
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

**Title: NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN ANNUAL
PROGRESS REPORT**

**Prepared by: Gavin Miles, Strategic Policy and Improvement Manager
Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation and Visitor
Experience**

Purpose

To report annual progress in delivering the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan and consider any areas where further discussion at Board meetings or with partners is required.

Recommendations

- a) That the Board note progress with delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan over the course of 2013/14;**

Executive Summary

This paper gives an overview of delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan over the financial year 2013/14 and the first few months of 2014/15. It shows progress towards the outcomes set out in the National Park Partnership Plan and a sense of what work has been undertaken during the past 12 months as well as what to expect over the next year. It also outlines the involvement of the National Park Strategic Delivery Group and the National Park Partnership meeting to be chaired by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change in late November in monitoring and influencing delivery as well as putting in place measures for a mid-term review of the Plan in 2015.

NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT - FOR INFORMATION

Introduction

1. This paper provides the National Park Partnership and Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) Board with an update on delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan. Monitoring reports are produced twice a year based on March and September reference points. This is the fifth update on delivery of Plan. The last update was in March 2014.
2. The paper has 4 sections:
 - a) An update on the National Park Partnership Strategic Delivery Group;
 - b) An update on the forthcoming National Park Partnership Meeting (November 2014);
 - c) A summary of indicators associated with the National Park Partnership Plan's five-year outcomes and an update on delivery of the Plan's delivery;
 - d) Next steps

Background

3. The National Park Partnership Plan is the plan that coordinates how the aims of the National Park will be delivered. Although it is prepared by the National Park Authority, it was developed with the help of many organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as interested groups and communities in the National Park. The National Park Partnership includes the organisations that are best able to coordinate delivery of the Plan.
4. The National Park Partnership Plan for 2012-2017 was approved by the Environment Minister in June 2012. It sets out the vision for the National Park and three long term outcomes as:

***An outstanding National Park,
enjoyed and valued by everyone,
where nature and people thrive
together***



5. The Plan also sets out 10 five-year outcomes that provide the focus for work for the five years between 2012 and 2017 and will help to deliver the vision and long term outcomes. A series of programmes and with work packages were identified with partners help deliver those outcomes and form the starting point for delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan.

The National Park Partnership Strategic Delivery Group

6. The National Park Partnership Strategic Delivery Group is a small sub-group of the partnership including senior representation from organisations (public/private/voluntary) with responsibilities for managing the Park beyond individual project delivery. It meets twice a year to oversee monitoring and reporting of progress.
7. This year the group has focused on the capital investment plan for the National Park and discussed major projects including development planning, capercaillie framework, Active Cairngorms strategy, Cairngorms Nature and the Cairngorm and Glenmore strategy. The September meeting is considering progress in delivery of the Partnership Plan and how to undertake a mid-term review of the Plan in early 2015 that will focus delivery and resources towards 2017.

The National Park Partnership Meeting 2014


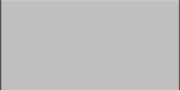
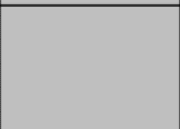







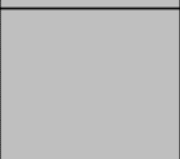



8. The National Park Partnership is chaired by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and will be in late November 2014. The meeting brings together all partners involved in delivery to review progress, celebrate success and address challenges. It will also agree the scope for the mid-term review of the Plan.

National Park Partnership Plan Annual Progress Report for 2013/14

9. We will publish another Annual Progress Report on the National Park Partnership Plan this autumn in advance of the Partnership Meeting. It will follow the same format as last year with an easy read summary of progress and illustrative case studies. The format and content will be informed by the strategic delivery group to ensure a wide partner involvement. We will distribute copies of the report to the Board as soon as they are printed.

National Park Partnership Plan Delivery – progress in delivering National Park Partnership Plan Five-year outcomes and update on delivery of Partnership Plan Programmes

10. Progress towards achieving the National Park Partnership Plan's five-year outcomes is tracked with the help of indicators and targets and summarised in Table I. They are not perfect measures of progress but help illustrate whether the outcomes are likely to be achieved. We are still waiting updates on a number of indicators and will use all available data for the Annual Progress Report as well as discuss potential alternative indicators with the Strategic Delivery Group.

