
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: 'LEARNING' AND THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to update the Board on how recent work relating to learning and the Cairngorms National Park has been progressed and is now being embedded within the Park Plan. The paper also seeks to clarify what 'learning' means in the context of the Park.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Note the different aspects of learning and the key role it plays in delivering the aims of the Cairngorms National Park
- b) Note the ways in which learning is to be embedded within the Park Plan.

Executive Summary

Learning is defined as the "*Act process or experience of gaining knowledge or skill*". It can encompass activities relating to lifelong learning, education outside the classroom, capacity building, active citizenship and vocational skills training. The Cairngorms National Park can be both a place where learning takes place and a focus of learning. Rather than having a separate learning strategy or plan, different aspects and concepts of learning are to be embedded within the Park Plan, particularly the priorities for action to which they primarily relate. With regards delivery, the Authority has not got staff resource in place to effectively engage with the education sector and to develop learning resources. This issue will be reviewed once the Park Plan has been firmed up.

'LEARNING' AND THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK – FOR INFORMATION

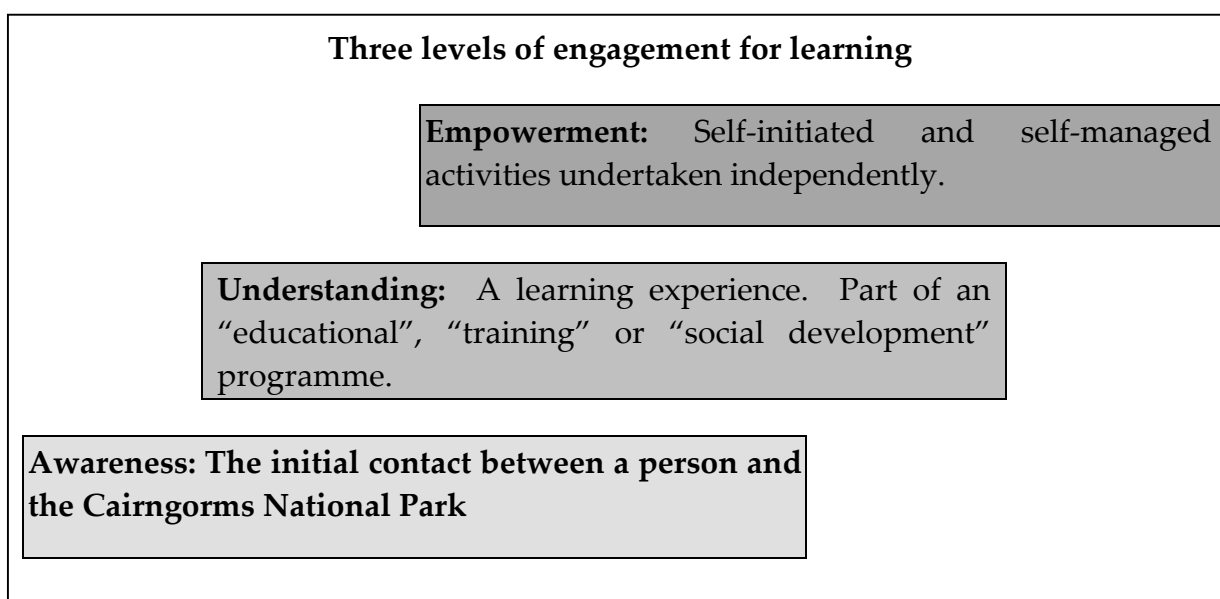
Background

1. On 10 February 2006, the Board considered a discussion paper entitled 'The CNPA's Role in Education and Inclusion'. The intention at that point in time, as explained in the paper, was to prepare separate education and inclusion plans. The paper provided an initial opportunity for the Board to discuss what the Authority's role in these policy areas should be and, subsequently, Richard Stroud and Lucy Grant volunteered to sit on a steering group to oversee the work.
2. The steering group also comprised officers from the CNPA's Economic and Social Development, Visitor Services and Recreation, and Strategic Policy and Programme Management Groups with additional input from Highland Council and Moray College. The development of the steering group's thinking was informed by work undertaken by David Pirnie Ltd, an external consultancy, who identified relevant legislative and policy considerations and good practice elsewhere, and led an extensive process of engagement and consultation with relevant stakeholders. The output reports from this work are available for any Board members who wish to see them.
3. As will be explained later in the paper, it has been concluded that it is not appropriate to produce separate learning and inclusion plans. Rather the relevant approaches and actions will be embedded within the Park Plan and the development of the Authority's future Corporate and Operational Plans. Furthermore, while they are related and there are areas of overlap, issues around learning and inclusion need to be considered separately. Therefore this paper updates the Board on the work on learning, while inclusion will be picked up in the next 'Park for All' Board paper which is scheduled for September.

What Do We Mean by 'Learning'?

4. As was suggested by the Board in February, the focus of the work was changed to consider 'learning' rather than 'education' which was perceived as being more formal in nature and a more constraining term. The Oxford Dictionary definition of learning is the "*Act, process or experience of gaining knowledge or skill*". So, in effect, when we talk about "learning" in the context of the Cairngorms National Park, we are describing a wider, more inclusive range of activities than the more traditional view of "education".
