
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CAIRNGORMS NATURE ACTION PLAN

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:

- a) Approve the final draft of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013 - 2018
- b) Highlight the next steps and priorities for the first year of the Action Plan
- c) Outline CNPA's contribution to delivering the Action Plan

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Agree to the Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group recommendation to approve the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan for launch by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment at the Celebrating Cairngorms Nature event on 18th May 2013.
- b) That the Board note the next steps, priorities and CNPA commitment to delivering the Action Plan.

Executive Summary

Cairngorms Nature is the new partnership to take forward positive conservation work in the National Park. It is steered by a Strategy Group made up of representatives from the Cairngorms National Park Authority, Dee Fisheries Trust, Forestry Commission Scotland, National Farmers Union Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Scottish Land and Estates, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Gamekeepers' Association, and a Community Development Officer.

The work of the partnership over the next five years is directed by the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013 – 2018. The Action Plan, developed through extensive consultation with a range of partners and species experts, is a key mechanism for delivering the policy set out in the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan. The four aims of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan reflect Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 5 yr outcomes; the targeted work needed for the conservation of some species of national and European importance; and the desire to involve people in realising the benefits that biodiversity brings and to have a say in its management.

CAIRNGORMS NATURE ACTION PLAN - FOR DECISION

Background

1. The CNPA Board (31st August 2012) approved the process of developing the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, commented on the first draft and provided useful feedback on the makeup of the Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group.
2. The Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group met for the first time 27th September 2012, chaired by Martin Price. The CNPA Board (12th December 2012) were updated on progress and made further recommendations on the draft plan. The Strategy Group (27th March 2013) recommended the Action Plan for approval by the CNPA Board.
3. The Cairngorms National Park is internationally important for nature conservation, and one of the most significant areas for conservation in the UK. Over half the area of the Park is designated formally as being of European importance, the Park is home to 25% of the UK's rare and threatened species and has the most extensive tracts of montane ground and Caledonian pine forest in the UK.
4. The outstanding conservation value underpins the Park's appeal and brand as an international tourism destination, shapes the land-based economy and of course is something to celebrate in itself.
5. The new Cairngorms Nature Action Plan sets out both the ambition and the collaboration needed to conserve and enhance the conservation value of the Cairngorms, and to help people feel connected to the Cairngorms National Park. Conservation action in the Cairngorms will also make a significant contribution to Scotland's national biodiversity targets and priorities.
6. Once adopted the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan will replace the Local Biodiversity Action Plan as the tool to guide priorities and collaboration for conservation in the National Park.

Next Steps

7. The Action Plan will be proof-read, professionally formatted and published as a full colour document with a high visual content.
8. Cairngorms Nature partnership, and its accompanying Action Plan, will be launched by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment at the Celebrating Cairngorms Nature event in Aviemore on 18th May 2013.
9. Developing the partnership and communicating its achievements will be fundamental to the success of Cairngorms Nature. We will initially establish the 'front face' of Cairngorms Nature and then mechanisms for involving and maintaining a network of supporters.
10. The Action Plan contains pieces of work that will become the foundations for further actions to be delivered, for example, a spatial targeting exercise to identify priority and strategic opportunities for expansion and enhancement. We will initiate these projects in the immediate short-term.

11. Effective delivery of many actions will require co-ordination of work already taking place. Cairngorms Nature will map out areas of activity, review the scale and scope of current partnerships and projects and establish efficient communication and delivery networks.
12. There is an immediate need to timescale actions across the five years of the plan and produce a more detailed work plan for year 2013 – 2014. As a part of this process, Cairngorms Nature will identify priority projects and specify partner commitments. The areas of work where CNPA will take the lead will be identified as part of this process.

CNPA Role in Delivery

13. **Promoting, inspiring and encouraging:** CNPA has a major role to play in championing the National Park as an exciting and leading place for nature conservation, through the vision, aims and goals of Cairngorms Nature. As part of our communications and engagement strategy CNPA is encouraging people to care for, and contribute to, the National Park. CNPA staff will promote the aims of the Action Plan in meetings with communities, businesses and land managers and identify opportunities for collaboration.
14. We need to be at the forefront of generating a sense of momentum and strong motivation for conservation in the National Park. CNPA will take a lead role in managing the communications for Cairngorms Nature, including management of the Cairngorms Nature website, ensuring a high profile for positive conservation work.
15. **Co-ordinating:** CNPA provides the leadership and administrative support for the Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group and will lead on communications and the development of the wider partnership. In some areas of delivery there are existing partnerships and projects working closely together, for example the Strathspey Wetlands and Waders Initiative, the Pearls in Peril LIFE+ project and the Catchment initiatives.
16. A key function for CNPA is to co-ordinate activities and integrate planning for biodiversity not just in protecting sites or species but across a range of work in the wider environment so that the whole is more than the sum of individual projects. Part of the role of the Cairngorms Nature staff team is to monitor the plan's progress and to identify where there may be gaps in delivery.
17. **Providing support, advice and training:** CNPA's programme of support for land management, which will be the subject of a board paper in June 2013, is specifically directed towards helping land managers to deliver the Action Plan. We will continue to identify training that will develop the skills needed to deliver the plan.
18. The significant casework advice provided by CNPA staff to planning and land management proposals will also look for opportunities to help deliver the plan. CNPA is working closely with the Cairngorms Business Partnership to provide support and training for businesses through 'Make it Yours' and Ranger work plans and training needs are tailored to meet the needs of the Action Plan.

19. **Leading projects:** The CNPA will take a lead role in delivery of some of the discrete projects and specific areas of work in the action plan. For example, in leading a work experience and skills development programme; taking forward recommendations on the species restoration; developing a landscape scale montane scrub restoration project; and assisting wildlife and species management conflict resolution.

Implications

Financial and Staff Implications

20. The strategic significance of the Cairngorms Nature Action plan is such that staff from all four Directorates will input. We recently recruited the Cairngorms Nature Manager to lead the development of Cairngorms Nature; there is no immediate plan to further increase staff resources to support Cairngorms Nature. There is an existing budget within the “Land Management and Conservation” and the “Getting involved” Programmes which will directly support the delivery of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. Priorities for CNPA delivery in future years will be an integral part of resource allocation through operational plan development.

Presentational Implications

21. The launch of the Cairngorms Nature partnership is a high profile event. The Celebrating Cairngorms Nature event on May 18th 2013 will be attended by Richard Lochhead, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment and key partners and supporters of the partnership. Cairngorms Nature will showcase the work of partners and of the Park Authority, demonstrably representing a collective surge in effort for biodiversity gain in the National Park.
22. Cairngorms Nature will be a major contributor to the positive image of the Park and the Park Authority, a figure head for our ambassadors. The partnership will be a strong arm for delivery and recognised as leading the way for conservation in much the same way as Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust does for access and the Cairngorms Business Partnership does for sustainable economic development.

Implications for Stakeholders

23. Cairngorms Nature Action Plan has been developed with extensive partner consultation on both its aims and objectives and the resources required from partners to deliver it. The partnership is led by a Strategy Group with strong representation across a range of land management sectors. Cairngorms Nature will be launched by, and with the full support of, key partners and stakeholders at the Celebrating Cairngorms Nature event.
24. There are significant opportunities for partners to showcase their efforts through Cairngorms Nature and for cross-organisation and cross-boundary working to deliver mutual benefits. Communities will be empowered to have more of a say in the management of their natural heritage and there will be more opportunities for people to get engaged with, and realise the benefits from, nature.

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