
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

**Title: CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS WORK PROGRAMME
 DELIVERED BY UPPER DEESIDE ACCESS TRUST 2006/07**

Prepared by: Bob Grant, Senior Outdoor Access Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to detail the proposed programme of works for 2006/07 and seek Board approval to fund the programme.

Recommendations

- a) That the Board approve funding of £100,000 towards the 2006/07 programme of works being delivered through the Upper Deeside Access Trust.

Executive Summary

The Upper Deeside Access Trust is seeking £100,000 support from CNPA towards an agreed programme of works for the 2006/07 financial year. The total value of the programme amounts to £195,000. This is an interim year of funding. - Future decisions by the Board will determine the best means of funding outdoor access infrastructure across the whole Park from 2007/08 onwards.

The funding of this interim year is included in the current operational plan. As this project contribution amounts to over £25,000 it requires Board approval. As such, the case for funding is supported by a full expenditure justification form which is attached to this paper. Approval from SEERAD will also be required.

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EXPENDITURE JUSTIFICATION

1. Title

Contribution towards work programme delivered by Upper Deeside Access Trust 2006/07

2. Expenditure Category

| | | | | | |
|---------|--|-------|---|-------------|--|
| Project | | Grant | X | Consultancy | |
|---------|--|-------|---|-------------|--|

3. Description

Summary

- a) The Upper Deeside Access Trust is seeking £100,000 support from CNPA towards an agreed programme of works for the 2006/07 financial year with the programme and associated costs shown in Annex 1 to this document.

Background

- b) The Upper Deeside Access Trust has delivered a wide-range of path projects and associated infrastructure and information over the last 6 years. CNPA has not contributed to a joint programme of works for UDAT before; funding to date has come from Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Balmoral Estate with further income deriving from both the car parking charges at Glen Muick and sale of leaflets covering promoted walks. In addition, a large scale path programme managed in part by UDAT – the Eastern Cairngorms Access Project – attracted funding from the Heritage lottery Fund, European funding and Angus Council. The ECAP project comes to an end in September 06.
- c) Changes in legislation resulting in the statutory elements of access being delivered by the Cairngorms National Park Authority rather than Aberdeenshire Council and a large scale European funded project coming to an end, have resulted in both UDAT and partners considering the future funding and delivery mechanism for access in the Upper Deeside area. These issues are addressed by the draft Outdoor Access Strategy that has been considered by the Board and is currently out to consultation.
- d) The lead-time for such change is long and whilst it was originally hoped that long term decisions would have been in place by the beginning of the 2006/07 financial year, this has not proved possible. To ensure that a range of suitable projects can still be taken forward and to provide some stability to existing UDAT staff it is proposed to offer a single year grant to UDAT.

4. Rationale and Strategic Fit

- a) The range of work planned provides a mix of work on low ground and in the mountains. A proportion of the planned work is partly outwith the Park boundary (ie around Tarland) but within few kilometres of it.
- b) Improving path provision will enable people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the special qualities of the Park and, for the upland areas, help improve the recreational experience while protecting fragile plant communities from pressures arising from outdoor access. These are both strategic objectives within the draft Park Plan. In addition, the draft Outdoor Access Strategy has policies that seek to improve the path provision and quality and seeks greater provision for people of all abilities and multi-use. The proposed programme has therefore a very close fit with the park Plan and associated strategies.
- c) The identification of works within the UDAT programme has stemmed from early consultation with stakeholders and through an area-wide survey for the higher level paths. Much of the work planned complements work that has already been undertaken, for example the Quoich/Slugain path (linking into the large scale programme delivered by NTS on Mar Lodge Estate) and the Glas Allt path repairs (providing a linked circuit with the large scale improvements done on the Ladder path on Lochnagar over the last year). There is therefore a high degree of stakeholder support for the planned works.

5. Option Analysis

- a) Management of this programme of works provides an overarching, professionally led approach to a diverse range of individual projects. It would be possible to have them taken forward as single, stand alone projects developed through individual communities or estates. However, such an approach would involve a greater degree of management from potential funders and there would not be the confidence of delivery that can be assured through UDAT who have an excellent track record in this field. In addition there would be a greater risk of failure without an experienced project manager overseeing the work. For all these reasons, the most appropriate means of delivery is through UDAT.

