

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: CAIRNGORMS RARE PLANTS PROJECT

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Purpose

To report to Finance Committee on:

- a) the development of the Cairngorms Rare Plant Project
- b) the support given in 2009/10 to establish the project
- c) the next steps for development and support for the project

Recommendations

- a) That the committee notes the support given to date
- b) That the committee approves the funding for this project, for a total of £25,000 over the financial years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13

Executive Summary

The Cairngorms Rare Plant Project seeks to undertake conservation of four key rare species. This will be done by working with land managers to produce site specific management prescriptions to stabilise the populations at a number of locations. The project will also seek to raise awareness among land managers and the public about these species.

The CNPA prepared the Bid to the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation which was approved in November 2009. Financial support was given in 2009/10 (£5,000) to establish the project and now approval is sought for continued support in the current and two further financial years (2010/11-£10k, 2011/12 -£10k and 2012/13 -£5k). The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation is the largest funding partner contributing £80,540 and SNH with £45,000.

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE JUSTIFICATION/(PROJECT PROPOSAL)

1. Title

Cairngorms Rare Plant Project

2. Expenditure Category

Operational Plan		Code		Procurement	
Programme: Conserving and Enhancing Programme				Grant	
Core or Project spend		Code		Capital	

Is this spend to be funded from an existing budget line, existing line with additional funds or is it a totally new spend?	£ 30,000 over four F/Ys	Existing budget	
	£	Additional budget	
	£	New budget	

3. Description

- Brief overview of project/activity including cost summary
- Specific elements for which support is sought (if not whole project/activity)

Cairngorms Rare Plant Project

Working with a wide range of partners, the project will identify and implement the most appropriate site specific action to secure the long term viability of four of the rarest and endangered plants in the Cairngorms National Park. Twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*), intermediate wintergreen (*Pyrola media*), lesser butterfly orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*), small cow-wheat (*Melampyrum sylvaticum*) and other associated fungi and bryophytes will be the focus of this project, using innovative techniques supported by the highest quality academic research and will include practical site management, translocations and the establishment of new populations where appropriate.

The project will liaise with project partners and land managers to identify the most suitable site-specific approaches to enhance the survival prospects of target species. This will include an assessment of current habitat conditions and their potential to support viable populations of target species; assessment of current site management and identification of site genetic variation using microsatellite markers where appropriate. This will lead to the establishment of best practice protocols for the selected sites with individual site plans being produced.

The project will focus on research through practical management. Monitoring will be

undertaken and control non-intervention plots will be set up. Measures of population health in non-intervention sites will indicate the level of change over time and act as a baseline for managed sites. Site managers will be trained in simple monitoring techniques to ensure that monitoring continues beyond the end of the project.

A key element for the Project Officer is to raise awareness of the plight of these endangered plants with landowners/land managers. Through awareness raising of the key issues and the development of specific plans for individual sites the land managers will be encouraged to submit funding applications to the Scottish Rural Development Programme to ensure long term support for practical action for the target species and significantly increasing benefits beyond the project timetable. Awareness raising will also target the general public and recreational users of the sites.

The Project Officer will develop the management plans with all key landowners/site managers and to undertake management prescriptions and field experiments. The Project Officer will also develop a GIS database of all known target species sites and undertake surveys at historical sites or sites with suitable habitat – this will involve the co-ordination of site surveys with volunteers, BSBI recorders, etc. Further development of micro-satellite markers will also be required for twinflower, following the successful pilot experiments undertaken by Forest Research. This will help to identify which isolated patches are a conservation priority and target those for compatibility testing and possible translocation.

The plants targeted through this project have their main UK stronghold in the Cairngorms and are in desperate need of immediate conservation action and this project will draw together the most appropriate methods and deliver action to ensure a significant improvement in the conservation status of these highly at risk species.

A Project Partnership Group has already been established and a workshop was held with all relevant stakeholders in 2008. All were in full agreement of the need for this work. A Scottish Pinewood Flora seminar was also held by Scottish Natural Heritage in 2008 to agree a rescue strategy and help the planning of conservation action over the next five years and the project will work closely with the experts involved. The project will deliver action for targets set in the UKBAP, the Cairngorms LBAP, the Cairngorms National Park Plan and SNH's Species Action Framework. This work should help prevent the extinction of both twinflower and small cow-wheat in the UK and significantly enhance the prospects of the other target species and the wider biodiversity of the managed sites.

This is a partnership project that combines academic research with practical conservation. Partners include CNPA, Aberdeen University, Plantlife, SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, RSPB, National Trust for Scotland, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh. It will also involve private landowners/estates and volunteer wildlife recorders.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is providing the majority of the funding for this project with SNH and the CNPA providing matched funding. The Project Officer is employed and line-managed by Aberdeen University, and the post is based in SNH's Aviemore office within the Cairngorms National Park. The Project Officer reports to a smaller Project

Management Group comprising representatives from Aberdeen University, the CNPA and SNH.

4. Rationale and Strategic Fit

- Why is the Park Authority considering investing staff and/ or financial resources in this project?
- Objectives/intended beneficiaries
- Evidence of need and demand
- Why is the Park Authority considering investing
- Fit with National Park Plan/Corporate Plan/other relevant strategies
- Linkages to other activities/projects
- What contribution may be made to improving KPI's?

