
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: Sustainable Tourism Action Plan: Update

Prepared by: Heather Galbraith, Sustainable Tourism Officer

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide a 6-monthly update on progress with the Sustainable Tourism Strategy Action Plan.

Recommendations

That the board note progress on the Action Plan to 1st November 2005.

Executive Summary

The Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan were endorsed by the Board in March 2005. Since that time, work to implement the Action Plan has been ongoing and this paper updates on progress to 1st November 2005. Work on all priority actions is underway and details of some key projects are included in this paper. A comprehensive annual update will be presented to the board in late spring, including details of relevant work by partners.

Sustainable Tourism Action Plan Update – For Information

Background

1. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan were presented to the Board for endorsement at the March 2005 meeting (Paper 1), and the strategy states that a comprehensive annual update will be presented to the Board with an interim 6-monthly update. Implementation of the action plan so far has been based solely upon the Sustainable Tourism Strategy. Future implementation, however, will take place within the context of the relevant National Park Plan Priorities for Action.
2. This update was presented to the ViSIT Forum in November 2005 and takes into account known progress, primarily on initiatives where the National Park is either leading or working closely with key partners on actions up to the 1st November 2005.

Update to October 2005

3. The full updated Action Plan is provided in Annex 1. The actions categorised as high priority in year 1 have been highlighted in bold (numbers 1a, 2a, 2f, 3a, 4f, 6g). Progress has been made on each of these actions and further action is planned before the end of Year 1 in April 2006. A summary of progress on some of the key actions is detailed below:

Cairngorms Tourism Conference 2005 (2e)

4. Over 100 people attended the annual tourism conference at the Lecht Ski Centre on 26th October. Quality Assurance, Green Tourism and the Cairngorms Brand were all items for discussion, and there was strong input from the many tourism industry representatives attending during subsequent question and answer sessions. Smaller afternoon workshop sessions allowed delegates the chance to discuss further topics (Visitor Information, Working Together, Outdoor Access and Funding for Marketing) in more detail. A full conference report is available and has been distributed to delegates.
5. Feedback from the event will be used to plan next year's conference. All attendees said that they would be interested in attending a Cairngorms Tourism Conference on annual basis. Delegates mentioned that they would have liked more notice, so a provisional date of 1st November 2006 has already been set. The venue was appropriate, attracting attendees from throughout the park area. Several suggestions on possible topics for 2006 were received, but there was a general feeling that the programme should be agreed closer to the time to react to topical issues.

Area Tourism Partnerships (2b)

6. Area Tourism Partnerships (ATPs) are currently being established, covering the same geographical areas as VisitScotland's Network Offices. The intention is that the ATPs will bring together key partners in tourism and will have strong industry representation. Each ATP will co-ordinate tourism development, support activity and oversee the development of an area tourism strategy. The ATPs for North-East Scotland, the Highlands and Angus & Dundee will all cover the Cairngorms National Park to some degree. Work is ongoing to ensure that the CNPA Sustainable Tourism

Strategy and work of the ViSIT Forum are given due consideration within the new groups and emerging strategies.

7. In Highland, a number of Local Area Forums are being set up to feed into the ATP. The proposal that the ViSIT Forum could fulfil the role of the Badenoch & Strathspey forum was discussed and agreed on an interim basis. Should this arrangement work successfully then this may impact on the other tourism forums. As a result, the membership of the ViSIT Forum is currently being reviewed.

Cairngorms Brand (3a)

8. The focus for the Brand Management Group over the last seven months has been to develop relevant quality and environmental criteria for a variety of sectors seeking to use the brand. Criteria have been agreed for tourism businesses, community and tourist associations, events, non edible produce, beef, lamb & venison produce, golf courses and outdoor operators and the brand is now being used by over 25 businesses/organisations in the area. The Group are currently considering the options for using the brand on retail merchandising and the use of the brand for produce marketing.

Green Tourism Business Scheme (1d)

9. There has been increased interest in VisitScotland's Green Tourism Business Scheme, largely through the setting of green accreditation as a criteria for tourism businesses to use the Cairngorms Brand. Based on feedback from the tourism conference in October, the CNPA organised, in association with VisitScotland, 2 seminars in December to provide information and encourage membership. Businesses attending were then offered a free follow-up site visit and, if the visit found that they met the standards for membership, VisitScotland offered to waive the usual joining fee and first year's membership fees. This was very well-received by the industry, with 35 businesses attending a seminar and 21 opting for the follow-on visit. A third seminar is planned in January for those businesses who were unable to attend the dates in December.

