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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR INFORMATION

**Title: JOINT WORKING WITH UK NATIONAL PARKS**

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#### **Purpose**

This paper presents an update on joint working activities undertaken between the 15 National Park Authorities in the UK. Key areas of joint work over recent years have been around development of National Park Partnerships Limited Liability Partnership, and subsequently the development and registration of the UK National Parks Charity Foundation as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charities Commission for England and Wales. The Authority has also been an active participant and Steering Group member of the “Working Together” initiative and a core member of the National Parks’ Communications Group.

This paper outlines the progress of these various initiatives and highlights, where known, planned future activity.

#### **Recommendations**

**The Board is requested to:**

- i. Note the progress of the Authority’s joint work with the other 14 UK National Park Authorities and the value of the emerging outputs and impacts of that work;**

## **Strategic Context**

1. Our involvement in collective activity with the other National Parks across the UK contributes to our delivery of our corporate priority to deliver ongoing service improvement including appropriate shared service development. This work also fits with our strategic financial planning on supporting grant-in-aid from Scottish Government with other income sources while delivering ongoing efficiency savings in our operations.
2. The Corporate Plan focuses our communications work on raising the profile of the Cairngorms National Park and to raise a connection to it and commitment to care for it. The work with UK National Parks has sought to help this communications objective by creating a stronger voice for National Parks as a whole through collective effort and multiple, widespread communication channels through which we develop stronger individual profiles in addition to delivering common messages, particularly with UK and International audiences.

## **Strategic Policy Considerations**

3. Our work to date in collective action with the other National Park Authorities in the UK has involved a relatively small amount of resource – typically time of senior staff with a small amount of financial resources. The main financial investment has been an annual contribution of £12,000 to support the development and work of National Park Partnerships.
4. The aim is to achieve results from collective action around income diversification, corporate sponsorship and communications and influencing that will outweigh any results that can be achieved through the NPAs working individually or in smaller groups, and hence achieve results that are more impactful than could be achieved working in more isolated ways. In this regard, we seek through collective action to address communications issues that are national and international in scale through a collective National Parks' message, while seeking sponsorship and income support from national and global commercial entities that are unlikely to wish to engage with individual or small groups of NPAs or local charities. Such impacts are already being seen in the corporate sponsorships we have seen through National Park Partnerships, including those with Columbia, Forest Holidays, Sykes Holiday Cottages, Dicky Bag and, most recently, Clif Bar. Joint procurement activities have also realised some small savings and / or efficiently supported procurement of key services, for example for statutory insurances. The potential benefits of the other strands of collective action around establishment of a UK charity and development of a centralised communications resource remain to be established.

5. At present the level of resource input is believed by Management to be appropriate for the potential scale of return that has been and may be realised through these activities.

## **Strategic Risk Management**

6. The collective work with National Parks across the UK contributes to mitigation of the following strategic risks:
7. **A1:** Resources – public sector finances constrain capacity to allocate sufficient resources to deliver corporate plan. Our work with colleagues in other NPAs in establishment of National Parks Partnerships Limited Liability Partnership (NPP LLP) is focused on the development of corporate sponsorship opportunities to help finance the projects and activities in the Cairngorms in delivery of the risk mitigation action to “focus resource on diversification of income streams to alternate, non-public income generation”.
8. **A14:** Reputation - the Authority’s reputation is impacted by a small number of vociferous social media opinion leaders. The Authority’s collective communications work is intended to contribute to the mitigation action of using our communications activity to support organisational aims and in reputation management. The inclusion of the Cairngorms as a positive exemplar within wider UK-wide communications aims to bolster the profile of the Cairngorms NP while reinforcing a positive perception and reputation.
9. **A15:** Reputation: high profile incidents or one off stories, such as those associated with wildlife crime, mountain hares, affordable housing can have an undue influence on the Authority’s wider reputation. Our mitigation action in this case seeks to establish, among other actions, close partnership working to seek to balance incident reporting and appropriately reflect Authority’s position and work – hence protecting our reputation from damage created by one-off stories.
10. The wider risk to the work itself is focused on the extent of commitment to this joint work by all NPAs in the UK.