| Table 1 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Five Year Outcomes | Indicators | Targets | Progress to 2017 Targets → | Explanation |
| The economy of the Park will have grown and diversified, drawing on the Park's special qualities | Business confidence reported through Cairngorms Business Barometer | Increase |  | Business confidence improved throughout 2013, though fell slightly in Q4 2013/14 |
| | Number of jobs created in the Park | To have grown by more than the rate of population growth |  | No data yet |
| Businesses and communities will be successfully adapting to a low carbon economy | % population living within connection of high speed broadband or equivalent | 75% |  | No change from 0% 2013. Expected to start in 2015 |
| | Renewable energy production | To increase year on year |  | Increase of 20% in generating capacity to 2014 |
| Communities will be more empowered and able to develop their own models of sustainability | The number of community enterprises generating income | Increase by at least 50% |  | New community enterprises formed and further income generation activity expected each year. |
| The quality and connectivity of habitats is enhanced | Area of woodland | Increase of 6% (c.4,000 Ha) in total woodland area |  | Over 2000 Ha new woodland planting schemes planned |
| | Water quality | Maintenance or increase in water quality status |  | 69% of water bodies at 'high' or 'good' status in 2013 |
| The species for which the Park is most important are in better conservation status | Active conservation for LBAP priority species | Targets identified in Cairngorms Nature Plan achieved |  | 12 of 26 priority species with active conservation projects |
| | Estates participating in Wildlife Estates Initiative | 75% of estates in the Park |  | 20 estates (26%) by April 2013, covering 85% of area of the Park |
| The special landscape qualities, including wildness, are conserved and enhanced | Qualities of wildness | Equivalent or increased area of the Park characterised as high or medium wildness |  | New data expected by 2017 |
| Settlements and built development will retain and enhance the distinct sense of place and identity in the Park | Number of conservation area improvement projects | To cover all conservation areas |  | Alternative indicator may be required. |
| More people will enjoy, learn about and help to conserve and enhance the Park | Number of volunteer days spent caring for the Park per year | Increase by 50% by 2017 |  | Increasing from 900 in 2011/12 to 1200 in 2012/13 |
| The expectations of visitors are met or exceeded | Visitor satisfaction reported in Cairngorms Visitor Survey | Increase |  | Next Visitor Survey results due 2014/15 |
| The Park's recreation opportunities have improved the health and enjoyment of residents and visitors | Number of people using promoted core paths | Increased path use overall and more even spread throughout year |  | 27% increase in use of sample core paths with people counters |

11. Table 2 below summarises activity within the twelve National Park Partnership Plan programmes and their work packages. It includes highlights of work, so is not an account of all activity.

| Table 2. Summary of National Park Partnership Plan Programme Activity | |
|--|--|
| Programme | Key Work Packages |
| 1 Supporting business | <p>1a Enterprise Forum, economic strategy development and implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Enterprise Forum has continued to meet and to steer the Development of the Economic Diversification Strategy. • The Economic Diversification Strategy has been completed and approved by the CNPA Board. • A review of the Economic Health of the Park Report from 2010 was undertaken. <p>1b Skills and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBP, RDCDMO and Business Gateway continue to deliver training for businesses, with Business Gateway planning to spend £20k on work that supports the delivery of the Economic Diversification Strategy. <p>1c Food and drink development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cairngorms Food for Life project completed the Cairngorms Community Orchards project and a successful ‘Hens in Schools’ project. • The Cairngorms Food and Drink Trail was launched. • The ‘Best of the Wurst’ Beer and Sausage celebration of local produce was held in Grantown on Spey. • Royal Deeside Food and Fiddle Fortnight festival continues to grow. <p>1d Growing the Cairngorms Business Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CBP’s Business Barometer has shown continued growth in business confidence in the Park for short and long term future. • CBP membership continued to grow (from 288 in August 2013 to 353 in August 2014) |
| 2 Infrastructure & communications improvements | <p>2a Improving IT and mobile communications connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BT Openreach providing help for some developers to include superfast fibre broadband in new developments. • Telecoms provider EE’s network went 3G in the Park. • Badenoch Broadband and Communications based at Laggan reached it’s 100th connection in August 2014. • Digital Scotland programme to improve broadband availability continues to plan for future. <p>2b Improving access to housing for local needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of communities in the Park are investigating community-owned housing developments. |

