorms, Deeside and Angus Glens https://cairngorms.co.uk/working-together/tourism-business/managing-for-visitors/
Develop easing of lockdown communications strategy as part of wider visitor management plan	Communications strategy was put in place and significant activity has been delivered throughout the period. CNPA continues to promote responsible opportunities to safely enjoy the National Park shaping the emphasis on current Scottish Government guidance and using the overall ‘strap line’, developed with Cairngorms Business Partnership, of #CairngormsTogether. CNPA has participated in the national Visitor Management initiative coordinated by VisitScotland.
Support visitor management through the development of CNPA seasonal ranger service & existing ranger services through grant support	Recruitment of CNPA rangers is now complete - five -time rangers in post (including one FTE post designated to support the Capercaille Project), and nine seasonal rangers. Four young people have also joined the team as part of the national Kickstart programme where they will learn and experience ‘first hand’ the skills required to be a countryside ranger. Throughout the summer the team provide seven day coverage including weekends and weekend evenings. Between April and mid-May they have been on 328 patrols and spoken with 2,362 visitors, with the vast majority keen to learn more about the area and what they can do responsibly. Sadly during this period they have also collected 219 bin bags of litter. Nature Scotland, RSPB, Forestry & Land Scotland, NTS and Balmoral Estate have all increased their summer seasonal staff. The growing “family” of Cairngorms Rangers communicate via mobile phone message groups to share experience and any requirements.

<p>Capitalise on the increase in physical activity, engagement with nature, increase in local food networks & volunteering that has been seen in lockdown to encourage long-term behaviour change that benefits climate change, biodiversity, local economy</p>	<p>This work is significant part of the Heritage Horizons bid and outcome will be known in late June.</p> <p>Cairngorms Nature Big weekend promoted these messages.</p>
<p>Rural Transport in Cairngorms and Kilkenny (TICK)</p>	<p>The ‘Active Cairngorms E-bike’ project (ACE) is now running with 18 e-bike loans with local residents to mid-May. Procurement of electric minibus for B&S Community Transport Company is now underway with a vehicle expected to be on the roads this summer.</p> <p>The Cairngorms Trust are working with HITRANS to install an information hub in Aviemore which will provide real-time public transport information as well as Active Travel options for residents and visitors.</p> <p>Kilkenny LEADER Partnership have invited Cairngorms Trust representatives to the September “Integrated Rural & Urban Transport Evolution” Conference (iROUTE 2) to present on this project.</p> <p>The TICK project will run to end of November 2021 with the various strands of the project being either completed or feeding directly into future work from that point forwards.</p>
<p>Spaces for People</p>	<p>Specific project not taken forwards at this time. This work is significant part of the Heritage Horizons bid and outcome will be known in late June.</p>

Capital Investment

Senior Responsible Officer – David Cameron

Title	Update
Shovel Ready (can happen in f/y 2020/21)	
Glenmore NMU path extension to enhance RTIF funding.	Path now complete and project learning review due to take place shortly
Deeside Way Extension – Braemar to Invercauld Bridge	Funding has not been secured to build this section of new path to date. There is some potential to take forwards under Tourism Recovery Programme (Pathway to net Zero) and costs have been submitted to Scottish Enterprise for evaluation.
Eastern Cairngorms Moorland Project willow and juniper exclosures	Fencing of Delnadamph juniper exclosure is underway at the moment. Mar Lodge exclosures will be carried out later this year with peatland restoration project.
Community Conservation Grant Scheme	Relevant projects were funded through Green Recovery Fund
Medium Term (can potentially happen in 2021/22)	
Cairngorms Nature Big Weekend	For second year the programme was virtual on the Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend and was a great success. Royal Zoological Society for Scotland hosted webinar on Wildcats and the Saving Wildcats project, talking about the captive breeding work being carried out at the Highland Wildlife Park. Scottish Environment Link hosted webinar on “We need Nature, Nature Needs Us”, attended by over 100 people. All of this year’s content is still on the events website www.cairngormsnaturebigweekend.com
Speyside Way – Boat to Aviemore resurfacing & traffic lights on Kingussie Bridge	Grant offer issued for Speyside Way maintenance by Outdoor Access Trust Scotland. Road improvements and traffic lights under consideration for Capital spend in 2021

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Dalnain to Grantown NMU	Plans in development with landowners and community bodies
Strathspey Riparian Planting – river Truim	Plans in development with landowners and community bodies
Strathspey River Restoration	Integrated into Heritage Horizons project, outcome expected late June
Nethy/Spey Confluence Project	No progress to report
Aviemore Street Furniture and Interpretation project	See TICK project above
Motorhome discharge facilities at public toilets	Under consideration for capital spend programme
Badenoch visitor information enhancement	Under consideration for capital spend programme
Longer Term (2022/23 onwards)	
Rails to Grantown	No progress to report
Cairngorm Mountain masterplan	Masterplan for Cairngorm Estate (managed by HIE) expected to be launched in June 2021.
Highland Folk Park enhancements	No progress to report

Conclusion

3. There has been a significant amount of work undertaken to deliver the Green Recovery Plan. Many of the principles of the Green Recovery Plan will also be incorporated into the work as we look to develop for the next National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027.
4. CNPA will continue to monitor the work that we are undertaking under the Green Recovery Plan and will provide an update on delivery incorporated with future reports on the Corporate Plan.

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1 June 2021