
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CAIRNGORMS VISITOR MANAGEMENT UPDATE

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Purpose:

1. This is an interim report to the Board on the visitor management work that has been undertaken in the Park this summer. A full report will be presented after the end of season review at the end of October.

Overview

2. The Cairngorms National Park Authority has been working with partners across the National Park since spring preparing for 're-opening'. There has been a weekly visitor management meeting chaired by the CEO of the CNPA with land managers, public bodies, Local Authorities, tourism groups, representative bodies and Police Scotland. A full list of the membership is included in **Annex I**.
3. The Cairngorms Tourism Emergency Response Group has also met weekly to address issues around the reopening of tourism. This group has been chaired by CNPA Board Member Janet Hunter and includes tourism groups, local authorities, and Visit Scotland. The membership is again in **Annex I**.
4. There has also been significant work at a national level with the ENFOR Access Group, Scottish Government Greener Communications Group, UKNP Comms Group and input to the national Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group, as well as, direct contact on a regular basis with SG policy teams.

Planning

5. The CNPA with input from a range of partners produced a [visitor management plan](#) for the Cairngorms as a whole and specific plans for Glenmore and Deeside. This allowed us to try and ensure that the right solutions were in place to deal with the anticipated demand for access to the Park when lockdown was eased.

6. The key dates that the different groups worked towards were the 18th June allowing short distance travel for outdoor leisure and exercise, 3rd July when travel restrictions were lifted, and then 15th July with holiday accommodation re-opening.
7. The CNPA ensured that the [Park Authority website](#) was kept up to date with all the latest information for residents and visitors.

Communications Approach

8. The [#CairngormsTogether](#) approach was developed by CBP, CNPA and others to ensure a consistent approach to communications – Know the Guidelines, Plan Ahead, Be Flexible, Be Kind. This has been used consistently by all the partners in the Park to deliver clear, consistent and positive messages for visitors and residents.
9. The CBP with support from the CNPA held a number of meetings with businesses and others to ensure buy-in to the development of the approach.
10. Zoom meetings were also held by CNPA & CBP with community councils, local authority councillors and residents in June and again in late August to share information, listen to local concerns, and develop a consistent approach to safely welcoming visitors. Zoom meetings were also held with SLE members in the Park and North-East on two occasions as well.

Practical Action

11. **CNPA Seasonal Rangers** – During lockdown CNPA hired nine seasonal rangers to help manage visitors at evenings and weekends across the Park and to supplement the existing ranger services in the Park. This is a 36% increase in ranger coverage in the National Park. Appointment was mid-June, followed by two weeks training with the team ‘on the ground’ by 26 June allowing great preparation for Phase 3 opening on 15 July. The support provided by seasonal rangers has proved very welcome across the Park, they have been seen to be doing a great job and feedback has been very positive. **Annex 2** provides a summary of their engagement with visitors to date.
12. **Partner Ranger Services** – during lockdown some services furloughed staff and we agreed with those receiving CNPA grant to put this ‘on hold’ while confirming that grant would be available when they returned. All but one partner service was back working in July & engaging with CNPA Seasonal Rangers to provide effective coverage where most needed. There has been really good collaborative working across the Park between existing ranger services and the CNPA seasonals. Forestry & Land Scotland also appointed additional weekend staff to engage with visitors at Glenmore over weekends in August. **Annex 3** provides a summary of work encountered on estates across the national park many staffed by rangers and visitor staff.
13. **Infrastructure** – The partners all moved quickly to get toilets and car parks open for the start of phase 3 in July and information was made available on the CNPA website about what [toilets](#) and [car parks](#) were open. Funding was also provided for temporary toilets at Linn of Dee. CBP also put in place an excellent website that updates daily about what [businesses](#) are open across the Park.
14. **Traffic Management** – The amount of cars coming into the Park has caused issues at six main locations; Glenmore, Muir of Dinnet, Linn of Dee, Glen Muick, Glen Tanar

and Glen Clova with other smaller 'hot spots'. The CNPA has worked with estates and local authorities to put in solutions including variable message signs at 4 locations, speed limits, road traffic order at Glen Muick, overflow car park at Linn of Dee, parking bollards at a number of locations including Glenmore, Loch Insh and Achlean. GlenTanar Estate also put in place an overflow car park. This has allowed significantly better management of visitor flows and traffic across the Park.

15. **Enforcement** – We have worked closely with the police and fire services to ensure that a prompt response can be made to issues where appropriate whilst taking account of the remote nature of some of the sites in the Park.

