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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR INFORMATION

**Title:**            **Developing Links with Community Planning**

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### **Purpose**

This paper seeks to update the Board on work undertaken to link Park Plan activity with Community Planning arrangements and on the planned next steps.

### **Recommendations**

That the Board note the work undertaken so far and note that plans are being developed for a rolling programme of community needs assessments.

### **Executive Summary**

Community Planning is a process, facilitated by Local Authorities, which helps public agencies to work together with the community (including communities of place and of common interest) to plan and deliver better services which make a real difference to people's lives. There is an area of common interest between the Park Plan and the Community Plans that cover parts of the Park. Officers are therefore engaging with the Community Planning process to achieve the objectives of strategic alignment, a joined up approach to community engagement and communications, and joined up delivery of activities/projects, which takes account of locally identified and prioritised needs and opportunities.

As a key element of this work, it is proposed that, a rolling programme of community needs assessments be developed. This would build upon pilot activity that is planned for this financial year.

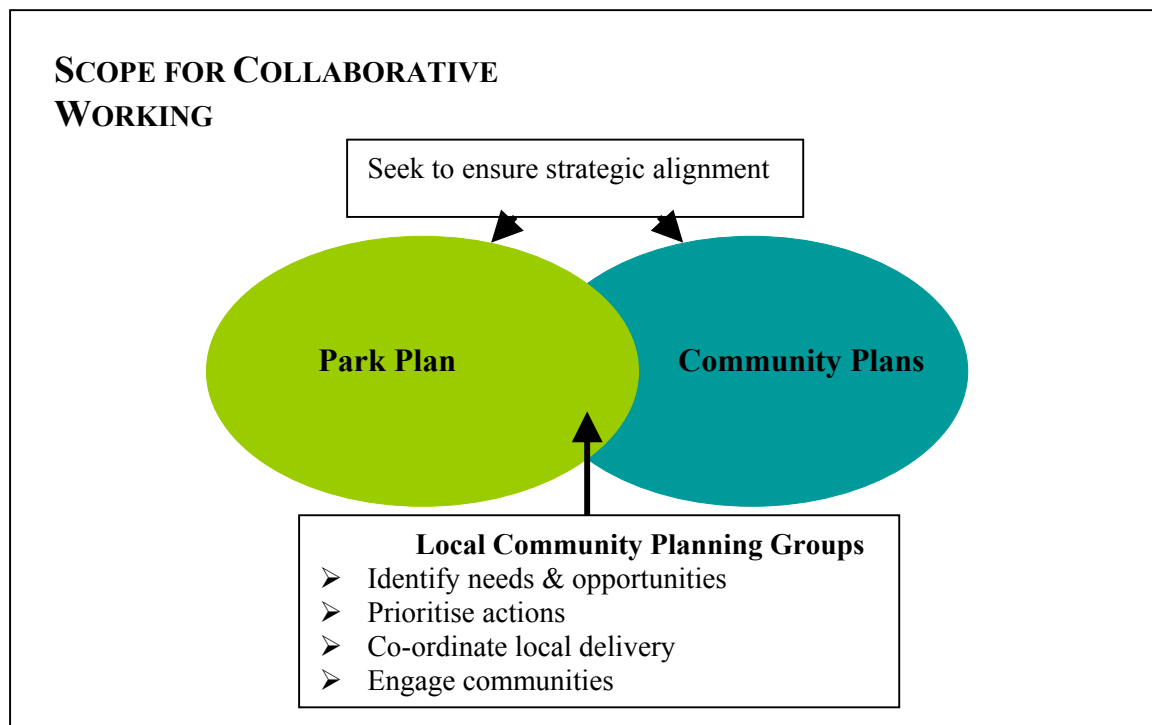
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## DEVELOPING LINKS WITH COMMUNITY PLANNING - FOR DECISION

### Background

1. Community planning is a process which helps public agencies to work together with the community (including communities of place and of common interest) to plan and deliver better services which make a real difference to people's lives. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to initiate and facilitate Community Planning in their respective areas and certain bodies have a duty to participate (police, fire and health services, and the enterprise networks).
2. The aims of Community Planning in Scotland are:
  - a) Making sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made on public services which affect them; allied to
  - b) A commitment from organisations to work together, not apart, in providing better public services.
3. There are two further key principles in addition to the two main aims outlined above:
  - a) Community Planning as the key overarching partnership framework helping to co-ordinate other initiatives and partnerships and where necessary acting to rationalise and simplify a cluttered landscape.
  - b) The ability of Community Planning to improve the connection between national priorities and those at regional, local and neighbourhood levels.
4. The Park Plan is similar in many ways to Community Plans. It seeks to co-ordinate the public sector, and as far as is possible the private and voluntary/community sectors, in delivering the four aims of the Park.
5. Thus the CNPA and the local authorities need to work together to ensure that the Park Plan and the Community Plans are consistent for those areas of common interest.
6. Community Planning, though, is as much about the process of planning and delivery as it is about the plan itself. There are partnership structures in place at a Local Authority-wide level and more localised structures and sub-plans are being developed across their areas. Of particular relevance to the Park are the local Community Planning partnerships that have been, or are being, established in Badenoch & Strathspey (Highland), Speyside (Moray), Marr (Aberdeenshire) and Kirriemuir and the Glens (Angus).
7. In November 2006 an information paper, titled 'The CNPA's Role in Community Planning' was presented to the Board. This explained the approach that was being taken by CNPA officers to engage with the Community Planning process in order to achieve strategic alignment between the Park Plan and Community Plans, a joined