## **Implications**

11. The implications of continuation of this work focus in the main on continued input of senior staff time. The Chief Executive will continue to invest time in attending Chief Officer meetings, while the Director of Corporate Services leads on the final stages of registering the national charity in Scotland, as the final step in the process of it being

enabled to operate across England, Wales and Scotland. The Head of Communications will also allocate some time toward the collective communication activities across all 15 UK National Parks.

12. The annual contribution to support the work of NPP is likely to continue for a period of time. Additionally, a joint communications unit is planned which will require annual support of between £5,000 and £6,000 from each NPA over the next three years. Both these costs have been provided for in the Authority's Operational Plan budget for 2019/20.

### **Success Measures**

13. Income and equivalent value of sponsorships generated through the collective action of the NPAs across the UK will represent one measure of success for these initiatives. The profile of National Parks and their messages across national media and in the public perception will represent a further measure of success arising from the collective communications work.
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## Supporting Information

1. The primary areas of collective work between the 15 National Park Authorities (NPAs) across Scotland, Wales and England have been on the development of corporate and commercial sponsorships through National Park Partnerships (NPP) a Limited Liability Partnership established jointly by all NPAs; the development of a charity organisation to support the work of NPP and allow access to funding available through corporate donations to charity; collective work on shared services; and joint communications activities. An update on each of these areas of work is presented below.

## National Park Partnerships (NPP)

2. Three years of work by NPP has resulted in a significant partnership with Columbia to provide a wide range of staff clothing and equipment, allowing considerable savings to be made in costs of Personal Protective Equipment and also enhancing corporate image. Partnerships are also now in place with a range of corporate sponsors who provide a range of funding support to the NPAs through NPP. The current list of corporate funders and sponsors of NPAs and their work can be found at:  
<https://cairngorms.co.uk/caring-future/working-with-partners/national-parks/>
3. For the 2019/20 financial year, NPP expect the position for each NPA to be at worst cash-neutral in terms of comparison of each Authority's annual contribution when compared with the cash return from corporate sponsors and funders. The value of clothing from Columbia is additional to this, with new clothing supplies in 2019 alone expected to be around £400,000 in value. As such, momentum built by NPP in its work with the corporate and commercial sector is expected to have reached an in-year break-even point as a minimum in the coming year.

## UK National Parks Charity Foundation (Charity Number 1182566)

4. The development of the UK National Parks Charity Foundation, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered in England and Wales, complements the work of NPP with the corporate sector in establishing a charitable entity able to take charitable donations from firms and distribute these funds toward supporting activities in National Parks across Scotland, Wales and England. The design and registration of this charity has been led by the Cairngorms NPA's Director of Corporate Services, with the registration of the charity with the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) the final outstanding stage of this development work. Once registered in Scotland, the charity will be fully operational and able to distribute any charity

donations from entities and their charitable foundations toward supporting work in National Parks across the UK.

## **National Parks Communications Unit**

5. After extended discussions, all 15 NPAs together with NPP have agreed the merits of forming a National Parks Communications Unit to work on behalf of the collective group in developing a clear brand identity for UK's National Parks; and develop and deliver clear and consistent messages on agreed subjects on behalf of all NPAs. The main objective is to raise the profile of the fifteen UK National Parks as part of a global family of National Parks and to promote the collective value they make to deliver public benefits. The communications unit will not engage in communications about policy development or its implementation, which is recognised can vary from area to area, and will operate on the basis of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) established with all members and setting out governance arrangements and the respective roles of the Communications Unit and each NPA. Recruitment for the Unit is currently underway and will cost between £5,000 and £6,000 in each of the next three years.

## **Working Together**

6. The Working Together initiative has invited National Parks to work collectively in the areas of Information Technology, Legal and Procurement, Financial Management, Human Resource Management and knowledge sharing on working through voluntary and charity sector bodies. The initiative supported joint procurement of insurance services and video conferencing facilities and has given impetus to a number of joint projects being progressed by sub-sets of NPAs.

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**June 2019**

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