Messaging

16. The CNPA, CBP, VisitAberdeenshire and many others have been putting out significant messages around visitor management throughout the summer. This includes films, vlogs & blogs across all social media platforms linked to the #CairngormsTogether approach and interviews on radio and TV. There has been significant work to target 1st time visitors and specifically the 18 -30 yr old, audience including purchasing adverts on social media aimed at a younger visitor. **Annex 4** provides a summary of key CNPA communication showing a significant increase in audience reach.
17. As the Access Authority the CNPA has also been very clear on messages around fires, bbq's, litter and camping.

Visitor Information

18. The CNPA park wide visitor survey, conducted every five years, was completed in March 2019. Post lockdown CBP undertook a survey with 2,500 contacts and we supported Nature Scotland in a survey of 1000 people on attitudes to the Scottish countryside and access. This has been complimented by a short 'snap survey' of visitors by seasonal rangers. Collectively this data provides good insights into what visitors to the National Park may want going forward. A summary of the visitor survey data is at **Annex 5**.

Issues Addressed

19. There has been a significant amount of people coming into the Park over the summer. There have also been issues around camping, campervans, human waste, fires, litter and verge parking. These have been especially prevalent at key hotspots. However, it should also be noted that the vast majority of visitors have behaved well, and that many of the issues around fires etc were done through ignorance rather than malice.
20. Overall the approach this summer has been successful and the feedback from residents and visitors has on the whole been very good.
21. There are two real exceptions to that. One was the failure to get the Camping in the Forest site open at Glenmore. This caused extreme pressure on the area and it is disappointing that this could not be rectified. The other is the lack of facilities to deal with the influx of campervans especially waste. This is something that we need to fix for next year.

Next Steps

22. A full end of season review will be held at the end of October. The Visitor Management Group has agreed to also work on producing further iterations of the visitor management plans during the autumn/winter and to identify areas for investment. There is the opportunity to work up Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund bids for specific 'hotspots' in the Park.
23. The work and feedback from this summer has given us an excellent understanding of what worked, what didn't work and the sorts of investment that we all collectively will need to make.
24. It is also clear that the visitor experience could be greatly improved by CNPA maintaining a ranger service, and greater investment in visitor infrastructure including; traffic management, car parking, provision of public toilets and waste disposal for campervans combined with clear, consistent and positive messaging about the National Park both pre and post arrival. Further work is also required on communicating with our 'new audiences'
25. CNPA will continue to coordinate regular land manager and tourism meetings and compile a full review of this summer's work in October. Going forward, we will, with partners, develop an ongoing visitor management plan for the National Park with more detailed plans for the 'hot spots' of Deeside and Cairngorm & Glenmore.
26. Following the October review on summer 2020 we will come to the Board in December with recommendations on how to take forward our collective management of visitors in 2021 and beyond.
27. Finally, it is worth stating that the co-ordination and genuine partnership working across organisations at a Park level has been fantastic. Where things have gone wrong we have adapted and addressed the issues and the approach taken stands us in good stead for the future and has been used as a template for other areas.

Annex I Key CNP 'Re-opening' Partnership Groups

Visitor Management Group

Chair Grant Moir CNPA

Cairngorms Business Partnership
Visit Aberdeenshire
Aberdeenshire Council
Highland Council
Police Scotland
Scottish Land & Estates
RSPB Abernethy
Mar Lodge Estate NTS
Cairngorm Mountain

Atholl Estate
Rothiemurchus Estate
Balmoral Estate
Glen Tanar Estate
Forestry and Land Scotland
NatureScot
Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Angus Alive

Tourism Emergency Response Group

Chair Janet Hunter CNPA

Cairngorms Business Partnership
Visit Aberdeenshire
Moray Speyside
Highland Council

Aberdeenshire Council
Visit Scotland
Highland & Islands Enterprise
Angus Alive

Annex 2 Summary of CNPA Seasonal Ranger Engagement with Visitors August 2020

Early August was very busy with large numbers of visitors to the park. Focus of Seasonal Rangers was positive engagement to ensure that people had a safe and enjoyable visit: **Visitor Management**. This led to a lot of positive reinforcement of the key SOAC messages around **camping, fires, litter and human waste**: these significant issues are highlighted in Table 1 below. Despite a noticeable increase in irresponsible behaviour the vast majority of visitors have been reacting favourably to information offered by the Rangers with few, but significant, occasions of difficult behaviour.

