

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title:** Key Issues for Tourism in the Cairngorms

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### **Purpose**

This paper is the first report to the Board of the Tourism Development Working Group (TDWG) and identifies the key issues for tourism in the Cairngorms.

### **Recommendation**

The Tourism Development Working Group considers that each of the seven key issues identified in the paper are priorities for action and that further work and analysis of these issues should be developed.

### **Executive Summary**

Sustainable tourism has the potential to contribute to the delivery of the four primary aims of Scotlands National Parks.

Seven key issues have been identified by the TDWG which will have a major influence on the delivery of a high quality tourism product in the area, these will require ongoing monitoring and evaluation and are;

- The successful co-operation, integration and encouragement of cross-sectoral working for all those involved in tourism in the area.
- The development and implementation of a Marketing Strategy & Action Plan for the Cairngorms.
- The development of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy and the successful application for, and implementation of, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism.
- The delivery of quality standards that build on nationally recognised standards which are specific to the Cairngorms.
- The support for and continued development of quality assured products grown, made or available in the area.
- The need for ongoing research, with easily accessible results, which assesses the needs, opinions and demands of visitors in order to be able to anticipate, meet and exceed visitor expectations.
- The enhancement of visitors' experience while in the area, through improved information and interpretation provision.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR TOURISM IN THE CAIRNGORMS**

### **Introduction**

1. The Tourism Development Working Group (TDWG) is a working group of the CNPA. It is an industry based group, comprising private sector businesses, the Area Tourist Boards and VisitScotland and other relevant public sector organisations involved in tourism.
2. The purpose of the Group is to identify the priorities for establishing improved co-ordination of tourism related activity in the Cairngorms National Park area, and to develop and implement CNP wide initiatives as appropriate. The TDWG recognises that tourism is all encompassing, as it is affected by, and relevant to, all aspects of everyday life in the Cairngorms. It is essential that the impact of these everyday activities is taken into account and where possible activity co-ordinated so that it does not detract from a visitor's experience of the area. The aim of this paper is to outline what the Group consider are the key issues for tourism in the area.

### **Background**

3. Tourism within the National Park is likely to be a growing market, and growth presents increasing challenges. There is a need to protect against the negative aspects of tourism development and maximise the opportunities. Tourism development in the Cairngorms National Park must be sustainable so that the natural and cultural heritage resources are protected whilst long-term effective economic development for the Park communities is ensured.

### **Sustainable Tourism in National Parks**

4. Sustainable tourism is about striking a balance between meeting the needs of the visitor, the environment and the host community for current as well as for the future generations.
5. The delivery of sustainable tourism has the potential to contribute to the four primary aims for National Parks, as set out in the Act. In addition, Schedule 3 of the Act sets out specific powers for National Park Authorities with respect to tourism, including the provision of information, education and interpretive facilities as well as services to promote the enjoyment of the parks' environment.
6. Professor Terry Stevens in his overview of Sustainable Tourism in National Parks highlighted the fact that this ability to directly provide, manage and intervene, creates interesting opportunities to be proactive, especially in partnership with other stakeholders to provide sustainable tourism products, initiatives and programmes. Furthermore unlike our counterparts south of the border the Scottish NPA's will be able to encourage people to visit the National Parks.
7. This power gives the Scottish NPA's the chance to engage in creative destination marketing and to encourage and co-ordinate the marketing of appropriate activities in order to promote sustainable tourism.

8. Sustainability should therefore be the underlying principle when considering all aspects of the promotion, development, management and delivery of tourism in the Cairngorms.
9. The Tourism Development Working Group consider there are seven key issues that provide opportunities for development and the improvement of the tourism product in the Cairngorms.

## **CO-ORDINATION & INTEGRATION**

10. This element is key to the delivery of a high quality sustainable tourism product and can be considered in three main areas:

### **Co-ordination & Integration with Partners**

11. Currently there are eight public sector organisations in the Cairngorms involved in supporting the tourism industry, either in providing funding or training support and or marketing activity. There are already good examples of ATB's working together successfully on specific marketing projects. It is vital that key partners consider and reach agreement on how they can continue to work in an integrated and co-ordinated way to deliver identified objectives on a longterm basis. For example the integration of initiatives involving the private sector is important so that business in and visitors to the Park are aware of the range of products available.

### **Integration within the Park Authority**

12. Within the NPA, tourism as a whole is wider than one particular Group or Department. It is essential therefore that strong communication is maintained between these different relevant Groups and departments, to avoid duplication of effort.

