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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DECISION

**Title: Proposed Cairngorms Tourism Partnership**

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### **Purpose**

To outline proposals for a Tourism Partnership for the Cairngorms National Park and seek Board support for the lead role of the CNPA in establishing this Partnership, the membership make up, remit, and approach to delivery.

### **Recommendations**

**The Board are asked to:**

- a) support the establishment of a Cairngorms Tourism Partnership to supersede the existing Sustainable Tourism Forum as per the remit and membership outlined in *Annex 1*;**
- b) confirm *Cllr. Bill Lobban and Paul Easto* as CNPA Board representatives on the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership; and,**
- c) note the *Draft Tourism Action Plan* which outlines the policy context, priorities, and approach to delivering the National Tourism Strategy 'Tourism 2020' in the Cairngorms National Park which will provide the focus for the work of the Tourism Partnership.**

### **Executive Summary**

A number of key drivers for change have been identified in relation to the CNPA's current approach to tourism delivery: the launch of the National Tourism Strategy (Tourism Scotland 2020); the mid-term review of the Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Strategy; new guidelines on State Aid and public sector support for tourism; and, the new Cairngorms Economic Development and Diversification Strategy. A new approach is proposed which aims to ensure alignment with the National Tourism Strategy for Scotland, and to put in place a strong partnership and mechanisms to enable delivery, particularly in relation to marketing. These changes include the establishment of a Cairngorms Tourism Partnership, associated Area Action Plan, and revised approach to visitor marketing.

## PROPOSED CAIRNGORMS TOURISM PARTNERSHIP – FOR DECISION

### Background

1. The Cairngorms National Park welcomes 1.4million visitors a year with tourism accounting for 43% of local employment and approximately 30% of the economy. A Sustainable Tourism Strategy was produced in 2005 in recognition of the importance and fragility of the visitor economy, and the need to protect the natural assets which are at the heart of it.
2. A Sustainable Tourism Forum (STF) was set-up in 2009 as an advisory group to the CNPA Board to:
  - a) advise on the development of the strategy for sustainable tourism;
  - b) advise each other and CNPA on issues relating to sustainable tourism; and,
  - c) provide a mechanism for cross-sector discussion and consultation on sustainable tourism issues.
3. The existence of such a structure, bringing together tourism businesses, public agencies conservation, and community interests is a requirement of the *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas* (the Charter). The Charter was re-awarded to the Cairngorms National Park in 2011 on the basis of the work done in delivering the initial Sustainable Tourism Strategy from 2005-2010, and on the strength of the plans laid out in the current Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2011-16.
4. Recently, a number of wider issues have affected the way we manage tourism locally:
  - a) in June 2012 the Scottish Tourism Alliance launched ‘The National Strategy: Tourism Scotland 2020’<sup>1</sup> which is increasingly recognised as a model for managing tourism at a local level;
  - b) a 2013 mid-term review of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy raised concerns about the efficacy of the Sustainable Tourism Forum;
  - c) in May 2014 the Scottish Government issued new guidance on ‘Public Funding for Tourism and State Aid Rules’ which has implications for funding of key delivery bodies such as the Cairngorms Business Partnership; and,
  - d) in June 2014 the Cairngorms Economic Development and Diversification Strategy was completed and highlights priorities for the tourism sector and wider economy.
5. A review of these issues has been undertaken in liaison with key partners and the CNPA Board. This paper outlines proposals for a revised approach.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Strategy: Tourism Scotland 2020 - <http://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/national-strategy/>

## Strategic Context

6. Key relevant sections of the National Park Partnership Plan are outlined below:
  - **Success Measure** – The Cairngorms National Park will be an internationally recognised world class sustainable tourism destination that consistently exceeds residents’ and visitors’ expectations in terms of quality of environment, services and experience.
  - **Long term outcome 1** - A sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities
    - **Programme** – Supporting business
  - **Long term outcome 2** – People enjoying the Park through outstanding visitor and learning experiences
    - **Programme** – Leading sustainable tourism
  
7. Key relevant sections of the Cairngorms National Park Authority Corporate Plan are outlined below:
  - **Programme 1** – Building the Cairngorms Brand and Visitor Experience
    - **Outcome** – Strong partnerships with “buy-in” to the Brand and its values, reflected in widespread use of the brand
  - **Programme 6** – Supporting Sustainable Business
    - **Outcome** – Strong business voice, leading Economic Forum and ideas for strengthening and diversifying the economy in the Cairngorms National Park
  
8. Tourism Scotland 2020 (T2020), the National Tourism Strategy for Scotland, was launched in 2012. Development of the Strategy was led by industry and it focuses on developing our assets, turning these assets into experiences, and building our capabilities. Key destinations and areas are being encouraged to identify how T2020 will be delivered in their area.
  