Table 1 Summary of Seasonal Ranger engagement with visitors

	No of people spoken (excluding campers)	No of campers (tents) spoken with	No of campervans spoken with	No of fires tackled	No of bin bags of litter (units .5)	No of Incidents of Fly tipping
Deeside (1)	721	154	51	55	26	1
Badenoch & Strathspey (2)	848	401	51	88	47	17
Total	1569	655	102	143	73	18

1. Key ‘hot spots’ Deeside - **Muir of Dinnet, Glen Tanar, Loch Muich, Linn of Dee &**, latterly, **Clunie Flats**

2. Key ‘hot spots’ Badenoch & Strathspey – **Glenmore**

Improved traffic and road management, increased signage and consistent messaging across the park has helped enormously in getting the message about responsible behaviour to the visitors. Where capacity has allowed work has included communities & has expanded on request with inputs to **Tomintoul, Achlean, & Laggan**

The Seasonal Rangers continue to build good relationships with partners, communities & Ranger Services. Feedback from partners has been very positive with the commonly held view that it would have been a very difficult season without them.

As we move into September things are quietening down allowing for other activities and duties to be introduced into the Seasonal Ranger’s programme.

Annex 3 Summary of Land Management Group Engagement with Visitors 15 July – 24 Aug 2020.

Data based on the feedback given prior to the weekly meetings with land manager and ranger services on scenario planning for lockdown easing. The data featured represents broad trends in issues.

Badenoch and Strathspey	
Est tents per week outwith of formal campsites.	80- 100 at key hotspots and some staying multiple nights.
Key hotspots	Glenmore beach, Loch and Eilein, Loch Garten
Estimated of fires per week.	10-15
Key hotspots – examples of significant incidents of irresponsible behavior	Glenmore Beach & all car parks - 17 th of July Friday night 25-30 fires put out by the fire brigade and 4 police officers in attendance from 12(midnight) to 0100. Invereshie NNR - New fire sites & litter Loch Garten - Damage to trees from fires, Human waste

Deeside	
Est tents per week outwith of formal campsites.	70- 90 at key hotspots and some staying multiple nights.
Key hotspots	Dinnet (Loch Kinord), Glen Tanar, Linn of Dee, Loch Muick, Clunie Flats (Braemar)
Estimated of fires per week.	10- 15
Key hotspots – examples of significant incidents of irresponsible behavior	Dinnet - Fires, Litter and abandoned tents: Loch Muick - abandoned tents, human waste and litter, burning of fencing and damage to bothies Linn of Dee - Significant fire at Lui/Dee confluence, burning on granny pine roots, littering, human waste Clunie Flats -Fires, human waste, nappies, sheep escaping onto road

Atholl and Angus Glens	
Est tents per week outwith of formal campsites.	20-30 at key hotspots and some staying multiple nights.
Key hotspots	Glen Doll, Calvine and Struan
Estimated number of fires per week.	5-10
Key hotspots – examples of significant incidents of irresponsible behavior	Glen Doll - a disco party with a marquee, abandoned tests, fires, human waste Calvine and Struan – Social gatherings, fires and litter.

As with **Annex 2** data shows a relatively small (by total visitor numbers) but noticeable increase in irresponsible behaviour.

Annex 4 Summary of Digital Communications Engagement with Coronavirus Guidance & Visitor Management Messages

Website A number of new web pages were specifically created to address Coronavirus Lockdown guidance/advice and visitor management. (* New Page)

Web Page	Page Views 15.07 - 31.08	Page View Comparison
Home Page	23,466	20,537 (+14%) same period in 2019
COVID – Latest Information *	4,902	7,233 (-32%) previous period (28.05-14.07)
Outdoor Access Advice	2,248	2,751 (-18%) previous period (28.05-14.07)
Camping in the Park	7,564	3,155 (+140%) previous period (28.05-14.07)
Car Parks, Public Toilets, Caravan Facilities *	5,255	540 (+873%) previous period (28.05-14.07)
Frequently Asked Questions *	695	199 (+249%) previous period (28.05-14.07)
Plan Your Visit	5,622	2,546 (+121%) previous period (28.05-14.07)

News Releases We published 4 news releases, between 15th July and 31st August, to the website highlighting key visitor management messages which were shared on social media and picked up by traditional media.