### **Integration with Neighbouring Regions**

13. There are several areas on the edge of the Park boundary that may benefit from and be able to contribute to the development of tourism in the area. These links with neighbouring regions must be maintained, and a two way process established so that views can be exchanged and those requiring information are kept up to date on developments.

## **CAIRNGORMS MARKETING STRATEGY**

14. As mentioned above, the NPA has as part of its remit "to encourage people to visit the National Park". Furthermore, as approximately 85% of the areas' businesses are involved in tourism, the effective marketing of the area, as an area, is a vital component in ensuring the overall stability and development of the areas economy.
15. Initial work towards the strategy was drawn from a park wide Cairngorms Workshop in November 2002 led by HOST. Following additional work on the document, consultants were commissioned by the NPA to produce a Cairngorms Marketing Strategy, and the first draft was submitted to the TDWG in December 2003.
16. The TDWG intends to engage with the wider business and local communities on the Strategy before will then be submitted to the National Park Board for approval.

17. The Strategy as well as identifying the product and the market, outlines a series of key action points including:
- how to raise the profile of Cairngorms National Park as a product, both internally within the Park area and externally to national and international markets,
  - the development of a Cairngorms Brand,
  - the development of a sense of arrival and good signage within the Park,
  - encouraging the use of local produce, and;
  - a high profile programme of training and learning for businesses and communities.
18. The implementation of the Marketing Strategy will be a key action for local businesses and communities, the National Park Authority and organisations involved in tourism in the area.

### **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY**

19. The National Park needs an effective framework for planning, action and evaluation to ensure that tourism is developed in a sustainable and sympathetic manner, and it is vital that this is developed in partnership with tourism enterprises and organisations that have an interest in the Cairngorms area.

#### **European Charter Status**

20. The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is a framework specifically designed for protected areas to plan, manage and implement sustainable tourism development. The two main requirements to achieve Charter status are:
- a permanent forum to manage the process
  - a sustainable tourism strategy including a 5 year action plan.
21. In effect it is a 'checklist' to ensure that all the key areas of sustainable tourism development in protected areas are covered:
- Protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage
  - Understanding and meeting visitor needs and ensuring quality
  - Communicating the Special Qualities of the Area
  - Encouraging tourism products relating to the protected area
  - Training relating to the protected area and sustainable tourism
  - Maintaining the local quality of life
  - Increasing benefits to the local economy
  - Monitoring and influencing visitor flows

#### **Next Steps**

22. The TDWG has endorsed the development of a sustainable tourism strategy using the European Charter guidelines and hopes to apply for accreditation in spring 2005. The Group is also keen to maintain the joint approach towards Charter status with Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.

### **QUALITY STANDARDS**

23. With the recent designation as a National Park, anyone visiting the area is likely to anticipate, or potentially expect, a quality experience. It is vital that the quality of the tourism product matches the quality of the natural environment.

24. The whole area of “quality” raises further issues for investigation and action which the TDWG see as a priority. These include the criteria to be used, training requirements, and delivery mechanisms e.g. should this be through existing mechanisms with a “Cairngorms kite mark” or a new Cairngorms accreditation scheme.

### **PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

25. As well as the development of the Cairngorms as a product, there are a wide variety of ‘products of the Park’ that could be developed, and as a result organisations, businesses and communities will require assistance in their development, promotion and marketing. These products range from recreational opportunities to locally sourced food and these could potentially benefit from National Park designation. The TDWG recognises that the development of the locally sourced food produce will be led by the Food Marketing Development Working Group.

### **INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION PROVISION**

26. Currently there is a lack of information available to visitors specific to the National Park area, and orientation in and around the Park is at times difficult. Interpretation can enhance visitors’ experience and attract them to the area. The provision of this needs to be addressed as a priority so that the Cairngorms can be enjoyed in a responsible way by all those who seek to do so. The TDWG recognises that the development of this is likely to be led by the Park Gateways Working Group.

### **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE & RESEARCH**

27. There are many reasons why visitors come to the area, scenery, tranquillity, enjoying the outdoors to name but a few, and these reasons are unlikely to change, however enjoyment of the area could be enhanced through better provision of information, standards of quality available, infrastructure etc. The TDWG feel that it is crucial to remain market focused and to understand and meet customer needs. On going customer research is required to be able to do this, and a first step towards this will be the information contained within the Interim Report of the Cairngorms Visitor Survey, which will be presented to the Group in February 2004.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

28. The TDWG has identified seven key interlinked issues for the planning, management and development of tourism in the Cairngorms. Further research, analysis and development of actions plans is now required for each issue, whilst recognising the linkages between the issues and the coordinated approach with partners and other working groups, that must be maintained by the Group. A further report to the CNPA Board will set out detailed proposals for further work.

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