up approach to community engagement and communications, and joined up delivery of activities/projects taking account of locally identified and prioritised needs and opportunities. It was envisaged that this would mainly be achieved via the local Community Planning partnerships.



### **Strategic Alignment between the Park Plan and each Community Plan**

8. The Park Plan and each Community Plan will be revised at regular intervals. None of the timescales for revising plans are the same, so work to maintain strategic alignment will need to be an ongoing and iterative process. All Local Authorities (and other Community Planning partners) helped to shape and subsequently endorsed the Park Plan so there is not believed to be any strategic misalignment between the Park Plan and Community Plans at present. CNPA officers will engage with processes to revise Community Plans, as and when required. For example, input has been made into the Marr Area Plan that is currently being revised and starting to evolve from being a Local Authority document to being a partnership document. Similarly input has been made into developing the revised Angus Community Plan 2007-2012 and to revising the associated Angus Rural Strategy.

### **A Joined up Approach to Community Engagement and Communications**

9. There are clear benefits that flow from public sector partners taking a more collective approach to community engagement and communications. It can cut out duplication in activity and is more customer friendly for the public and other key stakeholders.
10. The CNPA and Community Planning partners are all seeking to improve their community engagement and communications activities but it will take time,

continued effort and a degree of innovative thinking to really be as joined up and effective as we can be.

11. Recent examples of this more collective approach can be seen from the joint partner presentations that are given at the pre-Board open evenings, and the community planning engagement events in Marr, of which one is to be held tomorrow (16 June).
12. To ensure we are complying with best practice in community engagement, we have been using the Core Paths Plan consultations to trial the National Standards for Community Engagement. These standards, developed by Communities Scotland, are measurable performance statements which can be used by everyone involved in community engagement to improve the quality and process of the engagement. They set out key principles, behaviours and practical measures that underpin effective engagement. Local Authorities have already signed up to using the National Standards within Community Planning. We are evaluating the Core Paths Plan consultation and will use the lessons learned to further refine our approach to community engagement activity in the future.

### **Joining Up Delivery of Activities/Projects, Taking Account of Locally Identified and Prioritised Needs and Opportunities**

13. Whilst it is still early days, the local community planning groups are working towards having prioritised sets of local actions that the relevant partners help with delivering. It will therefore be important to maintain good communications between the new Cairngorms National Park priority for action delivery teams and the community planning groups.
14. To support the identification and prioritisation of local actions and to support their delivery a number of actions have been progressed or are planned, as set out below.

#### ***Community Needs Initiative***

15. The pilot phase of this project involves designing and co-ordinating the delivery of a community needs assessment for Grantown/Cromdale/Dulnain Bridge in order to:
  - a) establish clear baseline information on these communities, especially in relation to housing needs, tourism and other economic/social issues;
  - b) identify local needs and opportunities and a small number of prioritised actions (and fund some early actions);
  - c) build support from both local community based organisations and community planning partners to progress and support these actions;
  - d) develop a simple 'toolkit' that can be used by other local communities to go through a similar process.
16. Subsequently the 'toolkit' will be used to support at least two more community needs assessments in this financial year.

17. The pilot involves a partnership approach between local Community Planning partners and local community representatives and such local support would be a pre-requisite for any community needs assessments to be undertaken. Careful consideration is also being given to how best to manage community expectations throughout the process.
18. Subject to the Finance Committee having approved the above work for 2007/08, it is proposed that a rolling programme of community needs assessments be established so that information on needs and local prioritised actions can be identified for all of the Park's communities that wish to participate. The detail of this approach is to be worked up with Community Planning partners.