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| 3 Low Carbon Cairngorms | <p>3a Renewable Energy Generation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of private individuals, estates and communities have progressed renewable energy project proposals in the Park. <p>3b Low Carbon Living.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Energy Scotland continues to provide best practice advice and up to date information on grants available to households. • Greener Scotland website promoting up green living and signposting information advice and funding opportunities. <p>3c Low Carbon Land Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 peatland projects have been awarded SNH Green Stimulus Peatland Restoration funds, bringing £117k capital funds to peatland restoration in the Park, with further projects pending. |
| 4 Community Empowerment | <p>4a Community action planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Action Plans for Braemar and Blair Atholl were developed. • LEADER LAG continue to bid for new LEADER Programme from 2015. <p>4b Community capacity building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Communities project leading to formation of community companies in all the main villages in Badenoch & Strathspey as well as 'Team Towns' and 'Team Badenoch' initiatives. • The Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust (TGDT) took over operation of Tomintoul visitor information centre from Moray Council and VisitScotland and continued to generating income through events and from operation of Smugglers Hostel in Tomintoul. |
| 5 Building vibrant places | <p>5a Planning the best development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan Examination took place over summer 2014 and the Reporters report expected September 2014. <p>5b Delivering the most effective Planning Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNPA planning service introduced range of procedures to improve quality and speed of development management service. • Restructuring and strengthening of CNPA planning team continued. • Developers Forum, Community Council/Association Planning Network working well and improving communication with planning service. <p>5c Supporting the regeneration of Tomintoul and Glenlivet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust (TGDT) took over operation of Tomintoul visitor information centre from Moray Council and VisitScotland and continued to generating income through events and from operation of Smugglers Hostel in Tomintoul. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tomintoul Gateway project underway. <p>5d Quality in Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architecture and Design Scotland field trip to visit key sites in Aviemore and Glenmore area. • Scenic routes winning design announced and implementation underway at Corgarff. <p>5e Townscape Enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Area Appraisals delayed by need to shift resources. • Highland Council undertaking significant improvements, modifications and refurbishment of Kingussie Court House. |
| 6 Nature and Landscapes | <p>6a Wildlife Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cairngorms Nature Action Plan being delivered throughout year. The Cairngorms Nature Festival was held in May 2014 and 770 people attended 56 events over two days. • The Cairngorms National Park is piloting approaches to spatial targeting of SRDP agri-environment funds for habitat expansion and creation. • Capercallie Framework phase I on schedule for completion by end of year to secure the long term future of the bird's UK stronghold. • A number of significant woodland expansion schemes have been developed across the Park. • 3 of Scotland's 6 Wildcat priority for action areas announced are identified in the Cairngorms. • A Cairngorms Nature sub-group is addressing issues of raptor persecution and conservation. • Woodland Trust Ancient Woodland project launched in the Park. <p>6b Cairngorms Landscapes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cairngorms Landscape Toolkit continues to be used, including by developers to inform development proposals. • Cairngorms Caledonian Pinewoods and Farmed Floodplains Futurescapes projects continue to deliver enhanced management. • Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership application made in May 2014 for total project investment of £3.6M. <p>6c Designated Sites Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint-Agency Working on priority (Section7) deer sites continues. • More co-ordinated approach to deer management groups and planning is developing. |
| 7 Supporting Land Management | <p>7a Land Management Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steady uptake of the 30% grant available from the Cairngorms Land Management Training Project for rural skills training courses from April 2014. • 2013 saw around 400 trainees attending public benefit and rural skills training courses on topics ranging from habitat assessment to cattle and sheep management. |

