
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CEO REPORT

Prepared by: Grant Moir, Chief Executive

Purpose

- I. To highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.

Conservation:

- a) **Nature of Scotland Awards** – The CNPA won the Innovation Award for its Peatland Restoration work at the NofS Awards on 19th November. The Capercaillie Framework was shortlisted in the Species Champion category but did not win.
- b) **Capercaillie Framework** – We are in the process of putting together a first round application to HLF that covers the works not directly funded by SRDP. We're expecting to submit the application in March 2016. Community engagement work has started in Carrbridge.
- c) **Cairngorms Nature** – Partners are promoting the SRDP incentive map which allocates an additional 12.5% funding for native woodland creation in areas which benefit capercaillie and forest networks. Recent survey results show stable and increasing wader populations in areas where partnerships have targeted resource on the ground.
- d) **Moorland Partnership** – six estates (Mar, Mar Lodge, Invercauld, Balmoral, Glenavon and Glenlivet) are in the process of agreeing an Accord and the CNPA are making an application to the Env Co-operation Fund on behalf of the Partnership before the 26th January 2016 deadline to facilitate the work.
- e) **Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership** – The development phase of the TGLP is progressing well with a wide range of contracts in place to develop plans and programmes of work across all the projects. This will all be used to inform the preparation of a Landscape Conservation Action Plan which is a key component of the application to HLF for funding project delivery over 4 years. The application deadline is end of May 2016.
- f) **Deer Management** – A meeting was held with Mar Lodge, Atholl & GlenFeshie estates to discuss deer management issues along the boundaries of the existing deer management groups.

- g) **Land Manager Training** – Maintaining a skilled land management is important for ensuring best practice and encouraging high standards of management. Our most recent Land Management Training Project seminar, "Ticks, You and your Livelihood" was our best attended yet with over 120 participants learning how to minimise risks associated with ticks.

Visitor Experience:

- a) **The Mountains and the People Project** – Project steering group has met twice. Work is underway on the following paths in CNP; Lochnagar plateau, Dubh Loch (Deeside), and Glittering Skellies and Jocks Road (Angus Glens). Additional partner support has been provided by Angus Council of £15,000 this year. COAT has appointed staff to take forward the activity plan and the trainee path construction scheme.
- b) **Active Cairngorms** – First partnership meeting held in October with second scheduled for January 2016. Legacy 2014 project is developing links with GP practices in Ballater, Dufftown and Aviemore with health walk referrals scheduled to start in Spring 2016. Monitoring and evaluation being developed. Nordic Walking project being developed with six secondary schools in and around CNP.
- c) **Speyside Way** – Section to Kincaig is now 'officially' open and a people counter in place. The path will be extended to Ardgael by spring 2016 and a fully costed plan will be in place for the development of the route to Kingussie by spring 2016.
- d) **Cairngorm and Glenmore** – Consultation launched on 1 December by CNPA on behalf of Partnership including THC, SNH, HIE & FCS.
- e) **Visitor Survey** – Survey launched at CBP conference and now available on CNPA website. Four page summary infographic mailed to all tourism businesses in CNP and key partners.
- f) **Snow Roads Scenic Route** – Work started at Corgraff in late November. Planning applications also submitted in November for the site at Tomintoul Quarry and Devil's Elbow. Work ongoing with Visit Scotland over the promotion of the route.

Rural Development:

- a) **Development Management** – There are ongoing discussions on a range of potential planning applications in the Park. The Planning Protocol has also been reviewed with the Local Authorities and updated to reflect current approaches.
- b) **Planning Review** – The CNPA submitted a response to the Independent Review of Planning on 1 December.
- c) **A9 dualling project** – The dualling work continues on the five mile stretch from Kincaig to Dalraddy. CNPA staff are involved in a number of consultations on different sections of the A9 and these will be taken to the Planning Committee at the appropriate time over the next 6- 9 months. The section that will next come to Committee in December 2015 will be Dalwhinnie to Crubenmore with the Pitlochry to Killiecrankie section being put forward in early 2016.
- d) **Cairngorms Business Partnership** – The CBP annual conference took place in November. CNPA were well represented by Heather Trench, who presented the findings of the Visitor survey, and Cllr Peter Argyle, who summed up the findings of

the day. The latest Business Barometer results show medium & long Term business confidence to be at their highest ever levels since the Barometer began in 2003. Also 64% of businesses perceive that the fact the area is a National Park has a high level of influence in attracting first time customers, again the highest level on record.

