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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR DECISION

**Title:**                    **Communications and Engagement Strategy Progress Report**

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### **Purpose**

To update the Board on progress made to deliver the Communications and Engagement Strategy and outline the Action plan for 2013/14 for approval.

### **Recommendations**

That the Board:

- a) Note the progress made to date
- b) Agree the C&E programme for 2013/14
- c) Confirm they are happy to give presentations to schools within the Park and support the 2013 events programme as set out in Annex 5
- d) Agree to set up a small working group of members to work with staff to develop the C&E programme for 2014/15.

### **Executive Summary**

The Communications and Engagement Strategy agreed in January 2012 provides a clear purpose to be delivered through a range of activities across the organisation. The aim was to continue to raise awareness, a sense of closeness and a sense of responsibility towards the Park and this report provides an update on how we are progressing towards these outcomes. It was agreed to focus our efforts on establishing ‘champions’ for the Park so that they can play their part in helping to promote the Park and its achievements. Independent surveys and other monitoring mechanisms have shown that good progress has been made – particularly with politicians, visitors and residents across the UK. The programme for 2013/14 will capitalise on the Year of Natural Scotland and the Park’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary to create a legacy of:

- a) Stronger relationships with our partners and stakeholders,
  - b) Added value through the development of the Park brand particularly with local businesses,
  - c) An increased number of Park champions to share their stories about the Park,
  - d) An enhanced events programme and support materials,
  - e) A deeper emotional connection with the Park that encourages people to get more involved in enjoying and caring for the Park.
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## COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT - FOR DECISION

### Introduction

1. In January 2012 the Communications and Engagement Strategy was approved setting out strategic outcomes, communication themes and target audiences as well as the communication mechanisms we would focus on to achieve these outcomes. (see Annex I for a summary of the Communications and Engagement Strategy)
2. Since then we have implemented a number of actions and focused our efforts on our identified target audiences and potential 'champions' which has helped to ensure the work across the CNPA is better aligned to deliver the agreed outcomes.
3. To measure our progress we have carried out:
  - a) Opinion surveys with MSPs, visitors, residents (Scotland and UK), businesses
  - b) Monitored our media coverage, website and social media activities
  - c) Monitored the involvement of others through specific activities

### Progress Update

4. Three Strategic outcomes were agreed:
  - a) To raise awareness of the Park;
  - b) Increase a sense of 'closeness';
  - c) Increase a sense of responsibility.
5. Evidence to show what progress has been made against these outcomes is as follows:
  - a) MSP Survey results carried out in November 2012 show 38% know the CNP 'very or fairly well', 49% are 'very or mainly favourable' towards the CNP (rest mostly neutral), 35% would speak highly of the CNP
  - b) Survey results with residents in Scotland show 84% are aware that Scotland has National Parks and 34% of Scottish residents could name the Cairngorms National Park unprompted (higher than LL&TTNP)
  - c) Survey results with residents in the UK show 90% are aware of National Parks, 90% say they are 'very or fairly important' to them, 8% could name CNP unprompted and CNP is the most well known Park in Scotland at 29%
  - d) Survey results with visitors show 82% know they are in a National Park, 51% say that being a National Park is 'quite or very important' to their visit (an increase from 25% in 2004), 97% would definitely or probably recommend CNP as a destination and 76% would definitely or probably come for a return visit