6. Risk Assessment

- a) The risks to CNPA of funding this programme are very low. UDAT have considerable experience of handling a diverse annual programme of works such as these. The main risk is in relation to finding suitable funding partners but all other funding sources have been agreed (see item 7 below).
- b) A further slight risk would exist if there was significant staff turnover with the Trust but already the Trust utilise self-employed contractors on a regular basis to augment the work of the staff and therefore staff turnover is unlikely to pose a significant threat to delivery. We are aware that the UDAT Project Manager will be working part time

because of a period of special leave but there are satisfactory contingency arrangements in place and we do not anticipate undue difficulties.

- c) Permissions have already been obtained for the majority of works with others in advanced stages of planning. All land managers concerned have given consent for the works to take place. As such there would appear to be little external risk posed through permissions being refused.
- d) Financial risks have also been considered as UDAT operate a “live” bank account. Cash flow projections have been considered and are based on funding streams being delivered at agreed times.

7. Costs and Funding

- a) The cost to deliver the full work programme is shown in Annex 1. In summary, the programme amounts to £195,000 and funding is sought as follows:-

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Aberdeenshire Council | £20,000 |
| Scottish Natural Heritage | £70,000 |
| CNPA | £100,000 |
| Private Estates | £5,000 |
| Total | £195,000 |

- b) The funds to contribute to this project were identified in the Operational Plan agreed by the Board.
- c) In addition, UDAT have a revenue stream which funds maintenance on capital works that have already been completed. In the current year this is expected to amount to £38,000. The sources of revenue are shown towards the bottom of Annex 1.
- d) It should be noted that Scottish Enterprise Grampian had originally expected to contribute £30,000 to the programme as they had contributed similar amounts in previous years. However, funding difficulties at a national level precipitated a late withdrawal of their offer of funds. The programme of works shown in Annex 1 has already been rationalised to take account of this late decision.

8. Deliverables/Impact Assessment

- a) Each product will result in improved outdoor access opportunities within the Upper Deeside area. Combined, they will enhance the range of opportunities that already exist in the Area and will make a positive contribution to the local and visitor experience of the area.
- b) There are a range of measures that will be used to gauge success. These will include feedback from visitors, reduced damage to fragile ecosystems and sales of leaflets.

- c) The monitoring of all path and other projects is undertaken through the UDAT Management Group. CNPA is represented on this group by Bob Grant, Senior Outdoor Access Officer. Progress reports, including financial monitoring are presented to this Group quarterly. The Management Group have responsibility for agreeing changes to the work programme although such changes do require to be ratified by the UDAT Board of Directors.

9. Value for Money

- a) The programme of works provides good value for money by delivery being undertaken through a single organisation with a recognised pedigree for delivering high quality work timeously.

10. Exit or Continuation Arrangements (where applicable)

- a) This is a one year offer of funding. Future funding will be dependant on decisions CNPA take on how best to deliver the outdoor access remit within the Park as discussed with Board on 30 June 06. At present, active consideration is being given to the creation of a Park-wide Trust, but this is one of several options under consideration.
- b) A single year funding provides continuity for existing UDAT staff, ensures a broad programme of work is delivered and allows CNPA work up the options to ensure sufficient time is available to enact any changes from 2007/08.

11. Additionality

- a) The proposed work programme does not duplicate or impinge on other projects.
- b) Failure to fund the work programme would reduce the amount of individual projects that could be undertaken in year. In addition, the reduction in scale of works would probably have a staffing impact on UDAT.

12. Stakeholder Support

- a) UDAT has broad support in the relevant communities and has representatives from this wider group on the Management Group. There are some 47 affiliated organisations who are kept up to date with the work of UDAT and who are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting to feed in their views on the work of UDAT.
- b) The other funding agencies: particularly SNH and Aberdeenshire Council hold UDAT in high regard.

13. Recommendation

- a) This is a one year offer of funding which will help deliver a good range of individual projects. In addition, the funding will provide some stability for UDAT as decisions are made by both CNPA and UDAT on future funding mechanisms for delivering access infrastructure within the Park.

b) I recommend that funding of £100,000 is given to UDAT to complete the programme of works shown in Annex 1.

Name: _____ Bob Grant _____ Signature: _____ Date: 28 July 2006

14. Decision to Approve or Reject

Head of Group

Name: _____ Murray Ferguson _____ Signature: _____ Date: 28 July 2006