

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: CELEBRATING THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARK

Prepared by: NICK HALFHIDE, HEAD OF POLICY AND PROJECTS

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is for the Board to decide how to pursue a programme of events for September 2004 to celebrate the first anniversary of the Park.

Recommendations

Members are invited to discuss the idea of setting up a programme of events, and agree to form a sub-group of two Members and two officials to take the proposal forward.

Executive Summary

Members have already discussed the idea of a series of events to celebrate the first anniversary of the Park, partly as a way of engaging stakeholders with the Park, and partly as a mechanism to involve more people than could be accommodated at the official launch. Such events could be organised by the Authority, other public bodies, and by community and NGO groups.

The purpose of the programme would be to celebrate all aspects of the Park. This would not only directly help meet one of the Park's aims (to promote understanding and enjoyment ... of the special qualities of the area by the public), but would also help build support for the work of the Authority and the Park itself.

Given the long lead-in time to arrange such a programme, the Board needs to take decisions soon on how to pursue this idea.

CELEBRATING THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARK

Introduction

1. During its informal sessions and in the first edition of "Park Life", the Board has discussed how best to celebrate the opening of the National Park over and above the ceremony at Cairn Gorm on 1st September 2003.
2. Members have shown some enthusiasm for encouraging and supporting a series of local events in September 2004 to celebrate the first anniversary of the Park. This emphasis on the first anniversary recognises the long lead-in time of arranging events, particularly where some may be community-based; the importance of involving a larger number of people than could be accommodated at the official opening; and the fact that the Park will not be established on the ground overnight.
3. Members now need to decide how to proceed with such a programme of events, and in particular to discuss further the scope and nature of the programme, and the level of resources to be allocated.
4. Although some way off, this discussion needs to take place soon so that the necessary organisation can be put in place.

Why have celebrations?

5. There is a strong argument that a successful programme of events could play an important role in engaging both geographic communities and communities of interest, providing an opportunity to explain what the Park is about, and deepening the process of local participation, commitment, and support for the Park. This is an important goal in its own right. Not only will it help meet the aim of the Park to promote understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public, but it will also facilitate more broadly the work of the Authority and other public sector bodies to achieve the aims of the Park.
6. At a more emotional level, these events will help foster and give expression to the special qualities of the area that has led the nation's leaders to designate its as a National Park. They will be a showcase to the nation, as well as an international audience, showing just why the Cairngorms area is worthy of this status. This is unashamedly emotive, but if done correctly, will embody something of the spirit or soul of the Park, very much in line with the Board's thinking that this should be a Park for All.
7. There could also be an important economic spin-off, through attendance at events, and promotion of the area and its products.

How could it work?

8. There are a number of strands which we could pursue, choosing either one or a mixture. These include:

- a series of events organised by the NPA;
 - events organised by other public sector bodies;
 - new events organised by communities, voluntary groups and NGOs; and
 - existing local events branded for 2004 as events celebrating the National Park.
9. It will be important to ensure a good spread of events, both geographically throughout the Park and beyond (e.g. photographic exhibitions in the main cities), and covering all aspects of the Park (nature, landscape, culture, communities, outdoor recreation, forestry and so on).
10. Spreading ownership is also important. If one of the aims of the celebration is to deepen participation and commitment to the Park, then ownership of events must be spread as widely as possible. This is where involving communities, voluntary groups and NGOs will be particularly important.
11. As well as arranging events itself, the Authority could set up a funding programme, inviting groups to submit applications for support.

Resources

12. Depending on the approach favoured by the Board, the Authority would need to allocate staff and financial resources to co-ordinate the programme. This could be as much as half a full-time post and approximately £100,000, including an events organiser for Authority-led events, and a grant scheme to support applications from voluntary groups.
13. For the latter, it will be important to establish clear guidelines and ground rules, though in ensuring propriety and VFM in the use of public funds, we also need to be flexible in responding to the ideas and aspirations of others. The decision making process needs to be open and clear, and be creative in its response to requests.
14. The majority of resources would come out of the 2004-05 budget, though early works would need to be funded from this financial year.

Developing the Proposal

15. Assuming Members wish to take this idea further, it is proposed that the Board form a small sub-group of two members and two officials, taking advice as necessary from the Advisory Groups and others as necessary, to develop the ideas further with a view to bringing firm proposals to a future Board meeting.

Nick Halfhide
12th September 2003

nick@cairngorms.prestel.co.uk