

Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group Meeting Aviemore on 17th January 2013

Present Martin Price (chair)
 Stephen Corcoran (CNPA)
 Justin Prigmore (CNPA)
 Andy Ford (CNPA)
 Will Boyd-Wallis (CNPA)
 Ian Wilson (NFUS)
 Pete Mayhew (RSPB)
 Andy Wells (SLE)
 Nick Mardell (Community Development Officer)
 Shaila Ra0 (NTS)
 Giles Brockman (FCS)
 Sue Scoggins (SNH)
 Debbie Green (SNH)

Apologies: Mark Bilby (DFT)

1. Operating Procedures

The Strategy group were all happy with areas 1, 2 and 3. Need to add SNH to list; and it's still uncertain if SGA will be involved.

There was a discussion about how the Strategy Group relates to the wider membership of Cairngorms Nature. The operating procedures need to make it clear what is the connection to the wider group. Clarified that the members of the Strategy Group are the key delivery partners of Cairngorms Nature. The Strategy group partners are not representing the wider membership of Cairngorms Nature, but providing the strategic leadership of CN. CNPA's role is to facilitate the Strategy Group only.

Jan 13 API: AF to provide context for reason Strategy Group exists in the operating procedures and CNAP.

Jan 13 AP2: AF to include paragraph in CNAP on the strategy Group and wider partnership.

Jan 13 AP3: All partner (except CNPA) to consider if they would like to be the Vice-Convener, and that elections will be held at the next meeting.

2. Cairngorms Nature Action Plan

There were 49 comments from a wide range of people and organisations. Majority of comments can be fed straight into the action plan. A summary of the main issues raised by people was circulated to the Strategy Group and these were discussed section by section below.

The draft plan will be revised and a formal consultation alongside the SEA is to start on 28 January for four weeks.

Introduction and Vision section

Strategy Group recognised that there was a need to be clear that woodland and wetland expansion is at the expense of other habitats. This conflict has to be addressed in the action plan and the importance of farmland and open habitats recognised.

The action plan is not promoting woodland expansion everywhere and there are many sensitive issues that have to be included – getting the language right will be a challenge.

It is important that the action plan includes the issues to do with biodiversity conservation and how we have moved on in some areas and where we want to go in the future. Some of these challenges are uncomfortable but need to be highlighted.

The Action plan needs to highlight the importance of land management and the need to integrate biodiversity conservation in to what they do on a daily basis. However, it should be clear that this document is not a land use strategy.

One of the Strategy group's key role is to endorse and promote the action plan. Therefore, it is important that the plan correctly reflects the views of the Strategy group.

The strategy group felt there was no need to have any interim milestones to the 50 year vision. However, the action plan should clarify that it is delivery 10% of the 50 year vision through its actions.

Strategy Section

Strategy Group were clear this section should be much briefer, no need for details of every policy or strategy. It was better to list them all and include more detail in an annex.

Agreed to re-order the aims, but leave them unchanged, and include some overarching actions in the research and bio-security sections. The detailed research action on species or habitats can be highlighted within the body of the action plans.

Actions Section

If we want to launch the action plan on 18th May, the timescale for delivering this are extremely tight. This has significant implications if the Strategy Group thinks the plan needs extensive modifications. Detailed discussions with partners on each action, the resources needed and the ability of partners to allocate resources and timetable these will require many months of work.

The Strategy Group agreed that it was more important to get the plan out and initiate action. The targets should be smartened up as far as possible.

There are lots of actions in the plan and this may generate expectations that we might not achieve. The plan, therefore, needs to explain that the list contains some aspirations and that partners will develop their own delivery plans over the coming year. Action could be highlighted as one of the following: ongoing (but with

opportunities to do more); long term actions; actions need to be started and completed in 5 years. This could help prioritise some of the actions as this is lacking in the document.

There was some discussion about the WHO column and the partners. It could be highlighted that the WHO relates more to those organisations promoting, encouraging and leading rather than those actually doing the work on the ground. There should be a statement in the action plan under the “Action” section that says many actions will involve land managers and land owners. It would probably be useful to number all the actions.

The Strategy Group suggested making a mention in the document about the fact that new woodland creation has happened without fencing, and that this is quite unique in a Scottish context and is challenging. This has created a landscape with few fences. There will be a box on deer management and this should include the need to involve communities in deer management.

The mountain hare is mentioned in the golden eagle action plan but its importance and the issues with hare management are not mentioned in the action plan. It is important the action plan tackles challenging issues and there was agreement to raise the profile of the mountain hare within the action plan.

The action plan needed to ensure the link to nature providing ecosystem services that benefit people is clear. There needs to be opportunities for people to have a say in how things should be managed as well as opportunities to get involved through “Citizen Science”. Again the action plan should not duck the challenging issues like recreational disturbance. It was noted that more input from the conservation profession was needed in the recreational disturbance issue as it was felt this was being driven by the access profession.

3. Wider Partnership

There was a short discussion about the wider partnership and the relationship with the organisations on the Strategy Group. It was agreed to have a wider discussion at the next Strategy Group meeting.

Jan 13 AP4: AF to add an agenda item on the wider CN partnership for the next meeting

4. Identify

The Strategy Group agreed to adopt the more “relaxed” Cairngorms Nature identity.

Celebrating Cairngorms Nature and launch

This event is being organised through a sub-group of RSPB, FCS, CNPA and SNH, and will be a free event aimed at families. It is taking place on 18th May in Aviemore and focuses on three themes: woodlands (led by FCS), wetlands (RSPB) and involving people (SNH).

Jan 13 AP5: JP to circulate the draft for the launch to the Strategy Group ASAP and AF to add the launch as an agenda item for the next meeting.

Website

The Strategy Group were clear that Cairngorms Nature needed its own stand alone website from the beginning. The initial site does not have to be very detailed – that can come later – but should be ready for the launch event in May.

Jan 13 AP6: AF to develop a standalone website for Cairngorms Nature and to include an agenda item for the next meeting on the CN website

5. Next Steps

Discussion on the next steps will be carried forward to the next meeting.

6. AOCB - Species Restoration Report

This report is going to the CNPA Board for an informal discussion in February and a copy of the report will be forward to all Strategy Group members.

7. Date of Next Meeting

14.00 Wednesday 27th March, CNPA offices, Grantown-on-Spey