

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 1

Prepared by: Murray Ferguson, Head of Visitor Services and Recreation

Purpose

To inform the Board of the work undertaken since March 06 to achieve the first theme of the Corporate Plan 2005-08 and to describe plans for future activity.

Recommendations

- a) That the Board note the progress and plans for achieving the first theme of the Corporate Plan 2005-08.

Executive Summary

The first theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 is:

“To enable current and future generations to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the Park in a way that fosters those qualities and supports the activities of others.”

This report follows on from last report in March 2006 and has been structured around key policy areas. A brief progress report and consideration of future plans is given under the following headings:

- a) Sustainable tourism
- b) Outdoor access
- c) Ranger services
- d) Visitor information and interpretation
- e) Entry point markers and other signage
- f) John Muir Award

CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 1 – For Information

Background

1. The first theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 is:
“To enable current and future generations to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the Park in a way that fosters those qualities and supports the activities of others.”
2. Delivery of the first Corporate Plan theme is primarily the responsibility of the Visitor Services and Recreation Group and the Economic and Social Development Group, although other staff also make substantial contributions. This report has been structured around key policy areas. A brief report of progress since March 2006 and a summary of future plans is given under each heading.

Sustainable Tourism

3. The work associated with delivery of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy runs across two Corporate Plan themes. The work that is not covered under the headings below will be reported on under Corporate Plan Theme 3. The annual update on progress implementing the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan was presented to the Board in May 2006.

Outdoor Access

4. The Park Authority has been the access authority for almost 18 months now. Good progress has been made in fulfilling each of the four key duties (shown in italics below):
 - a) The *Local Outdoor Access Forum* (LOAF) is now fully established and working effectively. The Forum has provided extremely useful advice on a number of access issues and on the draft Outdoor Access Strategy. The Forum will consider the Strategy again once the consultation has been completed. The first open event to discuss outdoor access was held in Strathdon in April with over 60 people attending. Priorities for months ahead are the development of an annual report of the Forum and the continued use of the pre-meeting site visits to explore solutions to topical issues.
 - b) A project plan for *preparation of the Core Paths Plan* (CPP) was approved by the Board in April. The strategic overview within which the Plan sits will be provided by the Outdoor Access Strategy which is now out to a consultation exercise targeted at key stakeholders. The Strategy will be presented to the Board for approval in January 2007. The first phase of consultation on the Core Paths Plan will commence in September and run through to December this year. A Steering Group to oversee the CPP process has been established with representatives from the Board (Nonie Coulthard, Basil Dunlop and Ross Watson), the LOAF and Scottish Natural Heritage.

- c) A considerable amount of work has gone into *publicising the new Scottish Outdoor Access Code* and promoting awareness and understanding of it. Activity has included giving presentations to special interest groups (in conjunction with Land Based Business Training Scheme), placing adverts in relevant publications and using the LOAF annual meeting to further publicise the code. Future plans involve organising a workshop for golf course managers, developing a leaflet specifically targeted at land managers and contributing to the liaison meeting between paddlers and fishing representatives on the Spey.
- d) The Park Authority has a duty to *uphold access rights*. Procedures for dealing with these issues were agreed by the Board. We have received 75 access issues to investigate since we became an access authority. Of these, 19 have been investigated and resolved while three are considered to be outwith the scope of the Land Reform Act. The remainder are in hand and more detailed reports are made to the LOAF. At its last meeting the LOAF advised on the definition of criteria for assessing respective priorities to the outstanding casework. Steps are also being taken to work more closely with local authority ranger services in the Park, all of whom are already funded by SNH to undertake outdoor access work, to address the backlog.
5. A number of specific projects relating to improving the infrastructure for outdoor access have moved forward in recent months, as summarised in the table below:

Project	Progress report	Future plans (next six months)
Speyside Way	A Speyside Way Minute of Agreement has been finalised between all the funders and is in the process of being signed-off.	Ongoing management through Speyside Way Management Group. Review of route for multiple use if Sustrans funding is confirmed.
Proposed Speyside Way extension to Newtonmore	Board has approved route extension in principle but further work is being undertaken to discuss route options near Aviemore	Once a satisfactory line has been identified and stakeholders informed and consulted, a further paper will be presented to the Board (November). SNH will then take responsibility for seeking Ministerial approval.
Upland path repair and bridges	Glas Allt path on Lochanagar, Quoich Sluggain path link and the Mount Keen scoping study are all planned for the current financial year.	Plans for strategic review to be taken forward through proposals in the draft Outdoor Access Strategy.
Low ground path repair/enhancement	Ballater all-abilities path and Strathmashie Horse trails are now complete.	Clarack Loch all abilities path and a scoping study for a Dee crossing at Braemar.
Integrated Grants	A number of small scale	Continuation of scheme with