5. Learning, specifically in relation to the aims of the CNP, can be broken down into several themes/approaches that are increasingly affecting mainstream educational/learning frameworks. This is useful when covering such a wide topic area and developing common agendas when working with education delivery partners and existing learning frameworks:

- a) **Life Long Learning:** this describes learning as a life long process from the first needs of early education to learning opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds. This underlines a commitment that anyone of any age can learn about the CNP and its special qualities in a variety of locations both formal and informal.
 - b) **Education Outside the classroom:** drawing on the special qualities of the CNP this is learning that actively encourages experimental learning through direct experience of the landscape, wildlife and people of the area. The John Muir Award is a good example of this type of learning.
 - c) **Capacity Building:** this term describes supporting the development of knowledge and skills for communities and organisations within the CNP so that they can become more active, confident and informed in delivering the Park's aims.
 - d) **Active Citizenship:** this is learning that teaches people about core values, respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society. This is important in promoting a sense of ownership of, and respect for, the special places in Scotland.
 - e) **Vocational Skills Training:** this contributes towards the vibrancy and diversity of the local economy. The development of vocational skills helps people gain new or improved employment, whilst also contributing to business competitiveness. In the context of the National Park, this can include training relating to land management, conservation, cultural and natural heritage etc.
6. Learning not only covers different themes/approaches but it also takes place at different levels of engagement. These levels of engagement are shown below. People can engage at any level and can progress through the levels, if they so wish. This is an important concept to take on board in the design of awareness and understanding actions, so that there are clear 'routes' to the next level.



Relationship with the Draft Park Plan

7. Learning is effectively a means to an end. It is a 'tool' which can help in achieving all four of the Park's aims. In considering the previous aim of creating a learning action plan and how this might best fit with the draft Park Plan priorities for action, it has become clear that we might simply be slicing the cake in a different way and that this could unnecessarily complicate future delivery of the Park Plan.
8. The process of looking at the draft Park Plan from a learning perspective has, however, been extremely useful in identifying areas where it can be improved. The engagement of a wide range of stakeholders in this process will also have helped in securing greater 'buy in' to the final Plan, while at the same time building our relationship with key learning partners.
9. While learning is relevant to all seven of the draft Park Plan priorities for action, the following have been identified as the key ones where learning mechanisms have a role to play -

Developing Awareness and Understanding of the Park

10. This was seen as being the top priority area for developing learning opportunities by CNP learning stakeholders. Key actions related to this were identified as:
 - a) Developing educational materials based on the special qualities of the Park linked to the national curriculum and other learning frameworks.
 - b) Training on the special qualities of the Park for those working with visitors and residents.
 - c) Continued support of the John Muir Award as an exemplar vehicle for "beyond the classroom" learning in the CNP.

