
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CAIRNGORMS BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP – FUTURE SUPPORT

**Prepared by: Sandra Middleton, Sustainable Business Programme Manager
Murray Ferguson, Director Sustainable Rural Development**

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to confirm the CNPA grant funding contribution to the Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) for delivery of their 2013/14 Business Plan including;

- a) Priorities and principles for delivery;
- b) Reporting arrangements; and
- c) CNPA and CBP Board liaison.

Recommendation

That the Board:

- a) Agree the principles, priorities and reporting arrangements as outlined in the paper;
- b) Nominates a CNPA Board Member as key liaison contact with CBP Board; and
- c) Approves a core funding package for CBP comprising £60k for 2013/14 subject to submission of finalised business plan and confirmation through Finance Committee.

Executive Summary

CBP has had another successful year with increased membership and improved member benefits both for tourism and non-tourism businesses. 'Growing the Cairngorms Business Partnership' is identified as a priority in both the National Park Partnership Plan and CNPA Corporate Plan. In July 2012 the CNPA Board approved in-principle funding of £60k per annum for the CBP for three years. The CNPA Board are now asked to confirm funding for the 2013/14 CBP Business Plan. The Plan is currently in draft form and will be approved by the CBP Board in late April. The principles and priorities of the CNPA grant offer as outlined in this paper will help to inform the finalised CBP Business Plan and budget for the year. The paper also identifies proposals for improved reporting and liaison arrangements.

CAIRNGORMS BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP – FUTURE SUPPORT FOR DECISION

Background

1. The Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) is the business-led organisation for the National Park and fulfils the function of a Chamber of Commerce and a Destination Management Organisation. It was formed in 2011 as a result of a merger between various smaller organisations, each with their own membership base.
2. The formation of CBP has been a key step in the process of building the collaborative approach to the management of the Park. Businesses now benefit from reduced membership fees, a more sustainable and efficient organisation, and an effective business voice in the key issues affecting the Park. CBP also acts as an effective delivery mechanism for the public sector for project work at Park-wide scale. CBP has simplified the organisational landscape, making the vital connections between business activity and the sustainable management of the Park.
3. CBP has 284 members (approximately 20% of the businesses in the Park) and membership is growing at 9% per annum against a national decline in Chamber of Commerce membership. CBP's work is funded to a significant degree by membership subscription and business activity (50% of funds in 2013/14) and it draws support for project work from five public sector bodies. This model of self-sustaining business collaboration has attracted considerable interest from other parts of rural Scotland and is seen as a model that could be applied elsewhere.
4. The National Park Partnership Plan 2012 – 2017 (NPPP) identifies 'Growing the Cairngorms Business Partnership' as a key priority for all partners within the Supporting Business Programme. CBP is identified as lead delivery partner on a number of actions within the Partnership Plan and associated strategies. CBP sits on the Strategic Delivery Group which brings together key partners to review progress on the NPPP. The CNPA Corporate Plan 2012-15 identifies this as a priority for the Park Authority and makes provision for financial support to CBP.
5. In July 2012 the CNPA Board approved in principle a three-year offer of £60k per annum towards the CBP Business Plan for the years 2012 to 2015. A summary of CBP progress to date is provided in **Annex I**.

Funding and Delivery Principles

6. CNPA grant funding for 2012/13 was offered on the basis of three principles as agreed by the Board. It is proposed that grant funding for 2013/14 is also based on these principles with the addition of a fourth as outlined in Table I below.

Table I – Principles for Delivery	
Principles	Comment
1. Delivery should be Park-wide	<p>a) CBP has increased business membership across the National Park. Atholl and Glenshee are key target areas for 2013/14. 2 staff have been recruited to manage and grow membership, one covering Deeside/Donside and Angus and the other covering the remaining area of the National Park.</p> <p>b) The 5 areas of the Park are represented in marketing and website activity. The marketing plan for the coming year is looking at area campaigns.</p> <p>c) Activities and events planned are delivered Park-wide. Majority are in Badenoch & Strathspey due to large membership presence in these areas.</p>
2. Delivery must be contributing to the National Park Plan and associated strategies, for example the Sustainable Tourism Strategy	<p>a) Grant funding priorities have been directly linked to NPPP and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.</p> <p>b) CBP is involved in a wide range of groups and forums supporting delivery of activity e.g. Sustainable Tourism Forum, Brand Development Group, Developers Forum, Strengthening Communities project, etc.</p> <p>c) CBP now sits on the Strategic Delivery Group alongside other key delivery partners such as the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust</p>
3. There must be broad-based public sector support for the partnership and its delivery	<p>a) HIE, SE, CNPA, VisitScotland and Highland Council provided funding support in 2012/13. Anticipated continued support in 2013/14 – priority work is to encourage funding from other local authorities linked to delivery activity with development of the Economic Diversification Plan seen as a key opportunity.</p> <p>b) Royal Deeside & Cairngorms DMO, supported by SE and Aberdeenshire Council, continue to operate and deliver marketing and business development for their area which extends out of the Park – RDCDMO and CBP are in discussion to align some activity (e.g. web and training) to ensure direct benefit for businesses in the area.</p>

Table I – Principles for Delivery	
Principles	Comment
4. Proposed new principle - Delivery should be for all business sectors	<p>a) CBP have been increasing their offering for non-tourism businesses over the past year, in particular their work to secure money-saving opportunities for businesses.</p> <p>b) Priority activities for the coming year include the preparation of Economic Diversification Plan and work to ensure enhanced involvement from business interests on planning issues.</p>

Priorities for 2013/14 Delivery

7. A draft Business Plan for 2013-14 has been considered by the CBP Board and is due to be approved in late April. The Plan has been developed in consultation with funding partners, including CNPA staff. The draft plan can be viewed in **Annex 2**.

