

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: **A Natural Heritage Strategy Framework**

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Purpose

To seek Board approval at an early stage for a draft vision and strategy framework through which the CNPA will work with a wide range of communities, businesses, visitors, public sector partners, land managers and other interests in order to protect and enhance the natural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park (CNP). This draft vision and strategy framework will be developed through the Park Plan process.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- Note the current work being undertaken to protect and enhance the natural heritage by the CNPA.
- Agree the draft vision that residents, businesses organisations and visitors contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage of the CNP.
- Agree, that in order to achieve this the CNPA should work with partners and other interests in order to achieve integrated and comprehensive advice, training and support for all.
- Note that further more detailed strategy papers arising from this framework paper should be developed by staff and brought to the Board in due course.

Executive Summary

- The natural heritage of the CNP is internationally important. A major criterion for the failure or success of the CNP is the protection and enhancement of this outstanding legacy. This paper summarises current work being undertaken to protect and enhance the natural heritage by the CNPA. It recognises that there is much other activity being undertaken by organisations and individuals in the CNP. It proposes a vision and strategy framework for integrating and taking forward this work. This work is at an early stage and will be developed through the Park Plan process.
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A NATURAL HERITAGE STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Background and Introduction

1. Natural heritage is defined as the physical and geological structures that form the base of natural resources in the CNP, including water and air. It also includes landscapes (including wild land), habitats and wild species of animals, plants and fungi and other taxa. It embraces the science and conservation of these natural and semi-natural features.
2. The CNP is fortunate in having a wide array of nationally and internationally important natural heritage. It contains 25 % of Britain's threatened species. Nearly 40% of the CNP is designated for its special natural heritage qualities.
3. Many of these special qualities are affected by human activity. Some species and habitats rely on certain types of management. Strathspey is the most important mainland UK site for breeding waders, due to its extensive farming systems. The wrong type of management threatens others. Fences are being removed through the Capercaillie LIFE project to help mitigate previous practices, and secure a longterm future for this endangered bird.
4. The protection and enhancement of the natural heritage will be a major challenge, and an important factor in determining the success of the CNP. Many activities are already being undertaken to protect and enhance the natural heritage by a wide range of individuals and organisations. Appendix 1 describes work being undertaken by the CNPA. Activities by organisations will increase as the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act takes effect. The Act introduces a new biodiversity duty on public bodies. However, protection and enhancement of the natural heritage is not just for public agencies, but also for everybody. There is capacity to better integrate and increase support for natural heritage. The CNPA has a role to provide leadership and to work with stakeholders to this end.

Recommendation:

5. **Board is asked to note the efforts already being made by the CNPA to protect and enhance the natural heritage of the CNP.**

A Long-term Vision for Natural Heritage in the CNP

6. The immediate task for the CNPA is to develop and articulate a clear long-term vision for natural heritage in the CNP. This will then provide a basic framework strategy for further work, particularly by the Natural Resources Group but also by other staff that will determine short-term actions. The National Park Plan process will develop the vision and framework strategy. This will include discussions with the Integrated Land Management Advisory Forum and an evaluation of current activity to protect and enhance the natural heritage. This brief paper sets out a first draft of a vision and framework strategy for Board's consideration.
7. The longterm vision is that residents, businesses, organisations and visitors contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage of the CNP. Without everybody playing a part, it will not be possible to protect and enhance the natural heritage. For

example, there is an agreement between experts that loose dogs affect the breeding success of capercaillie. To help protect this rare bird, there is a role for public agencies to help the public prevent this disturbance, by, for example, encouraging the use of leads during the spring and early summer.

8. To achieve this vision, advice, training, support and opportunities should be provided for all. This already exists in some areas but there is a need for better integration of existing measures and a more comprehensive coverage. We will work closely with our partners to achieve this vision. We will need to ensure that this feeds into all work, for example the Interpretative strategy.

Recommendations:

9. **That the CNPA should work towards a long term vision for the area in which all visitors, businesses, organisations and residents contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage. The protection and enhancement of the natural heritage is a task for everybody, not just for a handful of public agencies.**
10. **That in order to achieve this the CNPA should build on work with partners and other interests in order to achieve integrated and comprehensive advice, training and support for all.**

Future Development of the Strategy

11. The natural heritage strategy framework will be developed over the next 24 months. It will be developed through implementing the current corporate plan and will be incorporated into the Corporate and Operational Plans for the CNPA in the coming year and beyond.
12. In addition to this, the vision outlined above will require development of more specific and focused strategies and policies that will be brought to the Board as thinking is developed with partners and the Integrated Land Management Advisory Forum. Much of this will also influence development of the National Park Plan and Local Plan. Examples include:
 - a) a strategy for implementing and developing the LBAP;
 - b) a landscape strategy;
 - c) a strategy for sustainable resource use;
 - d) the development of the Cairngorms Biological Records centre; and
 - e) a strategy for implementing the Nature Conservation Act.

Recommendation:

13. **That further more detailed strategy and policy papers arising from this framework should be developed and brought to the Board in due course.**

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Appendix 1 Current Natural Heritage Activities Being Undertaken by the CNPA

1. The table below provides a brief explanation of activities currently being undertaken by the CNPA that protect and enhance the natural heritage of the CNP. Much of the work is done in partnership. We are grateful for the support of other bodies. There are also other projects in the pipeline. This table describes the work of the CNPA only on natural heritage. There are many other organisations and individuals who undertake activities to protect and enhance the natural heritage in the CNP.

Activity	Description
Provision of natural heritage advice for CNPA	Advice is given for all aspects of the work of the CNPA, for example, planning and access issues.
Analysis of the State of the Natural Heritage	Being developed through the National Park Plan. Gaps in the knowledge of the state of the natural heritage will be identified and filled.
Integrated Land Management Strategy	Integrated Land Management support and objective setting aims to encourage land managers to deliver a wide range of public benefits, including the natural heritage.
Cairngorms Biological Records Centre	We are working with NorthEast Scotland Biological Records Centre to develop a Cairngorms BRC to encourage the recording and sharing of biological information.
The Cairngorms Moorland Project	The project seeks to integrate and demonstrate good practice in moorland management, including natural heritage.
Implementing the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan	Partner Delivery Plans are being drawn up. Existing LBAP projects (non-native fish and upland grain projects) are being implemented and developed. A communications strategy is being developed.
Capercaillie LIFE project	Project aims to improve breeding success and halt the decline of the Capercaillie.
Capercaillie recreation and disturbance study	Using the Delphi technique to assimilate anecdotal evidence of the effect of recreation on Capercaillie.
Land Based Businesses Training Project	Public Benefits Courses on natural heritage are being developed and Land Based Businesses encouraged to attend.
Reintroduction of Fresh Water Pearl Mussel	A project is under development to reintroduce the Fresh Water Pearl Mussel to parts of the CNP.
Aspen propagations project	Setting up a nursery to provide Aspen for the CNP.
Cairngorms National Nature Reserve Review	Working with SNH to develop the Cairngorms NNR to benefit wildlife and people.
River Catchment Management Plans	Developing integrated Catchment Management Plans to achieve multiple objectives.
Butterfly project	Promoting awareness of butterflies to visitors, tourism providers and encouraging monitoring.
John Muir Award	Helps people to enjoy and understand natural places.
Biodiversity Planning advice	A guide to protecting and enhancing biodiversity for development control is being produced.