News Releases	Page Views
New Traffic Management measures in Deeside	5,479
Advice for the weekend – if it is busy, move on!	581
Don't 'carry on camping' irresponsibly!	201
#CairngormsTogether will welcome return of visitors	33

Social Media Cairngorms News (Corporate Account) was used as the primary channel for Coronavirus and Visitor Management messages on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, these messages were supported by Active Cairngorms, Cairngorms Nature and Staff Accounts.

Data for period: 1.07.20 - 31.08.20

Channel	Posts	Reach	Engagement	Video Views
Facebook	156	438,602 (+242% on July/Aug 2019)	19,532 (+370% on July/Aug 2019)	56,388
Twitter	139	688,600 (+295% on July/Aug 2019)	10,001 (+483% on July/Aug 2019)	20,779
Instagram	39	42,576 (+286% on July/Aug 2019)	3,154 (+359% on July/Aug 2019)	1,884

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Paper 3 Annex 4 11th September 2020

YouTube	3	n/a	n/a	6,557
Staff Twitter	-	752,917	-	-

Digital Advertising In an attempt to broaden our reach beyond established digital audiences we trialed using Google Adverts to promote specific key messages on visiting the Park, tread lightly, fires and camping, taking the form of public service announcements as opposed to traditional adverts to drive traffic to the website.

Adverts	Results	Demographics
5 ads with links to cairngorms.co.uk distributed in google search results (01-31.08) Target: UK audience, keywords included Cairngorms, Cairngorms National Park.	61,800 impressions 5,420 clicks through to website Saturday, Sunday, Monday & Tuesday most impressions, between 6pm – 11pm.	60% male, 40% female 26% under 24 years old, 23% 25-34 years, 23% 35-44 years, 14% 45-54 years & 14% over 55 years.

Annex 5 Summary of relevant Visitor Data in 2020

Cairngorms Visitor Survey 2019-20

Every 5 years, CNPA commission a large-scale, park wide, 'face-to-face' survey with visitors. The fourth 12 month survey finished in March following 2200 interviews. Key findings from the research include:

- The **highest levels of visitor satisfaction** recorded so far, with an average score of **9.04/10**, up from 8.75 in the 014/15 survey.
- 55% of people said that **National Park** status was an **important** factor in their decision to visit, up from 36% previously.
- There was an increase in the number of **international visitors** from 21% in 2014/15 to **27%** in 2019/20.
- There was an **increase** in the percentage of people **camping or caravanning** up from 18% to 24% of overnight visitors.
- Although the majority of the data was very positive, there were two particular **negative issues** flagged up. Ratings for **public transport**, and the availability of **public toilets** both weakened quite substantially.

Post Covid-19 Visitor Trend Predictions

The tourism landscape has changed substantially in the wake of the Covid-19 lockdown. VisitScotland, the Cairngorms Business Partnership, Nature Scotland & others have carried out consumer sentiment research over the last few months, and the results of these were looked at in conjunction with the visitor survey to highlight likely impacts to our visitor profiles in the short-medium term:

- There would appear to be **strong underlying demand for countryside** destinations, and the Highlands in particular.
- Demand is expected to be particularly high from the **domestic Scottish market**.
- Older age groups who are more concerned about Covid-19 transmission are more reluctant to travel (**we may see a younger audience**)
- Potential visitors have a preference for self-catering, rather than serviced accommodation (note: latest Visit Scotland data indicates this will change in autumn)

Seasonal Ranger Visitor Survey

From 7th – 18th August, CNPA's seasonal rangers surveyed 156 visitors across a range of sites, mostly at the busier countryside locations, to get a **snapshot** of visitor demographics post-lockdown. While the methodology was not the same as the 2019-20 Cairngorms visitor survey so the data is not strictly comparable, the questions asked echoed the

demographic questions from that survey so comparing with data from August 2019 should give us a reasonable idea of how our visitors have changed.

- The biggest change is a collapse in the number of international visitors. In August 2019, 38% of visitors interviewed were from overseas. In 2020 only 4 of the 156 were from overseas, all from continental Europe.
- Looking only at domestic UK visitors, there was a slight decrease in visitors from England, from 42% of domestic visitors in 2019 to 33% in 2020.
- Looking at visitors from Scotland, 65% were on an overnight trip rather than a day visit, a slight increase from 60% in 2019.
- There was only a very **modest increase in first-time visitors**. 27% said that they had not visited the National Park before, compared with 23% of domestic visitors in August 2019.
- There appears to be a shift towards a **younger demographic**, with an increase in visitors under the age of 35, and a decrease in those older compared with domestic visitors in August 2020.