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| | <p>7b Advice and Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land management forum, Farmers Forum, monitor farm and CDAG continue to be active and usually well attended. • CNPA provided evidence to Rural Affairs Committee on deer management and operation of operation of Deer Management Groups(DMGs) and is supporting DMGs to meet expectations of Scottish Government. • Farm audits launched to help agents develop good SRDP applications. • Specific advice provided to estates on opportunities to deliver Cairngorms Nature priorities. • Estate management statements piloted and in further development with land owners. <p>7c Wildlife Estates Scotland Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wildlife Estates Scotland initiative continues to grow, with a number of estates gaining accreditation and advice available from CNPA. <p>7d Catchment Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catchment management partnerships (Dee, Spey and South Esk) remain highly active, each now developing and delivering river restoration projects. • Pearls in Peril project on upper River Dee has started to create new woodland enclosures. • Launch of new landscape-scale project around the River South Esk in Glen Clova with contour planting of trees for habitat enhancement, landscape improvements and to improve water storage. |
| 8 Leading Sustainable Tourism | <p>8a Implementing the strategy and action plan for sustainable tourism in the Cairngorms National Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-term review strategy and action plan for sustainable tourism in the Cairngorms National Park took place in 2013 with good progress noted. <p>8b Cairngorm Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New public body partnership and project team in place developing Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy. • Forestry Commission Scotland and CNPA have developed draft masterplan for future of FCS land holding at Glenmore and FCS purchase of upper Rothiemurchus has increased area of land under public sector management. • Natural Retreats won the contract for operation of Cairngorm Mountain and will bring new investment to the facility and be part of project team for Cairngorm and Glenmore strategy. |
| 9 Active Cairngorms | <p>9a Delivering and reviewing the Cairngorms National Park Outdoor Access Strategy</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Active Cairngorms Strategy underway. • The first revision of the Cairngorms Core Paths Plan was undertaken as part of the Local Development Plan and is now with reporters unit. <p>9b Promoting active enjoyment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Cairngorms Strategy will promote active enjoyment of the Park. • First sections of Speyside Way extension at Kinrara completed with further sections to Kinraig in development <p>9c Developing cycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 2 year post has been created with Sustrans to help deliver the Cycling Action Plan. • Cairngorms Electric Bike project continues.. • The new mountain bike trails on Crown Estate, Glenlivet were opened and have received good reviews in cycle press. • New mountain bike skills facility at Carrbridge was completed. • Works due to start on construction of Laggan Wolftrax Forest Centre. |
| 10 Outdoor learning | <p>10a Using National Parks in the Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNPA helping to provide course material for Higher curriculum. • The National Parks Senior pupil residential and teacher training weekend held late summer 2014. • The Outdoor Learning in National Parks competition was launched. <p>10b Learning from the Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Junior Ranger Project continues to operate in Highland, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Perth and Kinross with 6 secondary schools involved. • The John Muir Award continues to grow. <p>10c Volunteering to Support Nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A report and recommendations for how the CNPA can improve the coordination of environmental volunteering in the Park was completed and is being taken forward through Active Cairngorms and Cairngorms Nature. |
| 11 Sharing the Stories | <p>11a Coordination, training and support for visitor managers/communicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'Make it Yours' material has been trialled in 2014. • Communicating Cairngorms business toolkit has been developed and ready for launch. <p>11b Developing and delivering inspiring campaigns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cairngorms Nature campaign underway, supported by social media presence and development of a Roadshow exhibition to visit cities surrounding the Park. • The John Muir conference 2014 raised the profile of Scottish |

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| | <p>National Parks and management of wild and special places as part of Scotland's Year of Homecoming celebrations.</p> <p>I Ic Community Heritage Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has helped to engage local communities in their built heritage in the Badenoch area, and has focussed interest and enthusiasm in a number of community-led projects for the future. The same approach is included in the Landscape Partnership proposals for Tomintoul and Glenlivet. <p>I Ib Experiencing National Nature Reserves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The visitor centres at Nethy Bridge (Abernethy and Dell Wood NNR) and Glenmore (Glenmore NNR) were both refurbished. |
| Other progress | <i>The National Park Research Strategy was approved by the Board in May 2014 and will help focus and coordinate new research activity in the Park.</i> |

Next Steps

Looking ahead to 2015

12. A selection of highlights are summarised below:

Sustainable Communities and Business

- Implementation of Economic Diversification Strategy;
- Digital Scotland superfast broadband project likely to start bringing new superfast broadband connections to the Park;
- Community Action Plan to be developed for Strathdon and review of community action plans in Ballater and Boat of Garten;
- Cairngorms celebrations and promotion of Scotland's year of food and drink;
- Development of next LEADER Local Development Strategy; Both LEADER and SRDP programmes likely to start during 2015;
- Adoption of the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan;

People and Nature

- Further development of riparian and catchment planting projects on upper Dee and River South Esk;
- Development of a coordinated montane woodland expansion plan;
- Peatland restoration projects across the Park;
- Completion of Capercallie Framework for the Park to secure the long term future of the bird's UK stronghold;
- Decision on first round application for a Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Project for the Tomintoul and Glenlivet area;
- Development of a landscape change monitoring project across the Park;

Enjoying the Park

- Consultation on an Active Cairngorms strategy;
- Completion of Tomintoul and Glenlivet Gateways Project;

- c) Development of the Glenmore and Cairngorm project improving the visitor experience of the area;
- d) Cairngorms Visitor Survey 2014/15 will be completed;
- e) Make it Yours training and support to be rolled out after summer 2014;
- f) Completion of Laggan Wolftrax forest centre;
- g) Continued development of sections of the Speyside Way extension on the ground.

Gavin Miles

Hamish Trench

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gavinmiles@cairngorms.co.uk

hamishtrench@cairngorms.co.uk