- e) **Marketing campaign** – The joint Autumn Cairngorms campaign carried out by VisitScotland with funding from CNPA and the Cairngorms Business Partnership is now complete. The campaign has been very successful with over 60,000 web visits to the campaign page and over 36,000 entries to a prize draw.
- f) **Community Action Planning** – Recent successful events have taken place in Strathdon with Marr Area Partnership hoping to have a finalised Action Plan in place in early 2016. Initial work on a review of the Ballater One Voice Our Future (BOVOF) plan is underway and discussions are underway on possible reviews elsewhere in the National Park in 2016-17, as part of the grant offer arrangements with VABS and MAP.
- g) **Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)** – SCDC's Strengthening Communities project in Laggan and Dalwhinnie started very recently, seeking to help both communities improve collaboration, encourage more people to get involved and consider working together on shared issues. CNPA and Cairngorms LEADER are likely to be involved in future discussions as bodies with a potential support role.
- h) **Association of Cairngorms Communities (AoCC)** – AoCC have recently commissioned a contractor to undertake a study of micro-hydro potential across the National Park. This will hopefully identify a number of sites that individual community groups could consider in more detail.
- i) **LEADER** – The Cairngorms LAG Small Grants Programme was launched at the end of November. The aim of the Small Grants Programme is to fund quick impact small projects that benefit those who live, work and visit the Cairngorms National Park. Total funding available is £20,000. The application approval date is 17th February 2016.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- a) Meetings at a senior level have been held with a range of organisations, such as, Highlife Highland, RZSS, SNH, SCNP, THC, Albyn Housing, Macdonalds.
- b) The Convenor and CEO are also meeting with the Chairs/CEO's of the following organisations in the next month – SNH, HIE & VisitScotland.
- c) Graeme Dickson, Director General for Enterprise, Environment and Innovation visited the Park Authority and met with a number of stakeholders.
- d) The CEO spoke at the Scottish Rural and Islands Housing Conference in Aviemore.
- e) The RAFF Delivery Board met on 23 September and 26 November. Chaired by Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary. The CEO is Chairing the Business Plan/Corporate Plan alignment Group for the Board.
- f) National Parks UK Conference was held in Dartmoor National Park on 14/16 November and members and officers attended.
- g) The CNPA has attended the Highland Community Planning Partnership Board and Chief Officers Group.

Communications:

- a) Since the new website went live a new research page in support of the research seminar encourages more collaboration, visitor survey results have been promoted, the Cairngorms and Glenmore consultation with online feedback forms has gone live

and the online voting system for the Cairngorms Nature Young Presenters competition was delivered. Ongoing monitoring and analysis of the site allows us to identify the most popular web pages and continually improve the content and the user journey.

- b) Social Media has shown a 16% increase in followers since August 2015 with continued high levels of engagement.
- c) Cairngorms Nature Festival will take place on 14 & 15 May 2016. Work is underway with the ranger services, partner organisations and local community representatives and a core programme is expected to be confirmed by early 2016 when we will approach local businesses for their support via sponsorship or promotions. The final programme will be launched by end of March in advance of the Easter break and Nick Baker will again support the event.
- d) The 'Cairngorms Nature Young Presenters' competition, run in partnership with RSPB UK, has resulted in significant media and social media coverage. Following a public vote a winner will be announced on Monday 14 December who will win a family 5-day Speyside Wildlife holiday and a day filming with Iolo Williams in February 2016. RSPB has already confirmed they are keen to run the competition again in 2016.
- e) E-bulletin has been sent to tourism businesses and brand charter users encouraging better use of the brand, communications toolkit, walking and cycling information (following visitor survey results which show a big increase in walking and cycling in the Park) and information on the forthcoming marketing campaigns and events planned for 2016.

Organisational Development:

- a) **Staff Survey** – We participated in the Best Companies survey in October this year, and achieved a 91% response rate. Survey results were published in late November, and suggest high staff engagement - organisationally there has been a significant improvement on the 2014 survey, across all 8 factors (Leadership; My Company, My Manager, Personal growth, My team, Wellbeing, Fair Deal and Giving Something Back). The survey results will be analysed in detail, and an action plan informed by the results will feed into the evolving Organisational Development Strategy for 2016.
- b) **Facilities** – The CNPA await the outcome of the planning application by Reidhaven Estates to THC for the extension of the Grantown office. Work to improve the Ballater office will start in the New Year.

Upcoming Issues of Note:

- a) Spending Review – 16th December

Grant Moir
December 2015

Board Member Updates

Paul Easto on CTP activity

The Cairngorms Tourism Partnership met in early November as part of a commitment to hold two such meetings per annum. Moving forward, these meetings with key tourism stakeholders in the Park will be supported by a smaller working group (consisting of partners such as CBP, VRD and Visit Scotland) to focus on specific projects and tasks e.g. visitor experience training. At the CTP meeting, Natural Retreats presented plans on their proposed £15m redevelopment of Cairngorm Mountain and Ben Addy (the retained architect) talked through the exciting refurbishment of the Fife Arms. The Fife Arms project offers a potentially transformational opportunity for Braemar and it will be very interesting to see how this evolves. The new brand strategy for Visit Scotland was also shared which represents a significant departure from the way in which Scotland has been marketing to a domestic and international audience.

November is also conference season for the tourism industry and in the past month, the CBP Annual Conference, Highlands Tourism Conference and Wild Scotland Annual Conference have all taken place. The marketing restructure and rebrand of Visit Scotland was the main talking point. This change represents an opportunity for Scotland's National Parks to enhance their profile as must visit tourism destinations, especially for international visitors. A cornerstone of the new strategy is inspiring content e.g. video and photographic stories of the area. The challenge for the CBP, VRD and all tourism businesses in the coming months is to determine how best to work with VisitScotland in the creation and promotion of such content.