- e) During 2011 visitor numbers increased by about 1% over the previous year to 1.54 million. Since 2003 there has been an increase of about 8% (STEAM)
  - f) Business Barometer results show 48% of businesses feel that CNP is good for attracting first time visitors, and 40% think it is good for attracting repeat customers and 200 businesses and events are using the Park Brand as well as an increased use of the brand on visitor information (450,000 leaflets/annum)
  - g) Media coverage during 2012 was mostly positive or neutral (95%) while the total visitors to the CNP website was 121,076 (18% increase over 2011) which when combined with VistiCairngorms.com is 251,757 (LL&TTNP: 376,287 total visitors)
  - h) Social media monitoring shows VisitCairngorms.com Facebook page has 9873 'likes' and their twitter has 3986 followers. 'Cairngorms@CairngormsNews' twitter account has over 345 additional followers after just 3 months of activity. (LL&TTNP: Facebook 1144, twitter 3943)
  - i) In 2011/12 9763 people attended a ranger led event (12% increase), 4797 young people in education spent time with a ranger (29% decrease) and 1570 days of ranger led volunteer activities took place (74% increase) (see Annex 2 for a summary of the survey results)
6. These results show awareness of the Park continues to be high and a sense of 'closeness' with people valuing the Park is also increasing. There is an increased use and visibility of the National Park brand, visitor numbers have increased, 76% of visitors will definitely or probably return in the next 5 years, more ranger-led volunteering activities took place and a high percentage speak highly of the Park.
7. Our stakeholder engagement programme has resulted in several political public endorsements for the Park and its work (see Annex 3 for specific details) including:
- a) Scotland's spending review and draft budget 2012/13 by John Swinney
  - b) The launch of both National Park Partnership Plans by Richard Lochhead, the NPPP Forward by Stewart Stevenson and a joint letter of support for the plans to public sector partners by John Swinney and Stuart Stevenson
  - c) Endorsement for both National Parks at the Scottish Environment Festival at Holyrood by Stewart Stevenson and Sarah Boyack
  - d) Public support for the Blair Atholl visitor centre project by John Swinney
  - e) Public support for the Cairngorms Wildcat project by Stuart Stevenson
  - f) The opening of the Strathdon Bridge by Denis Robertson
  - g) First Minister's quote when announcing the additional 'shovel ready' funding for Scotland's National Parks (below)

Talking about an additional £2.35 million investment in the CNP, the **First Minister** said:

*“Scotland’s National Parks - while vital to the protection of important habitats - are also hugely important to our rural economy. This extra cash – for shovel ready projects to enhance visitor facilities and support green tourism – will also create new employment opportunities, delivering a fresh stimulus to the local economy.*

*“In the Year of Natural Scotland, there is no better time to enjoy Scotland’s great outdoors. And last year, visitors from both home and abroad enjoyed our stunning National Parks. This extra investment will ensure they continue to thrive and attract even more visitors in the years to come.”*

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2013/01/Scotlands-national-parks10012013>

8. The third outcome – to increase a sense of responsibility – is much harder to measure. However, during 2012 significant progress has been made. For Example:
- a) Adoption of the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) with clear endorsement by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Environment, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and strong commitment towards its delivery by public sector partners through the NPPP Strategy Group and Strategic Delivery Group
  - b) NPPP and Local Development Plan main issues report consultation received 114 responses with over 400 residents attending 10 community consultation meetings across the Park
  - c) Community Action Planning across the Park saw a 60% increase in participation and a 15% increase in volunteering
  - d) Completion of 17 community action planning processes and the formation of Development Trusts in Kingussie and Tomintoul and Glenlivet
  - e) Established the Cairngorms Nature partnership to develop and deliver the next Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the Cairngorms National Park
  - f) Education Scotland taking on the ‘Outdoor Learning’ project by developing a three-year action plan and embedding outdoor learning in Scotland’s National Parks and other protected places in the national Curriculum for Excellence (CNPA now play a supporting role rather than leading the project)
  - g) COAT taking on responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of paths and bridges they have upgraded or repaired, delivering a training programme and raising £1 million per year for this work
  - h) The work of 12 ranger services welcomes well over 1 million visitors each year with over 1570 ranger-led volunteer days held in 2011 (74% increase)
  - i) There has been a reduction of 60% in the number of access issues being handled under the Land Reform Act
  - j) CBP promote the Park as a destination through their marketing activities and with the Scottish Tourism Alliance in the development of a national tourism

strategy as well as playing a major role in the delivery of the sustainable tourism strategy for the Park including support for the Park Brand

- k) Partners taking responsibility to promote the Park and its special qualities (e.g. VisitScotland's £100,000 marketing budget for the Parks in 2013)
- l) Community-led initiatives including the 'Strengthening Communities' project, Blair Atholl Visitor Information Hub, Boat of Garten housing group and Station Square project, over 30 cultural heritage projects, 12 community-led path leaflets produced, etc.)