9. The current Sustainable Tourism Strategy (STS) 2011-2016 was produced prior to the launch of T2020 but has much in common with it. The STS was reviewed in 2013. The focus of the STS is on tourism growth, customer focus, special qualities, geographical diversity, environmental impact and leadership and partnership.
  
10. The Cairngorms Economic Development and Diversification Strategy (CEDDS) 2014-17 identifies tourism as a key economic sector. The Strategy was developed in conjunction with the mid-term review of the STS and in the context of TS2020 and highlights collaboration, product (asset) development, marketing, and destination development (including customer journey) as key priorities.

## Proposed Revised Approach to Tourism Delivery

11. The issues outlined in paragraph 4 above are key drivers for a change in our approach. The aim of this revised approach is to ensure alignment with Tourism Scotland 2020 (T2020), the National Tourism Strategy for Scotland, and to put in place a strong partnership and mechanisms to enable delivery, particularly in relation to marketing. Key changes to the approach were outlined in the recent Cairngorms Economic Development and Diversification Strategy which was endorsed by the CNPA Board in June 2014. These changes are outlined below and include the establishment of a Cairngorms Tourism Partnership, associated Area Action Plan, and revised approach to visitor marketing.

### ***Cairngorms Tourism Partnership***

12. The Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Forum (CSTF) has been the local mechanism for enabling collaboration on tourism issues and development in the National Park since 2009. The recent mid-term review found that the CSTF is not fulfilling its desired function and that, “the individual participants, while valuing the CSTF as a vehicle for exchanging knowledge, appear not to be committed to it as the lead body for tourism strategy, governance and management.”<sup>2</sup> This review, discussions with the CSTF, and discussions with wider tourism operators and partners has encouraged us to consider an alternative approach.
13. It is proposed that the existing Sustainable Tourism Forum is superseded by a new Cairngorms Tourism Partnership (CTP) for the National Park. The CTP will be based on the Area Tourism Partnership model which is recognised across Scotland and is supported by VisitScotland. The role of the CTP is not to replace existing regional Area Tourism Partnerships such as the Highland or Aberdeenshire ones. It is to enable collaboration between them and other tourism development and marketing agencies in a National Park context. Mike Cantlay, Chair of VisitScotland, chaired a meeting of key stakeholders in June to discuss the potential for an Area Tourism Partnership for the Cairngorms National Park. These initial discussions with partners indicated a willingness to support this new approach.
14. It is proposed that CNPA has two Board representatives on the CTP, Cllr. Bill Lobban and Paul Easto. They both have a wealth of experience in this field and have connections to other key industry groupings. Bill Lobban is the CNPA Board representative and Chair of the current CSTF, he is also a member of the Highland Tourism Partnership in his capacity as local Councillor. Paul Easto operates a significant tourism business within the National Park and also leads one of the industry working groups for delivery of the National Tourism Strategy. CNPA Board membership on the

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<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Tourism Strategy Mid-Term Review report, December 2013

CTP will be subject to review and members will be asked to report back to the Board as appropriate.

15. The valuable contribution made by members of the Sustainable Tourism Forum past and present must be recognised. The new approach is designed to ensure that participants can contribute effectively and find value in being involved. The proposed CTP will be made up of key public sector partners and local tourism groups and operators, and will aim to drive forward local tourism priorities in an integrated way. The proposed remit and membership of the CTP is shown in Annex 1 and will have a strong focus on collaborative marketing and destination development.
16. The Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Forum was a key requirement of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (the Charter) which was awarded to the area in 2005 and again in 2011. Early discussions with Europarc have indicated that the proposed change in approach would not preclude the area from applying for the Charter again in the future.

