

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: OPERATIONAL PLAN 2006/07, QUARTER 4

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Purpose

To present a final update on progress on the 2006/07 Operational Plan over the course of the year.

Recommendation

The Board is requested to note the progress made on the 2006/07 Operational Plan actions over the course of the year, and in particular that:

- a) Activity on 5 of the 7 priority 1 goals for 2006/07 has broadly delivered the outputs and outcomes sought by the end of 2006/07. Work toward adopting the Local Plan and in maintaining development control caseloads at manageable levels are highlighted as meriting some additional management attention.
- b) All 13 priority 2 goals are classed as green at the end of 2006/07 reflecting good progress across a wide range of activities in the year.

Executive Summary

The Operational Plan sets out a range of actions, and performance measures associated with these actions, which contribute over the course of 2006/07 to the ultimate delivery of the 20 Corporate Plan goals by the end of 2007/08. The Management Team's review of the delivery of the 2006/07 Operational Plan over the year has sought to identify whether planned activities have remained broadly on target in terms of timetable and delivered intended outcomes, or whether, for any reason, activities have not delivered intended outcomes or timetables have slipped.

The Management Team has adopted a "traffic light" system of categorising progress, with each action classed as green, amber or red depending on the level of risk attached to delivery of intended outcomes.

The monitoring process has highlighted that two of the Authority's seven priority goals merit some additional management attention. **Adoption of a Local Plan for the Park** remains highlighted following the Board's agreement to revise the original timetable for this exercise. **Delivery of an effective and efficient development control service** is also now highlighted as "amber" in risk management terms as a result of the outstanding caseload of applications called-in.

Activity on the other 5 priority 1 goals has generally delivered the outcomes sought. Activity on all 13 priority 2 goals is also shown to be broadly on track at the end of the year, reflecting good progress across a wide range of activities. On the risk management system used to monitor Operational Plan delivery, all 18 of these goals are therefore classed as green at the end of 2006/07 – showing Corporate Plan objectives in these areas remain on track for achievement by the end of 2007/08 and giving no overall cause for management concern.

The paper highlights key achievements over the course of the year:

- a) The National Park Plan was approved by Ministers in March 2007;
- b) The “Heather Hopper” bus service was reintroduced for the summer of 2006;
- c) A silver award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme reflecting its high standards of environmental awareness in delivery of its services;
- d) Publication of a range of information, including the well received “Cairngorms Explorer” integrated travel timetable;
- e) Completion of the first ever Outdoor Access Strategy for the National Park;
- f) Provision of advice to SNH on the route for the Speyside Way extension;
- g) The Park Brand is now approved for use by a number of businesses and organisations;
- h) Extensive consultation on the Local Plan, including on the development of policy on affordable housing within the National Park;
- i) Ongoing support to the John Muir Trust and presentation of 1,442 John Muir awards over the course of the year;
- j) Submission and evidence to the Beaulieu-Denny powerline inquiry;
- k) Support of a wide range of natural heritage and land management projects, usually in partnership with other bodies;
- l) Working closely with Scottish Executive and other partners to ensure that the new Scottish Rural Development Programme will contribute positively to the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the Park;
- m) On climate change issues, actively looking at our own operations and practices in order to reduce our carbon emissions;
- n) We continued to work with partners to explore any opportunities for efficiency and shared service delivery.

The paper also presents the latest update, as at 31 March, of the Authority’s Balanced Scorecard organisational monitoring tool. All four aspects of the organisation’s balanced scorecard – Governance and Risk Management; Human Resource Management; Financial Management; and Corporate and Operational Plan delivery – are shown to be generally performing well. The paper comments on exceptions highlighted within the balanced scorecard monitoring framework.

OPERATIONAL PLAN 2006/07, QUARTER 4 – FOR INFORMATION

Background

1. The Operational Plan for 2006/07 was agreed by the Board at its meeting in April 2006. This plan stems from the Corporate Plan for 2005/06 to 2007/08, approved by the Board in February 2005, and represents the second year of delivery moving toward the outcomes sought by the Board in that Corporate Plan.
2. The Operational Plan monitoring process follows a now standard procedure which has been set out to the Board in previous quarterly update reports.
3. For 2006/07, the Operational Plan review process focuses on achievement of a key performance indicator (KPI) which has been established for each activity.
4. In reviewing the status of delivery of operational plan actions against these performance indicators, the Management Team have used a three way system of categorisation:
 - a) Green: action being delivered broadly in line with timetable and intended outcomes envisaged in operational plan.
 - b) Amber: there are some changes to the timetable and/or intended delivery plans which pose some risk to delivery of intended outcomes.
 - c) Red: changes to timetable and/or delivery plans pose a significant risk to delivery of intended outcomes.

Results of Review Process

5. Annex 1 to this paper sets out the Operational Plan, with actions colour coded according to the above guidelines, together with a brief commentary on progress and achievements over the course of the year.
6. The review of activity over 2006/07 highlights some heightened risk over delivery of one of the 7 top priority goals: **adoption of a Local Plan for the Park by Spring 2007** and this was highlighted as amber in the Quarter 2 Operational Plan report to the Board in October. The Board has considered a separate report on the timetable for the Local Plan, at its meeting in August 2006 and agreed to postpone putting the draft Local Plan on deposit until June 2007. This goal remains highlighted in the latest Operational Plan review as a result of this shift in timetable. Work on this goal continues to progress in line with the revised timetable.
7. A further priority 1 goal – **delivery of an effective and efficient development control service** – is also now highlighted as amber. Monitoring of this area at the end of March has drawn attention to the increase in the number of active cases called-in, which stood at 54 in comparison with a target maximum of 40 set for monitoring purposes. The Operational Plan also set a performance indicator of 100% of called-in applications determined within 2 months of call-in, while the update shows that it has not been possible to achieve this target given the level of applications called-in. Management Team has reviewed the resource requirements

of this goal and agreed an additional allocation to provide for added development management staff time over a fixed period in order to clear outstanding applications.

8. Activity on the other 5 priority 1 goals have generally delivered the outcomes sought and, therefore, remain classed as green at the end of 2006/07.
9. Activity on all 13 priority 2 goals is also shown to be broadly on track at the end of the year, reflecting good progress across a wide range of activities. More detail of progress in specific areas is provided in the commentaries included in Annex 1.
10. It is important to bear in mind the overall context of this operational plan monitoring update, as seeking to reflect progress in delivering outcomes sought in the Corporate Plan. The Operational Plan review continues to indicate that the great majority of the three-year milestones set in the Authority's Corporate Plan remain on target for completion. Additional comment on progress against these three-year milestones is included in the paper considering the proposed Operational Plan for 2007/08.

Highlights of Operational Plan Delivery in 2006/07

11. The analysis of delivery Corporate Plan milestones presented to the Board along with the proposed Operational Plan for 2007/08 highlighted that excellent progress had been made over the first two years of the Corporate Plan, with many of the milestones now attained.
12. As this is the last monitoring report on the 2006/07 Operational Plan, it is appropriate to highlight a number of the key achievements over the course of the year:
 - a) The National Park Plan was approved by Ministers without modification in March 2007;
 - b) The "Heather Hopper" bus service was reintroduced for the summer of 2006 with support from the Authority, linking Strathdon and Deeside with Strathspey;
 - c) The Authority received a silver award from the Green Tourism Business Scheme reflecting its high standards of environmental awareness in delivery of its services;
 - d) Publication of a range of information, including the well received "Cairngorms Explorer" integrated travel timetable;
 - e) Completion of the first ever Outdoor Access Strategy for the National Park;
 - f) Provision of advice to SNH on the route for the Speyside Way extension following a full public consultation process;
 - g) The Park Brand is now approved for use by around 120 businesses and organisations;
 - h) Extensive consultation on the Local Plan, including on the development of policy on affordable housing within the National Park;
 - i) Ongoing support to the John Muir Trust and, through that organisation and 47 registered providers, presentation of 1,442 John Muir awards over the course of the year;
 - j) The Authority has made a submission and given evidence to the Beaulieu-Denny powerline inquiry, which started in February 2007;

- k) Support of a wide range of natural heritage and land management projects, usually in partnership with other bodies, for example water vole conservation project (with University of Aberdeen and support of Tubney Trust), and a butterfly and moth conservation project (with Butterfly Conservation Scotland);
 - l) Working closely with Scottish Executive and other partners to ensure that the new Scottish Rural Development Programme will contribute positively to the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the Park;
 - m) On climate change issues, in addition to a number of projects and work going on with partners within the Park to create a more sustainable and environmentally friendly Park, the Authority is also actively looking at our own operations and practices in order to reduce our carbon emissions. Key changes to date have been replacement of pool cars to models with significantly lower emission ratings and encouraging the use of public transport where possible to replace car journeys; and
 - n) We continued to work with partners to explore any opportunities for efficiency and shared service delivery.
13. The above list represents a small selection of the key highlights over the course of 2006/07. The Annual Report and Accounts for the year is currently being developed and Board members will be able to see a more complete report of highlights for the year in the draft of that document, which we hope to have available early in July.

Balanced Scorecard Model of Organisational Performance

14. The background to the development and production of the Authority's balanced scorecard model was presented to the Board in the Quarter 3 Operational Plan report to the Board in February 2007. Performance against the measures adopted in the balanced scorecard model is summarised in Annex 2.
15. All four aspects of the organisation's balanced scorecard – Governance and Risk Management; Human Resource Management; Financial Management; and Corporate and Operational Plan delivery – are shown to be generally performing well. Higher risk areas highlighted by the scorecard model are reported on by exception below.

Corporate and Operational Plan Delivery

16. As would be expected, the model mirrors the situation on the Operational Plan delivery highlighted above, with ongoing work toward placing the Local Plan on deposit by June 2007 shown as amber, and the current level of outstanding planning applications flagging the pressures on the Development Management service as "red".
17. Other than for these exceptions, the model shows that delivery of the Corporate Plan goals and milestones remains on target.

Financial Management

18. The model highlights that we currently expect the 2006/07 year-end accounts to show overall income and expenditure broadly in line with budget, with the financial accounts expected to show a relatively small surplus of around 2%.
19. The model highlights that this overall result is the combination of a shift in expenditure compared with budget expectation from core to operational plan activity. We have managed to reduce expenditure in the year on core staff and running costs (hence highlighted as a variation from budget in the balanced scorecard model) which has enabled a slightly higher than budgeted expenditure to be delivered on our Operational Plan activities.
20. Draft year-end figures for 2006/07 expenditure will be considered in greater detail by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 15 June.

Governance and Risk Management

21. The Balanced Scorecard area of governance and risk management overseen by the Audit Committee is shown to be substantially in line with operational standards, with a single Freedom of Information response issued two days after the due deadline causing this performance measure to be highlighted.

Human Resource Management

22. In the area of Human Resource Management, the relatively high turnover level over the last twelve month period is flagged-up as a significant variation from target operational level. This has been considered in detail by Management Team and the Staffing and Recruitment Committee. While the level of staff turnover in the period is now just above the national average, information received at exit interviews and analysis of reasons for leaving show that there are no underlying causes for concern highlighted.
23. The level of staff absence is also highlighted as amber for the first time. While the organisation's level of staff absence remains very good, absences have risen from their previous very low levels over the last quarter of 2006/07. This is accounted for by a flu virus which affected many staff between January and March, resulting in a number of relatively lengthy absences. Again, therefore, monitoring of the situation does not indicate any underlying causes for concern.

Next Steps

24. The Management Team has commenced the development of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2006/07. The Annual Report and Accounts completes the monitoring cycle for 2006/07. It is intended that a draft of this document will be circulated to members in July.
25. Corporate Services officers will also continue to report regularly to the Board's Committees.

26. Having highlighted areas where delivery or organisational functions are at some risk, officers will continue to seek to bring those actions back on track. The Board agreed the Operational Plan for 2007/08 at its meeting in February 2007 and we will now progress delivery and monitoring of activities for that year, a number of which continue progress on activities and projects reported on here for 2006/07, or seek to address issues highlighted by operational monitoring over the course of 2006/07.

Implications

Financial Implications

27. There are no direct financial implications arising from issues reported on in this paper. The Board's Finance Committee will continue to consider the Authority's budget management, and the implementation of budget allocations made for the 2007/08 Operational Plan.
28. The Finance Committee is also scheduled to meet on 15 June, at which it will consider the initial draft of the 2006/07 financial year-end position summarised in the balanced scorecard at Annex 2 to this paper.

Presentational Implications

29. The Authority continues to make good progress across a wide range of planned activities. Therefore, the Authority is able to report continued successful delivery of its Corporate Plan through the second year of the three year plan, often involving working with and through others, maximising the effect of its relatively small limited resources by acting as a catalyst, a co-ordinator, and enabler.
30. We have previously highlighted some delay in the original timetable envisaged for putting a draft Local Plan on deposit and are closely monitoring adherence to the revised timetable agreed by the Board.
31. In highlighting performance on determining planning applications in this report, we are also reaffirming our commitment to resolve applications as quickly as possible, reviewing the resource requirement to do so, while striving to work with applicants to achieve a positive outcome for all concerned.

Implications for Stakeholders

32. In working with and through others in meeting the Authority's objectives to date, other stakeholders will also benefit from that process of co-ordination and joined-up activity. There is, therefore, some confidence that in delivering our operational plan for the year, the Authority will also be contributing to the wider delivery objectives for a range of stakeholders with an interest in the Cairngorms National Park area.

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