Project	Progress report	Future plans (next six months)
Programme strand on Outdoor Access	projects are being considered including further works at Anagach woods, an all abilities path at Cairngorm Mountain and Carrbridge and pathworks in both Kingussie and Newtonmore.	enhanced contribution from SNH

Ranger Services

6. A consultant's report has been prepared to evaluate the various options for changes to the management arrangements for ranger services and the consultant has made recommendations to CNPA. Copies are available on request. Meetings have been held with the various ranger service managers, Scottish Natural Heritage and with the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association to discuss the findings. An informal discussion was held with the Board in June and this provided very useful input into the process of evaluating options for change. A decision paper with recommends for change will be presented to the Board in November. Board members should be aware that a number of parties are involved and that any decisions taken in November will then require further dialogue with partners.
7. Plans to upgrade the ranger base at Angus Glens have been delayed due to a shortfall in funding from European sources. Angus Council, as lead partner, will keep CNPA informed of progress. The programme of countryside events is being promoted through the website and special press releases have been issued for National Parks Week.
8. In June staff gave a presentation about the National Park to 250 delegates from over 30 countries at the International Rangers Federation World Congress in Stirling. Some 70 delegates then visited the western side of the National Park. The one day field trip gave the rangers the chance to see the work of ranger services in the Park managed by Highland Council, Rothern, Cairngorm, Forestry Commission Scotland, Speyside Way and Explore Abernethy. A number of useful contacts were made and are being followed up.

Visitor Information and Interpretation

9. Projects and plans for promoting CNP as a destination, developing and reinforcing the sense of place and enabling communities and organisations to communicate the special qualities of their locale in the context of the National Park are outlined in the table below:

Project	Progress Report	Future Actions
Visitor Information	The following leaflets have been produced and distributed :-	Hill Tracks of the Cairngorms is being

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Guide 2006/07 • CNP page in Landmark Bedroom Folders • New 'Welcome' Leaflet • Cairngorms Countryside Events 2006 • Cairngorms Explorer Integrated Timetable • Heather Hopper Timetable • Place Names Leaflet 	reprinted for Scotways with the Cairngorms Brand.
Tourist Information Centres and Rangers Bases	<p>Cairngorms branded photographic displays and branded leaflet racks have been installed at all TIC's.</p> <p>CNPA has contributed £10,000 to the upgrade of the interpretation at the Glenmore Forest Visitor Centre.</p> <p>Branded panels have been installed at Cairngorm, Crown Estate (Tomintoul) and Glen Muick ranger bases.</p>	Branded panels are being prepared for Glenmore and Glen Tanar Ranger Bases and the Funicular ticket foyer at Cairn Gorm Mountain.
Integrated Grant Scheme	<p>CNPA has funded the following interpretation projects:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballater Trails • Grantown Interpretive Plan • 'Happy Map', young person's interpretive project • Scot sheep 	Nine other projects are in the planning phase with proposals scheduled to be complete by April 2007.

Entry Point Markers and other signage

10. An information paper was presented to the Board in June and more recently updates have been sent to Board members, Community Councils and ViSIT Forum members directly. Considerable progress has been made with preparation of the 21 permanent entry point markers on non-trunk roads. Installation work is currently under way.
11. Work with the Scottish Executive on Phase 2, involving the four trunk road sites, is progressing and a decision paper will be presented in December.

John Muir Award

12. The John Muir Award Project exceeded all of its targets for calendar year 2005 and is already making very good progress in 2006 as reported in the table below.

Awards Completed	2006	2005
Target	1000	600
Actual	1040 (to date)	831

13. In 2005 17% of all participants were from socially excluded backgrounds. The aim for 2006 is to raise this to 25%. All of this activity involves direct outdoor experiences and the awards are offered making a strong link between these experiences and the National Park. The Award also has a very strong partnership component with a wide variety of organisations including ranger services, outdoor centres, teachers, youth workers and uniformed youth groups who deliver the Award 'on the ground'.
14. Rhona Brankin, Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development, visited a group participating in the Award at Glen Tanar on 18 July, and The Minister met with eight young people working with the Workers Education Association Outreach Project based in Aberdeen. As part of the Award the group were undertaking conservation work and environmental art supported by the Glen Tanar Ranger Service.
15. Feedback about project was sought recently as part of the study on Learning and Social Inclusion. The main messages from the focus groups were that "The John Muir Award is widely viewed as an exemplar both for learning and working with under represented groups and much can be learned from its critical success factors" and that the promotion of the Award in the park should have a long term future.
16. The Project has recently received an offer of funding to extend the project by one year to October 2007 from both SNH and from LEADER. Beyond that time the promotion of the Award in the Park will be considered as part of the Priority for Action in draft Park Plan on Awareness and Understanding of the Park.

MURRAY FERGUSON

July 2006

murrayferguson@ Cairngorms.co.uk