**Recommendation:**

19. **That the Board note the planned development of a rolling programme of community needs assessments.**

*Supporting Prioritised Projects*

20. The lead for progressing some prioritised projects is likely to lie with public sector partners in some cases and with local community-based groups in others. The level of project management knowledge and skills and the support infrastructure for community development activities will vary between communities and between local authority areas. For instance, some communities have development trusts or similar organisations in place, while others do not. Aberdeenshire has rural partnerships such as the Marr Area Partnership and the Mid-Deeside Partnership which provide additional community support over and above that provided by more local community-based organisations such as Ballater Royal Deeside.
21. There are always difficulties in maintaining financial support for community based development workers and, where these workers are tied to particular settlements it limits the flexibility to progress joint projects between communities and to address needs in communities that do not have such a resource in place. With this in mind, one of the first actions of the Badenoch and Strathspey Partnership has been to fund two new part-time community support posts to advise and support communities in project delivery. These have been jointly funded for two years, in the first instance, by The Highland Council, HIE IEH and the CNPA. Line Management will be provided by Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (the local CVS) and the workers will report to a Steering Group comprising members of the Badenoch and Strathspey Partnership who will maintain the strategic overview.
22. In this year's Operational Plan a sum of £40,000 has been set aside for 'community planning' projects. The thinking is that this will be used to fund some projects that have been prioritised locally and contribute towards both the relevant Community Plan and the Park Plan. These will be projects that are larger in scale than those that would be supported through our more reactive Community Investment Programme. Of this, £10,500 has been committed in this year for the Badenoch and Strathspey

community support workers. Discussions are underway with each of the local Community Planning groups to identify further suitable projects for support.

23. As part of the community needs assessment pilot, we also plan to test the effectiveness of earmarking some resources (£10,000) for 'early actions' as an incentive for people to engage in the process. The community representatives on the project steering group felt that it was important to show an up front commitment to supporting actions in advance of the community needs assessment being undertaken.

### *LEADER and the Community Investment Programme*

24. As was agreed by the Board in November 2006 (see decision paper – 'The Future Development of CNPA Grant Mechanisms'), the Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme and the (as was then known) CNPA Integrated Grants Programme are currently being evaluated. Part of the brief, as was also agreed by the Board, is to examine ways in which Community Planning linkages can be improved.
25. In May I gave a verbal update on the fact that SEERAD are inviting a bid for a further Cairngorms National Park LEADER Programme with a Local Action Group that will be required to demonstrate explicit links to Community Planning Partnerships. The evaluation work will provide useful pointers as to how this might be most effectively achieved.
26. As was also agreed by the Board, we are also seeking to invite comments from key community planning partners on applications that are received under this year's Community Investment Programme (CIP). To minimise bureaucracy we are testing out the 'hub' concept that the Big Lottery Fund is introducing. They have developed a set of e-mail contacts of local community planning partners in each local authority area to act as a sounding board for Lottery applications. The CNPA is part of the Aberdeenshire 'hub' and will use a number of the e-mail contacts to circulate brief details of CIP applications so that people are kept informed and can comment if there is anything they feel we should be aware of.
27. A further paper on future grant programmes will be presented to the Board in August.

### **Consultation**

28. Discussions have been held with Community Planning officers/Area Managers from each of the four Local Authorities and their input has helped shape this paper.
29. The paper has been discussed and agreed by the Authority's Management Team.
30. Linkages with community planning and the planned role out of the community needs assessments are to be discussed with the Economic and Social Development Forum on 25 May.

## Policy Context

31. Within the Park Plan, the initiative will contribute towards the following Strategic Objectives for Sustainable Communities:
- a) promote provision of local services that meet the needs of communities through community planning and other community development initiatives.
  - b) strengthen the capacity of local communities and encourage community development building on existing networks, expertise and experience.
  - c) promote community involvement and more inclusive representation in the management of the National Park.
32. Strengthening the Authority's engagement within Community Planning should also help deliver aspects of all seven Park Plan priorities for action.

### *Delivering Sustainability*

33. Developing strong links with Community Planning will help deliver sustainability objectives as it will support delivery of the Park Plan at the local level.

### *Delivering A Park for All*

34. The proposals would help deliver a Park for All through joining up public sector approaches to community engagement and support.

### *Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency*

35. Building upon the linkages between the Park Plan and the Community Plans and actively participating within the Community Planning process will help to deliver on those areas of common interest in a more joined-up way. If done right, this will lead to reduced duplication and a more productive use of collective partner effort.

## Implications

### *Financial Implications*

36. There is existing financial provision in this year's Operational Plan for the Community Needs Initiative (£40K), Community Planning projects (£40K) and supporting local Community Planning consultation activity (£3,600). No other funding is required in this year. Future requirements will be assessed in developing the next CNPA Corporate Plan.

### *Presentational Implications*

37. No specific presentational issues have been identified.

### *Implications for Stakeholders*

38. If we are successful in building upon our existing Community Planning linkages, then the implications for other stakeholders involved in the Community Planning process and for local communities are likely to be positive.

## Next Steps

39. Officers will continue to work with Local Authorities and other Community Planning partners to achieve the objectives of strategic alignment, a joined up approach to community engagement and communications, and joined up delivery of activities/projects, which takes account of locally identified and prioritised needs and opportunities.
40. The detail of establishing a rolling programme of community needs assessments will be worked up in conjunction with Community Planning partners.

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