## **Communications and Engagement Action Plan 2013/14**

- 9. The Communications and Engagement Strategy identifies the mechanisms we will focus on to deliver the three strategic outcomes:
  - a) To raise awareness of the Park;
  - b) Increase a sense of 'closeness';
  - c) Increase a sense of responsibility.
- 10. Below is an overview of the planned activities, using these mechanisms, for 2013/14.

### ***Digital Communications***

- 11. Digital communications will be used to keep our key stakeholders and other interested parties informed of the work of the Park and how to get involved. This will include a twice-monthly e-newsletter, regular blogs by the Convener, Vice-Convener, Planning Committee Convener and Chief Executive, our 'twitter' account which already has over 300 followers, regular e-bulletins for MSPs and other stakeholders and continued development of both the CNP and VisitCairngorms.com websites. An online communications toolkit will provide practical advice, materials and information to help potential 'champions' promote the Park.
- 12. As part of our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary we are in discussion with partners to launch a competition on face book which aims to create a community of people with a 'closer' interest in caring for the Park. The competition will invite people to share what inspires them about the Park which could help identify future 'champions'.
- 13. During 2013 we will put in place a training programme for CNPA staff and Board members to develop our skills in how to make best use of digital communications including the use of 'Linked-In' for group discussions, how to build a stronger following for our twitter and face book accounts and the use of flickr and Youtube. This work will be done in partnership with the CBP to ensure we do not duplicate our efforts and support each other as much as possible.

**Stakeholder Engagement Programme**

14. A stakeholder engagement programme will focus on building strong relationships with our NPPP delivery partners and key influencers. A stakeholder engagement workshop has identified and prioritised who we need to communicate with and what outcome we want to achieve following our engagement. Our forums and working groups ensure we engage on a regular, face-to-face basis (see Annex 4 for details). We are working with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority to reach any shared stakeholders to achieve the best impact for both National Parks. The Forward Look 2013 sets out the current engagement programme.

**Developing the Park Brand**

15. The Brand Development Group has recently been revised and will advise the Board on how the brand can be developed to improve quality standards, help make an emotional connection to get people involved, promote shared messages and deliver a commercial advantage including possible merchandising and fund raising opportunities. Following a Brand Development Group meeting in March a Board paper on Tourism and the Brand will be brought for discussion in May 2013.

**Campaigns**

16. 2013 is the Year of Natural Scotland and the Park's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This provides a unique opportunity to capitalise on a National Campaign to help promote the Park and its special qualities. A detailed programme of events and activities are being progressed with partners to ensure Scotland's National Parks and the Cairngorms in particular get as much profile as possible.
17. A proposed programme was presented to the Board in December (see board paper 2 December 2012) and the following discussion points have been taken into account:
- a) A signature event will take place in Blair Atholl with John Swinney on 22<sup>nd</sup> March to mark the Park's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and open the new Visitor Hub
  - b) All schools across the Park will be contacted to offer an inspiring presentation to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Park to be led by Board members (staff will prepare the materials for Board members to use)
  - c) An events programme is being developed which will ensure a geographical spread across the Park (See Annex 5 for a list of events)
  - d) A competition via social media aims to create an online community of supporters who could become future champions for the Park
  - e) VisitScotland, ANPA and Merrell will promote both National Parks on an international/UK-wide basis
  - f) An international conference is planned for spring 2014 to celebrate John Muir and the Year of Homecoming (subject to gaining funding support)