#### ***Cairngorms Area Tourism Plan - delivering the National Strategy***

17. Area Tourism Partnerships in Scotland are being encouraged to develop Area Tourism Action Plans. These Action Plans are aligned to the National Tourism Strategy (TS2020) and identify priorities for development and marketing of tourism at a local level. The Highland Area Tourism Partnership has produced a short action plan showing how TS2020 will be delivered in the Highlands<sup>3</sup>. A number of Destination Organisations have also produced a 'Destination Rocket Diagram'; this diagram has been adapted from one within TS2020 to demonstrate the strategy and capability of an area to deliver.
18. An outline of how TS2020 will be delivered in the Cairngorms National Park can be viewed in Annex 2 in the form of a Draft Area Action Plan under the key headings of TS 2020:
  - turning assets into experiences;
  - improving the customer journey; and,
  - building our capabilities.
19. This Action Plan draws together key opportunities and priorities for the Cairngorms National Park in delivering TS2020. It draws on existing plans and strategies such as the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Economic Development and Diversification Strategy. The Action Plan will be further developed and refined by the proposed Cairngorms Tourism Partnership and will form the focus for their collaborative activity and delivery.

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<sup>3</sup>Highland Tourism Action Plan - <http://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Highland-Tourism-2020-Summary.pdf>

**Visitor Marketing Funding and Delivery**

20. The Cairngorms National Park Marketing Framework was produced in conjunction with the Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) in 2010. It identifies the target audiences, marketing objectives, and marketing propositions for the area and is directly connected to the CNP brand image. This work produced the endline ‘*Make it Yours*’ and was used to develop the Cairngorms Brand and Marketing Guidelines. These Guidelines form the basis for the design and style of marketing communications which utilise the Cairngorms National Park Brand Identity and are utilised extensively by the CBP in visitor marketing and to an extent by the CNPA.
21. CNPA previously provided financial support to CBP to deliver Park-wide marketing activity. As a result of recently issued guidance on ‘Public Funding for Tourism and State Aid Rules’ this approach has now been changed and no funding is provided to CBP for marketing activity. The CBP continue to undertake Park-wide marketing activity funded by private income streams and in the current financial year by VisitScotland Growth Fund.
22. A workshop is planned for October 2014 to undertake a review of the Marketing Framework and to identify opportunities for collaborative marketing activity over the next three years. This workshop will be lead by VisitScotland and will include key representatives of the proposed Cairngorms Tourism Partnership and the Cairngorms National Park Brand Development Group (BDG). It is proposed that future CNPA funding and delivery of visitor facing marketing (including visitor websites) will be delivered through a strong collaborative partnership with VisitScotland and guided by the CTP and BDG.

**Fit with other Plans and Strategies**

23. Implications of the proposed change of approach in terms of key CNP Plans and Strategies is outlined in Table I below.

**Table I - CNP Plans and Strategies**

<b>CNP Plan/Strategy</b>	<b>Implications of proposed change of approach</b>
<b>Cairngorms Nature</b>	Cairngorms Nature identifies ‘Inspiring and Engaging’ both visitors and residents as a key area of work, particularly in working with local visitor attractions and wildlife tourism operators. The collaboration and marketing opportunities presented by the new approach will provide the mechanism to support this work.
<b>Active Cairngorms</b>	Promotion is a key theme of the Active Cairngorms Strategy. The collaboration and marketing opportunities presented by the new approach will provide the mechanism to support this work.

CNP Plan/Strategy	Implications of proposed change of approach
<b>Economic Development &amp; Diversification Strategy</b>	The proposed new approach to tourism delivery is in line with the actions identified in the Economic Development & Diversification Strategy for the sector.
<b>Sustainable Tourism Strategy (STS)</b>	The STS will remain in place for the lifetime of the Strategy 2011-2016. It is proposed that future strategy for tourism in the CNP is incorporated within the National Park Partnership Plan with a succinct action plan put in place for delivery. Early discussions with Europarc have indicated that the proposed change in approach would not preclude the area from applying for the Charter again in the future.
<b>Local Plan/ Local Development Plan</b>	The CTP will provide a useful group for engagement on tourism issues in relation evidence gathering for the LDP and to inform future development.
<b>LEADER Local Development Strategy</b>	Excellence in sustainable tourism is a key theme in the LDS with an outcome relating specifically to an increase in the quality of the tourism offering. The CTP and associated collaborative activity should contribute towards effective delivery of this LDS outcome.