All four species are priorities within the Cairngorms LBAP and the Scottish Natural Heritage Species Action Framework (SAF). This project will help fulfil the National Park Plan strategic priority 5.1a (conserve and enhance the condition and diversity of habitats and species). It specifically contributes to achieving the priority for action 6.1.3e (conservation projects to undertake active management targeted at prioritised species and habitats)

The four species targeted are all nationally rare and the CNP is the main UK stronghold. There is evidence that the populations of these species is either stagnant or in decline across the park.

5. Option Analysis

- Are there other ways in which the above objectives could be achieved?
- If so, why is this the preferred option?

This proposal has been discussed with the various partners and it has been agreed that the approach within the project is likely to be the most effective way of ensuring the conservation status of these species.

6. Risk Assessment

- Strategic, Organisational Risks: Does the project assist in managing or reducing any of the strategic risks identified by the Audit Committee or Management Team? Please reference the Strategic Risk Register and specify which risks are addressed through the project and how these risks are addressed.
- Project Risks: Are there risks to the CNPA in funding this project/activity?
- Are there risks in the project/activity not being delivered to required timescale/quality?
- Comment on the likelihood of such risks occurring, their potential impact, and (where appropriate) any action that would be taken to mitigate the risks.

The main risk within the project is the delivery of the outcome fails. This would be from lack of land manager support, poor management proposals and or other environmental effects such as adverse climatic conditions.

The project has been set up to minimise these risk through direct contact and management with willing land managers, engaging an experienced project officer proficient in good land management practices and expert botanical knowledge.

7. Costs and Funding

- Detail the financial costs of the project/activity
- Detail the sources of funding
- Justification also needs to be given if the CNPA is the major funder
- Detail any non-monetary costs to the CNPA (such as Member or staff input)

The overall project cost is for £155,540. This will be contributed by three sources

SNH (Species Action Framework) - £45,000

CNPA (Priority species programme) £30,000

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation £80,540

In addition Aberdeen university will be contributing to the administration and direct management and support of the project officer. The project is a three year project which started in March 2010. The cost to the CNPA will be spread over four financial years as follows

2009/2010 - £5k, 2010/11-£10k, 2011/12-£10k, 2012/13-£5k.

The contribution for 2009/11 has already been made from the conserving and enhancing programme.

There will be some staff time from a LBAP Officer in monitoring the project and representing the CNPA on the project management group. The project officer will be employed by Aberdeen university and based at the SNH office in Aviemore.

8. Funding conditions

- Detail the project specific conditions that need to be included in any contract for services or grant offer letter in order that CNPA obtains the intended outcomes and Value for Money
- In the case of grant offers, our Financial Memorandum requires that SEERAD agree these conditions in advance of the grant offer being made

A memorandum of agreements has been prepared with all the contributing partners.

9. Deliverables/ Impact Assessment including Equalities

- Could the project have any discriminatory or negative effects on particular groups?
- Have opportunities been taken to promote equality within the project design?
- Does the project fall within one of the Park Authorities priority areas for considering equality impacts?
- What end products/outputs will be delivered?
- How will success be measured?
- How will the project be monitored and what will be the feedback to the CNPA?

Success in the project will be measured by the range of land managers willing to engage with the project and consequently the number of sites for each species to be addressed. The monitoring will be undertaken by the Project management group, which include a CNPA representative.

As a strict conservation project and EqIA has not been undertaken but the likely hood of

any discriminatory effect is very low. Awareness raising of the general public will consider specific communication issues to ensure that equalities issues are addressed.

10. Value for Money

- In view of the costs, do the deliverables appear to offer value for money? (consider cost of comparable projects, where available).

The contribution of the CNPA, while significant, is relatively modest compared with the other contributors. It therefore represents good value to the CNPA as the delivery of the outcomes is a high priority within the conserving and enhancing programme.

11. Exit or Continuation Arrangements (where applicable)

- If this is not a discrete, time-limited, project or piece of work, what are the exit/continuation arrangements for when CNPA support ceases?

This is a strict time limited project, over a period of three years.

12. Additionality

- Does this work/project substitute for or duplicate work being carried out or proposed by others?
- What would be the effects of the CNPA not supporting the project? Would it proceed without CNPA support?

The project has started with the initial support of the CNPA through the conserving and enhancing programme (£5,000). It is proposed that the CNPA continues to support the project in the financial years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13 for £10k, £10k and £5k respectively. Without this support the project would have to seek funding from an alternative source.

There is no other similar project or research in the area.

13. Stakeholder Support

- Have the organisations and/or communities that would have an interest in this work/project been involved, and are they supportive?
- If supporter are also not funders an explanation may be required.

Partners include CNPA, Aberdeen University, Plantlife, SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, RSPB, National Trust for Scotland, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh.

It will also involve private landowners/estates and volunteer wildlife recorders.

14. Recommendation

It is recommended that the financial and staff support outlines in section 7 be approved.

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

15. Decision to Approve or Reject

Head of Group

Name:	Signature:	Date:
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Head of Corporate Services

Name:	Signature:	Date:
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Chief Executive

Name:	Signature:	Date:
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Finance Committee

Name:	Signature:	Date:
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Board

Not applicable – below approval limits		
Name:	Signature:	Date:

Scottish Government

Not applicable – below approval limits		
Name:	Signature:	Date: