

THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY	Agenda Item	7
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15th APRIL 2003

PROJECT COMMITMENTS

SUMMARY: Scottish Ministers have indicated on a number of occasions that they expect the Cairngorms National Park Authority to take on the existing project commitments of the Cairngorms Partnership as part of the smooth transfer between the two bodies.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the Board to the projects it has inherited; outline the timetable for transferring these projects; seek the Board's approval to contribute to two new projects; and report on other project commitments known to be in the pipeline.

While the Board will wish to form a view about project work in the context of a wider policy framework for the Park, this will inevitably take some time to develop. In the meantime, it is important to avoid an hiatus in activity.

CONSIDERATION

1. Inherited Project Commitments

- • 1.1 The Cairngorms Partnership currently has 17 on-going projects which it is either leading or in which it has an outstanding financial commitment. This is in addition to a number of on-going projects to which the Cairngorms Partnership has already contributed funds or in which there is an on-going contribution of staff time.

1.2 The inherited projects are listed in Annex 1. Of those being led by the Cairngorms Partnership, the largest are the Administration of the Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme, Phase 2 of the Cairngorms Moorland Project, and Phase 3 of the Forest of Spey Project.

1.3 The total value of these projects is approximately £4.7m, to which the Cairngorms Partnership had contributed just under £45,000 by the end of the 2002-03 financial year. The inherited commitment for the National Park Authority to these projects is £90,252 in 2003-04; £45,841 in 2004-05; and £35,445 in 2005-06.

1.4 These projects range widely in their subject matter, geographic coverage, and size. All have been developed to help implement the Cairngorms Partnership's Management Strategy, and at the same time, are compatible with the aims of the National Park.

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6. It is also interesting to note that whilst all of the projects are targeted on areas within the National Park, the majority include adjacent areas. This recognises the fact that projects have to cover coherent areas, which will differ for each project depending on its objectives. Further this approach helps to reduce the so-called "edge effect"; whilst the National Park is the focus of attention, the benefits of activity in the Park spread beyond its boundaries.

2. Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme

- • 2.1 In addition to these projects, the National Park Authority will also inherit the Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme. Worth £2.41m in total, this Programme has approximately £1m of European Structural Funds to pilot innovative approaches to rural development that will promote the sustainable economic, environmental and social development of the area's rural communities. A wide range of partners is involved in managing this Programme and in providing match funding for individual projects.

3. The Timetable for Transfer

- • 3.1 Under the terms of the Designation Order setting up the Cairngorms National Park, the National Park Authority is allowed to enter into contracts from its establishment, but is not allowed to give grants until 1st September 2003.

3.2 In practice this means that existing projects led by the Cairngorms Partnership which give grants, principally the Forest of Spey Phase 3 and the LBAP Phase 2, as well as the Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme, will have to remain with the Cairngorms Partnership until September at which point they will transfer to the National Park Authority.

3.3 The fact that the National Park Authority can already enter into contracts allows it to take the lead now on new and existing projects which it wishes to initiate provided that they do not give grants.

3.4 Where there are outstanding grant commitments, these will need to be met until September by the Cairngorms Partnership on behalf of the National Park Authority; and equally should the National Park Authority be minded to make other grants before that date, it will need to contract the Cairngorms Partnership to do so on its behalf.

4. New Commitments

- • 4.1 As part of its on-going work to maintain momentum in the run up to the National Park, the Cairngorms Partnership has been developing new initiatives with a range of partner bodies. Two of these projects have now advanced to the stage that they require the Board to approve a funding contribution. Further details of the projects are set out below:

Joint National Parks Visitor Survey

- • 4.2 In September 2001, a Steering Group comprising representatives from Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Joint Interim Committee, Tourism and Environment Forum, VisitScotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Cairngorms Partnership met to discuss the need for baseline information on visitors in the proposed National Parks. They agreed that the gathering of baseline visitor information would be essential to both National Parks to help them develop, monitor and evaluate sustainable tourism strategies. Further, the partners considered that a joint approach, with the full survey starting at similar times, and repeated every 3-4 years, would allow direct comparison between the two Parks and promote a clear understanding of the relative effectiveness of their strategies.

4.3 The partners therefore agreed to address the work required in three

phases. In Phase 1, a consultant was commissioned to provide an audit of existing visitor information for both areas and to develop a new visitor survey which addressed the visitor information requirements common to both areas. The final report was completed in March 2002 by NFP System 3.

4.4 In Phase 2, the face-to-face and self-completion questionnaires were piloted, and recommendations made for the appropriate methodology and sampling to be used in the full baseline survey.

4.5 Work is now ready to begin on Phase 3 which involves a full 12-month baseline survey of between 2-3,000 face-to-face interviews and 1,000 self-completion questionnaires beginning in late spring 2003. A detailed project brief is contained at Annex 2.

4.6 VisitScotland has estimated that each survey should cost in the region of £50,000 including VAT. The following funding has already been secured:

- • Scottish Enterprise Grampian £10,000

Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise £ 6,000

Scottish Enterprise Tayside £ 1,000

VisitScotland £ 5,000

Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board £ 2,000

Aberdeen and Grampian Tourist Board £ 2,000

Angus and Dundee Tourist Board £ 1,000

Cairngorms LEADER+ £ 5,000

- • **Total £32,000**

4.7 This leaves an outstanding balance of £18,000 which the Board is asked to agree.

4.8 The Board is requested to give this request urgent consideration so that the survey can commence straight away in parallel with the work in the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

John Muir Award

- • 4.9 A Project Development Group consisting of SNH, the Cairngorms Partnership and the John Muir Award, in consultation with Community Learning and Development in Highland, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Angus, and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, has been developing a proposal to promote and develop the John Muir Award in and around the Cairngorms National Park.

4.10 The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme focused on wild places. The Award's four challenges encourage the discovery, exploration and conservation of wild places and the sharing of experiences in a spirit of fun and adventure. These themes seek to engage people in nature,

develop understanding of wild places and get involved in practical action for these places or issues relating to them.

4.11 Established in 1997, the Award is delivered mainly through partnerships with youth organisations, schools, clubs, Councils and outdoor centres. With advice and assistance from Award staff, these 'Award Providers' integrate the Award structure with their own environmental and outdoor programmes and activities.

4.12 Development work in promoting the Award in the Cairngorms is currently limited to one Edinburgh-based Regional Manager who covers the whole of East Scotland.

4.13 The proposal agreed by the partners on the Project Development Group is for the National Park Authority to employ a full time manager for the Award in the Cairngorms area for an initial period of 3 years at a total cost of £99,782. This comprises £75,257 for the manager's costs, £9,975 for overheads, and £14,600 for developmental work. A draft job description for the post is contained at Annex 3.

4.14 90% of the funding is already in place, with SNH and Cairngorms LEADER+ providing £44,902 each (subject to review after the first year), and the Group is now requesting assistance of £9,978 over 3 years from the National Park Authority for the project to proceed.

5. Financial Implications

- • 5.1 The Board's support for these two new projects would increase the National Park Authority's project funding commitments in 2003-04 from £90,252 to £111,861; in 2004-05 from £45,841 to £48,993; and in 2005-06 from £35,445 to £38,662.

5.2 The Cairngorms National Park Authority has not yet been allocated a budget for 2003-04. Ministers have indicated that they are committed to providing adequate funding for the new Authority, and the amount of grant-in-aid will be the subject of early discussions between the Minister and the Board. A draft budget will be brought forward shortly by staff for the Board to consider, but it would in any event provide for existing project commitments, the two new projects (Visitor Survey and John Muir Award) detailed above, and a further amount for other new projects.

6. Future Projects

- • 6.1 Staff are aware of a number of other existing projects which are likely to be approaching the National Park Authority for assistance in the near future. These include the Cairngorms Estates Training Programme and the Upper Deeside Access Trust, both of which have been strongly supported by the Cairngorms Partnership in recent years. The former provides co-ordinated and subsidised training events for land-based estates around the Cairngorms, whilst the latter is a well-known organisation that helps to maintain and assist public access in Upper Deeside. Requests for these and other projects will be presented to the Board at a later date.

RECOMMENDATION: The Board is invited to [a] note the projects to be inherited from the Cairngorms Partnership; [b] to approve expenditure of £18,000 for the Joint National Parks Visitor Survey and £9,978 for the John Muir Award.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rajni'.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Policy and Projects

Date: 2 April 2003