- g) The 'legacy messages' we want people to be left with are that the Cairngorms National Park has astonishing wildlife and landscapes and that everyone can enjoy the Park and get involved
18. To mark the Park's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary there will also be a series of activities and materials to promote some of the achievements that have been collectively delivered since the Park was established in 2003. The aim is to encourage and support others to act as 'champions' for the Park so they can 'tell their own stories' when the opportunity arises.
19. To help illustrate these achievements ten case studies are being developed which explains what is special about the Park, what has been delivered, how this benefits people supported by a set of key facts and figures. The ten case studies will focus on:
- a) The ancient and natural forests found in the Park;
  - b) The rich and varied wildlife found in the Park;
  - c) The Park as a destination;
  - d) Support for land-based businesses through the LBBT project;
  - e) Investment in the Park (successful planning applications and developments);
  - f) The empowerment of our local communities;
  - g) The work in relation to the Park's ranger services;
  - h) The John Muir Award;
  - i) The Feis Spe initiative;
  - j) Investment in our paths infrastructure.
20. We will encourage our partners and potential 'champions' for the Park to make use of these materials to promote their role in managing the Cairngorms National Park. Opportunities where these case studies can be show-cased are being confirmed with partners and support materials will be available for use via the website and through the CBP-led 'Make it Yours' initiative (formally Park Aware) from March 2013.
21. A bespoke training course on advanced communication skills is being developed with the ranger services to encourage them to be even more effect in their work with the public and partners. Training will be delivered in March as part of the annual ranger gathering.

### ***Strengthening Communities***

22. Considerable investment has gone into developing strong support for local communities in the Park. Almost all communities (80%) have undergone a community action planning process supported by community development officers which has fed into the development of both National Park Partnership Plan and Local Development Plan. Community Development Officers have also supported over

250 community groups, drawn down £2 million in additional funding for community projects (including capital projects) and increased volunteer numbers creating greater levels of community cohesion. (see Board Paper August 2012 and Cultural Heritage paper February 2013). Longer term support through Community Development Officers as well as Local Authority community planning partnerships will be brought for decision later in the year.

23. In addition, community development trusts have been established in Tomintoul and in Kingussie. This, along with the practical support and advice being provided via the 'Strengthening Communities' and Community Development Officers' network has provided communities with the confidence and support they need to take on major initiatives that will have a significant impact for the benefit of the whole community.
24. The LEADER programme has played an important role in providing financial support for community-led projects and an update paper and forward look at the 2014-2020 bid will come to the Board in April 2013.

#### ***Youth Programme and Volunteering***

25. Following an extensive audit of the training opportunities available to people living and working in the park a youth and volunteering programme focused on skills development and job creation particularly in the land based business sector is being developed and will be brought to the Board for discussion in March 2013.

#### ***Planning, Development and Housing Issues***

26. As part of the Planning Service Improvement Plan we have made progress to improve communications and relationships around these areas which are of key concern to people in the Park and to CNPA:
  - a) We now have a planning contact for each of the Community Councils/Associations within the National Park and will work to develop these relationships through the Planning Representatives Network. This group, chaired by Roger Clegg from Association of Cairngorms Communities, is working well to develop better relationships, discuss issues of common concern and improve standards of communication.
  - b) We have established a Developers Forum to better support planning agents, architects and builders in preparing high quality planning applications and will work with them on the draft Local Development Plan and other topical planning issues.
  - c) We ran a very successful Design Awards scheme to promote high standards of design. The visual material that was generated will be used with a wide range of groups to generate positive conversations about the role of the planning process.

- d) We piloted a planning awareness session with schools within the National Park and will roll out more widely in the year ahead.

## **Implications**

### ***Financial Implications***

27. The proposed Communications and Engagement programme for 2013/14 set out above can be delivered within the existing operational plan budget with the exception of the International Conference which is a partnership event and dependent on being awarded a 'Year of Homecoming' 2014 funding bid.

### ***Implications for Stakeholders***

28. This programme focuses on building stronger relationships with our delivery partners and key stakeholders, encouraging interested parties to get more involved in enjoying and caring for the Park and to act as 'champions' by sharing their stories about the Park. We will work closely with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority and the Cairngorms Business Partnership to ensure our efforts support each other as effectively as possible.

## **Next Steps**

29. In order to take this work forward and ensure lessons are learnt along the way we propose to set up a small working group who will provide support and advice on the delivery of the programme to help us establish a legacy of stronger partnerships, enhanced future events and materials plus a community of 'champions' for the Park. In particular this working group will help develop a communications and engagement programme for 2014/15 to support the Year of Homecoming.
30. A further progress report along with an update on any lessons learnt will be brought to the Board in early 2014 and a discussion on the proposed programme for 2014/15 will be brought to the Board in the autumn 2013.

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15<sup>th</sup> February 2013

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