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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DECISION

**Title:** The Role of the Land Based Business Training Project in 2007

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to outline the proposed role of the Land Based Business Training Project (LBBTP) for 2007, and to seek agreement to the CNPA's continued support and financial contribution to the project for this period.

### **Recommendations**

That the Board:

- a) Agree to the continuation of the LBBT during 2007 and to the pilot of a new 'Public Benefits for All' strand to the project.
- b) Note the proposed next steps.

### **Executive Summary**

The Board has regularly expressed its support in principle for the LBBTP. The positive impact of the project on both beneficiaries and the CNPA as a whole is evident. However, as we approach 2007, the current European funding, which has been the mainstay of the project to date, is coming to an end. The Rural Development Plan for Scotland may provide a future funding source for training in the CNP. However, the timetable for its implementation is unclear. In addition to this, until the Park Plan is finalised, it would be premature to make long term plans for the project. This paper seeks a "stop gap" for 2007, during which time a clear view can be reached on the future of the LBBTP in the context of the finalised Park Plan. At the same time, it is becoming clear that the brokerage function that is at the core of the LBBTP is a potential means of delivering other elements of the Park Plan. It is therefore also proposed that the beneficiary base of the project is widened and that a broadening of the project's focus is piloted during 2007.

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## THE ROLE OF THE LAND BASED BUSINESS TRAINING PROJECT IN 2007 - FOR INFORMATION

### Background

1. The aim of the Land based Business Training Project (LBBTP) is to help land based business in the National Park to become more economically viable through giving them training support, whilst at the same time providing them with the skills to deliver the aims of the National Park. A Land Based Business (LBB) includes any business that is involved in the use and/or management of land, such as estates, farms, outdoor recreation providers, golf clubs, horticultural nurseries, fishing and forestry. Most of these businesses are, by their very nature, involved in tourism to varying degrees.
2. The rationale in making only land based businesses eligible for the training support was that in addition to being the custodians of the Park's natural, and to an extent cultural heritage, they provide:-
  - a) a significant workforce within the National Park
  - b) management of wildlife and landscapes
  - c) housing in rural areas
  - b) timber as well as livestock and crops
  - c) recreation and tourism opportunities
  - d) encouragement for responsible access to the countryside.
3. The project deals with two primary issues. It contributes to the continued economic development of a core sector that overlaps with a number of other core sectors, including tourism and recreation. At the same time, it is a mechanism for the delivery of Public Benefits associated with the aims of the National Park
4. The training support offered through the project includes;
  - a) Part funding for commercial training courses, which cover a wide range of topics in the following categories:
    - i) Use and maintenance of machinery/equipment/vehicles
    - ii) Environmental
    - iii) Management development courses and business skills courses
    - iv) Health and safety
    - v) Customer care
    - vi) IT
    - vii) Technical Training
  - b) Fully funded Public Benefit courses (see Annex 2) ;
  - c) Help to identify training needs;
  - d) Finding trainers and courses to meet those needs;
  - e) Finding others who are interested in the same training to make up course numbers;

- f) Influencing course dates and venues to suit the location and time commitments unique to LBBs;
  - g) Providing advice about changes in legislation and new training opportunities; and
  - h) Providing ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure high quality courses run by good trainers.
5. A paper setting out the plans for the future of the Land Based Business Training Project (LBBTP) was presented to the Board in February 2006. The Board noted the success of the current LBBTP, agreed that there seems to be a market for the coordination role which the CNPA is filling through the project, and supported in principle the continuation of the project.
6. The outcome of the Board's discussion also allowed for the potential development of a linked "Public Benefits for All" training project and a "Youth Training Project".

### **Important Features of the LBBTP**

7. The difficulty for businesses prior to the project was not the existence of training courses, but in the sourcing, facilitating and organising of these courses. The LBBTP meets all these elements, and the need for these elements will remain. Although several of these elements can be delivered by other organisations, the project must be managed by the CNPA, as the success of the project rests on the facts that:-
- a) No other organisation provides the "one stop shop" that the LBBTP provides i.e. the "brokering" function it fulfils.
  - b) The project team has established such good relationships with beneficiary businesses and individuals that these businesses/individuals feel comfortable about approaching the team with their needs, and feel confident that their needs will be acted upon.
  - c) The CNPA is uniquely placed to deliver the "non-commercial" Public Benefit training to help businesses deliver the Park's aims.
8. The brokering function is significant as a potential model for delivering other elements of the Park Plan. It is essentially about linking customers and providers in a more efficient and effective manner. This point is explored in more depth later in the paper.