## Implications – CNPA contribution to Delivery of the Strategy

24. CNPA staff and financial support will be required to support the establishment and ongoing coordination of the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership. This is in line with the resource currently committed to managing the Sustainable Tourism Form.
25. The Action Plan in Annex 2 gives an overview of key activity in relation to tourism delivery. The Actions are taken directly from the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Economic Development & Diversification Strategy, as such CNPA staff and financial resources are already in place to deliver and monitor this for 2014/15 as summarised in the CNPA Operational Plan. Beyond 2014/15, CNPA financial and staff resource for delivery of the Strategy will be decided through development of the next Corporate Plan.
26. The revised approach to marketing and the review of the marketing framework will require financial and staff resource. The marketing review will take place within the current financial year and staff time and budget will be allocated towards this through the 2014/15 Operational Plan. Allocation of funding to deliver visitor facing marketing in future years will need to be a key consideration of the next Corporate and Operational Plans. Future funding and support of the Cairngorms Business Partnership will also be a consideration.

## Strategic Risk Management

27. The pressure for Economic growth and the potential impact this may have on the Special Qualities of the National Park is identified as a strategic risk for the CNPA. A lack of engagement with 'Communities of Place' in key areas of work is also identified as a Strategic Risk. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy and TS2020 both outline the importance of developing sustainable tourism - economically, environmentally, and socially. This must be central to the new approach.
28. An additional element has been added to the remit of the CTP (Annex 1) to ensure that sustainable tourism is a key consideration. The proposed new approach will require careful communication with key partners including current STF members, other Area Tourism Partnerships, and Europarc.

## Next steps

29. CNPA will write to key stakeholders advising them of the change in approach and inviting representatives to be involved in the CTP. A letter of thanks will also be sent to members of the STF. A meeting of the CTP will be arranged later in the year to consider and refine key priorities as outlined in Annex 2.
30. VisitScotland will facilitate an initial marketing workshop in October with members of the proposed CTP. The workshop will review the existing marketing framework and prioritise and agree collaborative marketing activity over the next 3 years.
31. Further discussions will be undertaken with Europarc to agree a future approach to tourism strategy development and re-application for the Charter.

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August 2014

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## **Annex I - Proposed Cairngorms Tourism Partnership**

### **Remit and format**

It is proposed that the CTP would meet twice a year. One session would be lead by VisitScotland and focus on collaborative marketing activity. The other session would focus on tourism development activity with contributions from the Enterprise agencies. Smaller sub-groups may have additional meetings to consider key themes such as marketing. The Partnership would also liaise via correspondence on key issues as required. The proposed remit of the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership is in line with that identified by VisitScotland as outlined below.

1. Drawing up and overseeing the implementation of Area Tourism Partnership Plans that would/will set agreed priorities for the development and marketing of tourism. Once they have agreed what commitments each partner will make, they produce a local Action Plan (called an Area Tourism Action Plan). They also monitor the progress of actions detailed in the plan.
2. Input to the national tourism strategy and review of local alignment.
3. Securing resources to ensure effective delivery of the Area Tourism Partnership Plan.
4. Acting, where appropriate, as a lobbying body to further the interests of local tourism, hospitality and leisure industries.
5. Acting as a link between public and private sectors.
6. Acting as a vehicle to engage the industry.

An additional element to the remit is also proposed:

7. Promoting the importance of economic, environmental, and social sustainability as a key consideration in all discussions and delivery.

### **Membership**

The proposed membership of the CTP is in line with that identified by VisitScotland including local players from across the private and public sectors.

<b>Tourism Groups (Chair)</b>	<b>Senior Public Sector representatives</b>
Visit Royal Deeside	CNPA
Cairngorms Business Partnership	VisitScotland
Cairngorms Attractions Group	Highland & Islands Enterprise
Area Tourism Partnership representatives	Scottish Enterprise
Key Tourism Operators	Local Authorities
Other Groups as appropriate	