Other recommendations for actions identified in this section were:

- d) *Pilot a "Young Scotland" volunteering scheme with appropriate partners (rangers services, local trusts, etc)*
- e) *Series of presentations/interactive workshops about the Park and its special qualities that can be used in pre-schools, schools and more informal learning environments.*

Making Tourism and Businesses sustainable

11. This was also seen as a clear priority area for learning opportunities by CNP learning stakeholders. Key actions related to this priority were identified as:
 - a) Developing a youth apprenticeship scheme/vocational training opportunities. *(See. Vocational Training Paper: Claire Ross/John Thorne)*
 - b) Create effective mechanisms for two-way communication with business stakeholders.

Supporting Integrated Land Management

12. This priority was also highlighted as having a strong learning element by CNP learning stakeholders. Key actions related to this priority area were identified as:
- a) More coordinated advice and training to assist support of public benefits
(see. LBBT paper: Claire Ross/Kate Christie)
 - b) Advice and information networks to promote good practice and support management

Consultation

13. As previously stated, there has been an extensive stakeholder consultation process. This has included -
- a) Discussion workshops on Learning with the Economic and Social Development Forum;
 - b) Postal survey of learning/education deliverers;
 - c) Focus group meetings with learning/education deliverers and learners;
 - d) Stakeholder consultation events (Nethy Bridge and Strath Don);
 - e) The consultation has also generated reports on current policy/legislation and good practice in the area of learning/education.
14. The Authority's Management Team have been closely involved in considering this work and its links with the Park Plan and agreeing the way in which it is to be progressed.

Policy Context

15. Education/learning is central to the long-term vision of the Scottish Executive, and the CNPA and its partners should seek to work within this context and contribute to the achievement of national policies in these areas. Specifically:
- a) *"Life through Learning; learning through Life"*, the Scottish Executive's lifelong learning strategy that aims to provide education for a more inclusive society.
 - b) *"Curriculum for Excellence" Scottish Executive 2002*, promoting a balance between "academic and vocational" subjects and include a wider range of experiences, particularly pertinent to rural communities.
 - c) *"Education Outside the Classroom Manifesto"* learning that actively encourages learning through nature: experiential learning that can stimulate and inspire; foster independence; aid personal and social development; and can often motivate reluctant learners.

Delivering Sustainability

16. Learning is a vehicle for promoting sustainability at all levels from courses on sustainable land management to raising awareness on conservation issues and the importance of long-term strategic planning for local communities.

Delivering a Park for All

17. Learning is an important way of raising awareness and understanding of a wide range of opportunities that people can get involved in. It is a bridge to generating

more interest, and “buy in” to the CNP. The Park is an exceptional practical, “hands on” learning environment this approach working particularly well with traditionally non-academic students

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

18. Developing strong partnerships with learning users and deliverers is essential to developing effective efficient and best value in the delivery of learning activities that promote the aims of the CNP. It is also a vehicle to raise awareness and promote understanding of the Park enhancing the experience of visitors and those that live within the CNP.

Implications

Financial Implications

19. The financial implications of progressing the relevant Park Plan actions will be considered in due course and addressed via the Authority’s corporate and operational planning processes.

Presentational Implications

20. There are no specific presentational issues arising from this paper. The finalised Park Plan, though, will need to take account of this work and the outputs from the stakeholder engagement exercise.

Implications for Stakeholders

21. The implications for other stakeholders in terms of their involvement in delivering specific actions will be clarified through the Park Plan priorities for action.

Next Steps

22. As explained, learning activities will now be embedded within the Park Plan. There will be no future reports on learning as a separate policy area. Rather the various learning activities will be considered within the context of the Park Plan priorities for action and reporting on planning and delivery of learning activities will take place on that basis.

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