### **Project Performance**

9. In 2004, 419 people, working for 64 land based businesses in the National Park received training support through the project. In 2005, 711 people working for 132 LBBs in the National Park received training support through the project. The forecast for 2006 is that 825 people working for 150 LBBs will be beneficiaries of the project.

10. The project team has just concluded a survey of its business beneficiaries and of the training providers that they have worked with, identifying how the LBBTP has added value to these businesses. Annex 1 sets out the survey results in detail, but key conclusions are that the project has significantly helped the staff of LBBs to work more efficiently, has inspired LBBs to adopt a training ethos, and has created a positive economic impact for the training providers. The evidence strongly suggests that the LBBTP has played a major role in making LBBs more profitable and more visible. 85% of the respondents had sent staff on Public Benefit courses, and of these 91 % said that the Public Benefit courses have helped their businesses contribute to the aims of the National Park.
11. In addition, an independent external evaluation of the project has just been completed (June 2006). The evaluation report concludes that: - *“the project clearly continues to have an important role to play in:*
  - a) *awareness raising (on a wide range of strategically important issues);*
  - b) *skills training;*
  - c) *creating adaptable and efficient workforces;*
  - d) *job creation;*
  - e) *culture change in land based businesses;*
  - f) *delivering public benefits;*
  - g) *community capacity building*
  - h) *sustainable communities;*
  - i) *sustainable use of the land;*
  - j) *protection of the natural heritage.”*
12. Finally, the project has recently been recognised as an example of national best practice in the Forward Scotland report of 2005 on “Skills, Training and Recruitment in Rural Natural Heritage Organisations”, commissioned by the Scottish Executive, BP, Jobcentre Plus and SNH. The report suggests that the LBBTP is a role model and potential solution that could be rolled out in other areas to increase access to training in rural Scotland. The report validates many of the aspects of the project that are vital to making a difference and encouraging training to provide a more skilled workforce delivering the four aims - for example, raising awareness of existing courses and developing courses to meet local needs.

## Issues

13. The LBBTP is currently funded until 31 December 2006, with the primary funding being provided by European Social Fund, through the Highlands and Island Partnership Programme (HIPP), and the Scottish Objective 3 programme. Both of these programmes come to an end at the end of this year.
14. Initial indications are that a new European Programme will be available, but only from the Autumn of 2007. Informal feedback from our European Funders is that the **principle** of the LBBTP may be supported through the new programme. However, there is a clear gap in the availability of European funding for 2007.

15. The recent consultation on the Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Scotland included training as one of many possible Tier 3 measures. It also notes the benefits for delivery that accrue from a strong integrated advisory network. Decisions on the RDP's implementation from 2007 will be made over the next few years and the timetable is unclear. There is no doubt that there will be limited funding available under the scheme. We are working closely with the Scottish Executive on the implementation of the programme and our position, as agreed by Board June 2006, included the wish to identify the priorities in the Cairngorms and have an effective advisory service to deliver them. This advisory service would include the provision of training to advisors and participants. Therefore, the LBBTP could be a mechanism to deliver this quality training. The RDP is open to a wider range of participants, than the current beneficiaries of the project, which would have implications for the future of the project.

### **Options for delivery**

16. Given this possible 12 month funding gap, there are 3 options for delivery;
- a) *Option 1:* In the short term (i.e. for 2007), whilst we await the finalisation of the Park Plan, as well as the outcomes of the Scottish Rural development Programme, the LBBTP should continue with its current activity;
  - b) *Option 2:* Again, in the short term, the project should continue but with an expanded focus.
  - c) *Option 3:* Discontinue the LBBTP

#### ***Option 1 – Continue Unchanged***

17. This option would allow continued delivery of the benefits previously outlined. It would allow time to assess the future opportunities presented by the Park Plan and the Scottish Rural Development Programme without committing ourselves to a particular delivery structure in the longer term. Given the intensive training support that has been provided to date, the number of commercial training courses would be reduced, while the public benefits training would be expanded.

#### ***Option 2 – Expanding the Focus of the LBBT***

18. As was highlighted in February, many of the training courses provided through the LBBT project, are actually of more general interest beyond the land based sector (for example, training relating to biodiversity, cultural heritage or the Scottish Outdoor Access Code). There is an opportunity to provide such courses for the general public and those working with visitors, which would particularly contribute towards the draft Park Plan priority for action on 'Developing Awareness and Understanding of the Park'. Current draft actions under this priority include:-
- a) A range of initiatives to encourage visitors to use the ranger services as an accessible source of specialist information about the Park;
  - b) Training on the special qualities (natural and cultural heritage for those working with visitors.