Cairngorms Connections (4g)

10. Cairngorms Connections is a product-knowledge training course, developed in association with Tourist Board Training and aimed at people of the frontline of the tourism industry in and around the CNP. There is a strong emphasis on networking and linking the various different areas of the park. Four courses were run in May 2005 and an additional 2 in November 2005, with 50 delegates in total attending. Eleven delegates additionally attended a familiarisation trip from Strathspey to other areas of the park. Feedback from participants has been good, but uptake is slightly disappointing and this will be reviewed. An online version of the course, aimed at those resident outwith the park but leading tours in the area will be developed in early 2006.

Sense of Place (4e)

11. Interpretation panels are in situ in the majority of Tourist Information Centres (Newtonmore, Aviemore, Grantown, Tomintoul, Ballater and Braemar), and will be placed in the remainder by April 2006 in time for their re-opening (Kirriemuir, Kingussie and Crathie). Five ranger bases have been approached to display the panels in their visitor centres and all have agreed (Glenmore FCS, Cairngorm Mountain,

Glenlivet Estate, Balmoral Estate-Loch Muick visitor centre and Glen Tanar). Discussions are currently ongoing to determine combinations of text and images that best illustrate how the estate or area contributes to the Park's special qualities whilst retaining a co-ordinated pan park approach. It is hoped these will also be in place by April 2006. The next stage of the project, as presented to the ViSIT forum in November, will be to identify and approach visitor attractions that have the potential to house interpretation panels.

Annual Update to April 2006

12. A comprehensive annual update, with progress to April 2006 will be presented to the board in late Spring. While the 6-monthly update has focused largely on projects in the which the CNPA has taken a lead or are closely involved, it is recognised that partners are undertaking significant work under particular actions, and further details of this will be included in the annual update.
13. The annual update will also report on quantitative measures of out put and response, for example, distribution of information, press releases and attendance at training sessions.
14. Future implementation of the Action Plan will be set in the context of the Priority for Action 'Making Business and Tourism Sustainable', identified in the Draft Park Plan. Work identified in this priority draws on the Strategy and will in turn guide its future delivery.

Monitoring and Evaluation

15. A monitoring framework for the strategy is being prepared in partnership with the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute and a set of indicators will be developed to monitor the performance and impact of tourism. The indicator set will be developed so that it complements and integrates with the full set of indicators being established by the CNPA as part of the Park Plan.

Consultation

16. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in line with Principle 3 of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas "To involve all those implicated in tourism in and around the protected area in its development and management". The draft updated Action Plan was endorsed by the ViSIT Forum in November 2005.

Policy Context

17. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy will deliver many of the actions identified under the draft Park Plan priority for action "Making Business and Tourism More Sustainable", as well as working towards the longer term strategic objectives.

Delivering Sustainability

18. The concept of sustainability lies at the heart of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Delivering a Park for All

19. The cross-cutting aim “A Park for All” is implicit within much of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy, but is drawn out explicitly by Priority for Actions 5c within the Action Plan which states “Improve quality for key visitor groups who experience barriers to social inclusion”.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

20. The Sustainable Tourism Strategy has been developed in consultation with key partners who will deliver, or contribute to the delivery of, many of the actions. Regular meetings are held to avoid the risk of duplication.

Implications

Financial Implications

21. Funding for CNPA projects within the Action Plan have been budgeted within the 2005/2006 Operational Plan. Many of the projects will be delivered by, or in partnership with, other key partners.

Presentational Implications

22. A communications plan to promote the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas was prepared in September 2005. This aims to increase awareness of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan within wider stakeholder groups.

Implications for Stakeholders

23. Stakeholders were heavily involved in the development of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy, and the success of the Action Plan depends on delivery of key actions by partners. Six-monthly updates will continue to be presented to the ViSIT Forum and relevant project updates will be also presented on a regular basis. Meetings with key delivery partners are ongoing, and full details of partner contributions to the Action Plan will be presented in the annual update in late Spring.

Heather Galbraith, Sustainable Tourism Officer
January 2006

heathergalbraith@cairngorms.co.uk