8. Discussions about the Business Plan identified a wide range of potential projects, groups and forums where CBP support and input would be desirable. There is a growing recognition, however, that the CBP staff resource is thinly stretched and there is a need to prioritise key activities in order to be effective.

9. CNPA funding to CBP is for delivery of their overall Business Plan. Within the grant offer letter we will identify key priorities for delivery in 2013-14 as proposed in Table 2 below. In addition, the offer letter will set out:
 - a) Resources and support to be provided by CNPA (e.g. staff time to assist the preparation of the Economic Diversification Plan);
 - b) Additional funding flexibility - there are likely to be in-year opportunities for CBP to deliver elements of work arising from other projects (e.g. Food for Life project) and it is proposed that, as in previous years, some flexibility is built in with any additional funding assessed on a case by case basis; and
 - c) Additional areas where CBP activity would be desirable on Park related activity subject to resources becoming available.

Table 2 – Proposed priorities for delivery 2013/14	
CBP key areas of work	CBP Business Plan Activities (<i>full detail in Annex 2</i>) - key priorities for CNPA funding
1. Promotion (PR & Marketing) - match funding the VisitScotland Growth Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Promotional activities & PR campaigns developed and delivered in conjunction with CNPA including activities around Year of Natural Scotland, 10th anniversary of the National Park and National Parks week b) E-media (website, App, social media and village network sites) including continued work to better integrate CBP and CNPA websites and social media c) Promotion of local produce through events and marketing
2. Business Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop an Economic Diversification Plan for the National Park b) Lead the establishment of the Cairngorms Enterprise Forum c) Review of Business Barometer and development of customer feedback mechanisms d) Develop further usage of the Park brand by businesses e) Business capacity and competency building including annual conference f) Roll out of 'Make it Yours' programme through new and existing activities and working closely with CNPA across the National Park g) Customer service development including working with CNPA and Visit Scotland to develop Visitor Information Points throughout the Park
3. Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Contribute to the Leader Local Action Group and development of the Local Development Strategy b) Work with CNPA to improve practices which will enable the Planning Service to support sustainable economic development
4. Organisational Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Development of a 3 year business plan for CBP - discussion with key partners early in financial year to assist with forward planning of resources.

Reporting and Improved CNPA/CBP Board Liaison

10. CBP and CNPA staff work closely together throughout the year and share information on a regular basis. A CNPA staff member regularly attends CBP Board meetings and there is open invitation for CBP staff or Board members to attend CNPA Board meetings.

11. It is recognised that contact between the CNPA and CBP Board members could be improved, both in terms of regular reporting and liaison. It has been suggested that a CNPA Board Member should be nominated to attend the CBP Board meetings on a regular basis and there are also options available to CBP to co-opt a member of CNPA Board onto the CBP Board. It is proposed that the former option is preferable, providing the opportunity to strengthen relations while allowing flexibility on key areas of decision making. The proposed reporting and liaison mechanisms are outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Reporting and Liaison		
Period	Reporting / Liaison	Proposal
Monthly	1. CBP member e-updates	a) All CNPA Board members to be added to the database to receive e-updates directly
Two Monthly	2. CBP Board Meetings	b) CNPA staff to continue to attend in observer capacity c) A CNPA Board Member to be allocated as key Board Liaison contact to attend CBP Board Meetings
	3. CNPA Board Meetings	d) Standing invite to CBP Board Members and staff to attend e) Specific invitations to be issued for particularly relevant areas of discussion f) CNPA staff to provide brief update to CBP after each meeting
Quarterly	4. CBP quarterly grant claim reports	g) CNPA staff to report on progress to Finance Committee for information
Annually (programmed for January)	5. CBP and CNPA Update and Networking event	h) Joint annual meeting of CBP and CNPA Boards to update one another on activity and plans for the coming year i) Event to include a networking lunch
As appropriate	6. CBP business networking events	j) Calendar of events and invitations to be circulated to CNPA Board members with encouragement to attend

Policy Context

Delivering Sustainability

12. The CBP is central to the development of the Park as a sustainable destination and a place to do business.

Delivering a Park for All

13. The CBP plans are well-integrated with the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and National Park Partnership Plan which was subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

14. The CBP directly improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of public funds in the Park, reducing the need for duplication of staff and administration among the business organisations, focusing more resource on delivery and reducing the number of bodies seeking funding for similar activities within the Park.

Implications

Financial Implications

15. The financial implications are addressed above. If the recommendations are approved a formal offer will be made for 2013/14. CNPA staff will work with CBP on the development of Business Plan for future years which will be required before a formal offer is made for years 2014/15.

Presentational Implications

16. Support of the CBP by CNPA and partners is vital to their ongoing success and development. The new marketing campaign has raised the profile of the CBP and the Park and this is likely to increase further over the coming year. Strong connections are maintained with CNPA staff working on communications and engagement.

Implications for Stakeholders

17. For public bodies that are potential funding partners for project delivery, there are implications to consider in how best to co-ordinate and get best value from funds invested in the Park, particularly given the current public funding situation.

Sandra Middleton
Murray Ferguson
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sandramiddleton@cairngorms.co.uk
murrayferguson@cairngorms.co.uk