19. The project could very readily expand its beneficiary base in this way, thus contributing more broadly towards the achievement of the Park's aims. There would be a need to address barriers to participation, such as transport costs or childcare arrangements if the audience was to be broadened.
20. Also flagged up in the February Board paper was the idea of a "Youth Training Project", to focus on the delivery of snapshot training courses for young people. This has not been considered as an option in the context of the LBBTP, but rather would be considered as part of the 'Skills Passport' action referred to in the preceding paper – *Vocational Training support for Young People*. Nevertheless, given the networks and relationships that have been established by the LBBTP team, it is possible that elements of the vocational training actions could be delivered via the LBBTP. This possibility will be examined in working up the detail of the vocational training proposals and could be pursued if either option 1 or 2 are agreed.
21. As was referred to earlier in the paper, the brokering role that the LBBTP fulfils is of wider interest in the context of the Park Plan. The above expansion of focus for the project indicates some such opportunities but there are others. For example, we are currently considering how best to promote opportunities to visit the Park to people from targeted social inclusion groups and linking this with the wealth of providers that exist in the Park. There are also opportunities to link people who would like to carry out Park related volunteering with organisations that specialise in supporting volunteering. A brokerage approach may well be appropriate for such areas of work. Expanding the focus of the LBBTP could thus be considered as a pilot for developing this brokerage function further.

### ***Option 3 – Discontinue Project***

22. In considering the options it is only right that we should address the question of what would happen should the project be discontinued.
  - a) All but one survey response from LBBs suggested that the CNPA was best placed to deliver the co-ordination and support function. In addition, the Trainer's Survey indicated that it is unlikely that trainers could deliver the project with the same value and impartiality – none could deliver all the elements that the LBBTP delivers. It is clear therefore that should the project cease, no organisation would replace or deliver what the LBBTP currently achieves.
  - b) The benefits previously outlined would be lost. Furthermore, the LBBTP is a positive tool of engagement with land managers, and discontinuation would have potential reputational issue with LBBs.
  - c) Discontinuation would free up funding for other Park Plan activities.
23. In weighing up the three options, it seems clear that the benefits of continuing with the project outweigh those of discontinuing it. The real options that should be considered are therefore options 1 and 2. Option 2 provides an opportunity to pilot

an expansion of the LBBTP's brokerage role, with the potential for future application in other areas of Park related activity.

## Recommendation

24. **It is recommended that Board members agree to the continuation of the LBBT during 2007 and to the pilot of a new 'Public Benefits for All' strand to the project.**

## Beyond 2007

25. There is clearly continuing value from the activities currently delivered through the LBBTP and potential value from adapting its brokerage approach for other areas of work. However, in the long term it is likely to be difficult to keep re-shaping the project to tap into different funding sources. As such, careful consideration will need to be given to how the outcomes to which the LBBTP contributes can best be delivered in the longer term. Options could include looking at alternative means of delivery or, alternatively, mainstreaming the activities within core of CNPA. This latter option would provide greater flexibility in terms of how staff could be deployed but possibly at an additional cost to the Authority. Should the Board agree to the continuation of the existing, or an expanded version of the LBBTP, these options will be reviewed over the course of the coming year.

## Policy Context

26. As has been outlined in previous papers, the LBBTP project is a key delivery tool for a number of elements of the current CNPA Corporate and Operational Plans.
27. Clearly The LBBTP also links well to the draft Park Plan. In terms of the Park Plan Vision, the project links to each of the three themes:-
- a) **Conserving, enhancing and managing the Park** - many of the public benefit courses, delivered and planned, are directly linked to the theme of enhancing the distinctive landscape and species of the Park through management, particularly those on Habitat management, and the protection of native species (eg Water Vole conservation through Mink Control, Wildflower Management, The understanding and Management of Wildfires etc). The theme also focuses on the preservation of local architecture and traditions, which are covered in courses on "Interpreting the Historic Landscape", and "Storytelling"
  - b) **Communities living and working in the Park** – "Public Benefit Training for All" involves targeted courses for communities that will help them to be able to take a part in managing the Park and in making use of its special qualities, including courses on "Gaining an Awareness of the Recreational, Historic and Cultural opportunities for locals and visitors in the National Park", and "The Maintenance of Access paths". Furthermore, the vision is that all people in the park will be able to find training and education, which the project directly achieves.

- c) **Understanding and Enjoying the Park** - Through the delivery of such courses as “How to manage and deliver Interpretation”, “Getting your message across in writing”, residents and visitors are being well informed about the area, and able to enjoy, understand and support the special qualities of the area.
- d) The delivery of the Public Benefit training is a mechanism to help the Park’s communities achieve all 4 of the Park’s aims (Annex 2). In addition, the LBBTP also contributes to the delivery of all seven Priorities for Action for 2007 – 2012.

## Implications

### *Financial Implications*

28. The 2006/2007 Operational Plan already has a provision of £32 147 towards the first 3 months the project’s 2007 costs. The likely additional funding requirement for the next 9 months would be £34,213 or £54,213 depending upon whether the project expands its focus or not.
29. Should the project continue, it is planned that the LBB contribution towards the commercial training courses increases to 60% (rather than 50% in the Speyside area and 55% in Deeside). This would ensure parity across the Park. In addition, the survey results indicate that whilst the funding element of LBBTP support is rated by LBBs as being the most important element, the other elements are very close in importance to funding, particularly “ensuring courses take place locally”, and “advice about new training opportunities”. It makes sense to continue to provide funding support, albeit on a slightly reduced scale. The LBB contribution of 60% of commercial training costs amounts to £53 852.
30. Other potential funding avenues are being explored, including the Local Enterprise Companies, with whom initial discussions have been positive. Furthermore, although the 2000 – 2006 ESF Programme is coming to an end, a small sum of funds remains which the project is well placed to access.
31. Given the above, our assessment of the potential funding packages for the two continuation options (compared with forecast 2006 figures) is as follows –

<b>Funding</b>	<b>2006 (Forecast)</b>	<b>2007 (Option 1 – Continue unchanged)</b>	<b>2007 (Option 2 – Expand project)</b>
CNPA	£ 53,853	£ 66,360	£ 86,360
ESF	£ 116,456	£ 30,000	£ 30,000
Private	£ 75,207	£ 53,852	£ 53,852
Other		£ 25,000	£ 25,000
<b>Project Cost</b>	<b>£ 245,516</b>	<b>£ 175,212</b>	<b>£ 195,212</b>



32. Funding will be sought on this basis for the option agreed by the Board. If additional partner funding can be identified, this will of course be pursued. Formal funding approval will be sought from the Board once the appropriate funding package has been finalised.

### *Presentational Implications*

33. All Public Benefit courses are advertised in the local press, and most courses are followed up with press releases to the local and National media. This publicity is key to promoting not only the Public benefit courses that are delivered, but the National Park Authority as a whole. This benefit is true also for funding partners. The project is an important tool for positive engagement with land owners and land managers, as well as with the general public.

### *Implication for Stakeholders*

34. The main stakeholders of the LBBTP are the LBBs. To date their financial contribution has been no more than 55%. The proposed increase in their contribution to 60% will have an obvious, but small financial impact on these businesses. However, the wider support they receive through the project is as important to them as the funding. Most businesses have reported added value to their businesses.
35. The proposal of establishing funding partner relationships will have financial impacts on these partners, but will also have positive, knock- on publicity impacts, and should help the partners achieve their own targets.

### **Delivering Sustainability**

36. The project plays a major role in ensuring that the Parks resources are managed, used and enjoyed in ways that conserve and enhance them for future generations. This is done currently through a variety of public benefit courses for land managers, as well as through support for commercial courses that help these businesses operate more viably.

### **Delivering a Park for All**

37. Through the delivery of Public Benefit courses, the project encourages beneficiaries to learn about the Park and help deliver its aims. Examples are courses like "The Identification of the Cairngorm Wildlife, and Habitat Management", as well as courses for land managers on "How to use signage to promote responsible Access", courses for Communities on "how to maintain Access Paths", and courses for the public on "The Public's responsibilities in terms of the SOAC". The project is a delivery mechanism for the "Park for All" and makes targeted training accessible to all, by taking the training TO people living and working in the Park, and by making it relevant to them.

### **Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency**

38. The LBBTP team have developed a simple but successful model for the support of training. This "brokering" role has been identified as the way forward for dealing with constraints to skills development in rural Scotland. It does not duplicate the work of any other agency, and continues to deliver economy, effectiveness and efficiency. The project operates with the minimum of bureaucracy, under a small team whose knowledge and experience are best placed to take the "Public Benefit Training for All" element forward.
39. The project team regularly consults with internal and external partners to deliver public benefit training courses that best meet the needs of both. Many of these courses would not take place if left to the organisation of internal partners, and the central coordinating/facilitating role of the team makes the project operate with maximum effectiveness and efficiency

### Next Steps

40. Should option 1 or 2 be approved, then associated funding package will be firmed up and financial approval sought from the Board.
41. Once the Park Plan is finalised, and as the Rural Development Programme for Scotland is implemented, the Authority will be better placed to identify the most appropriate future options for the delivery of the actions and outcomes that flow from the LBBTP. Consideration will also be given to the potential for delivering other activities through such a brokerage model. A paper on the future of the LBBTP beyond 2007 will be brought to the Board next year.

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