
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust – Business Plan 2011 to 2015

Prepared by: Bob Grant, Senior Outdoor Access Officer

Purpose

This paper highlights the work already delivered in the current Business Plan of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust and seeks support for the range of work to be undertaken in the next four years and a commitment to fund the detailed work in the first year of the draft Business Plan.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Notes the progress towards achieving the agreed outputs in the 2009/11 Business Plan;
- b) Notes the close fit between the outputs in the future Business Plan for 2011/15 with the Priority for Actions contained in the National Park Plan; and
- c) Approves a total CNPA contribution of £185,000 for the 2011/12 financial year.

Executive Summary

The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust is nearing completion of the current two year Business Plan and is now at the stage of developing a programme of works for the following four years. There remains a degree of uncertainty over public sector funding beyond the 2011/12 financial year and therefore funding is only being sought at this time for one year. Funding approval has however already been given towards the Mountain Heritage Project for the four years of that project's life. The Business Plan provides an indication of likely financial support and the scale of work that is planned to be undertaken in the period.

CAIRNGORMS OUTDOOR ACCESS TRUST – BUSINESS PLAN 2011 TO 2015 FOR DECISION

Background

1. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It came into being in April 2008 and evolved from the Upper Deeside Access Trust. In May 2008 the Cairngorms National Park Authority Board approved a contribution of £150,000 towards the delivery of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust's 2008/09 business plan. A further £365,000 was approved in October 2008 to support the work detailed in the Business Plan for 2009/11.
2. The Trust developed a large scale mountain path repair programme and, due to the timing of funding bids for Heritage Lottery and European Regional Development Funding, Board approval was sought in advance of CNPA being advised of 2011/12 allocations from Scottish Government. At the meeting in September 2010 the Board approved specific elements of the 2011/15 Business Plan. These were a £200,000 contribution towards the four year Mountain Heritage Project at £50,000 per annum and contributions towards the maintenance of the Speyside Way and community paths projects totalling £50,000 for 2011/12. A funding contribution of £100,000 has therefore already been approved for next year. Funding is now being sought for the remaining elements of work to be delivered in the first year of the 2011/15 Business Plan totalling a further £85,000. As there remains uncertainty over future levels of support from Scottish Government funding is only being sought at this stage for the first year of the Business Plan. Funding for the remaining years will be sought once the uncertainty has been removed.

Progress to Date

3. The presentation to the Board on 18 February 2011 provided the opportunity to show visually the broad range of work that COAT has undertaken over the last two years. Below is a summary of that work.
4. **Community paths** – in the two year Business Plan path works have been undertaken in the following communities: Braemar, Ballater, Dinnet, Cambus o May, Strathdon, Insh, Kingussie, Aviemore, Carrbridge, Dulnain Bridge, Boat of Garten and Street of Kincardine.
5. **Mountain paths** – work commenced on this four year programme in the autumn of 2010 and progress was made before the early snow arrived on paths in the northern Cairngorms. There is a training element to this project with 8 trainees in the process of being recruited and trained to be fully qualified path workers over a 12 month period. This will involve them working towards a Scottish Vocational Qualification. Adverts have been placed locally and to date 160 application forms have been issued. A significant economic legacy will therefore derive from this work.
6. **Strategic routes** – The Trust has taken on responsibility for managing the Speyside Way within the National Park: a role that was previously undertaken by The Moray Council. As a result annual savings are accruing of approximately £44,000. The Trust has a separate agreement with Aberdeenshire Council that involves them managing and maintaining the Deeside Way.

7. **Walking to Health** – Healthy walking groups are now operating in Ballater, Strathdon, Grantown, Nethy Bridge, Aviemore, Carrbridge, Kingussie and Newtonmore with a 140 individuals walking on a weekly basis. Volunteers lead these walks and the Trust provides support and training for all the volunteers.
8. **Marketing, development and promotion** – COAT have embraced the model for path leaflets developed by CNPA and have produced new leaflets in this format for Kingussie and Ballater. All new way-marking follows the guidance developed by CNPA and CNPA Communication staff provide assistance to COAT on relevant PR opportunities.

Recommendation

9. **The Board notes the progress towards achieving the agreed outputs in the 2009/11 Business Plan.**

Business Plan 2011/15

10. The Business Plan for 2011/15 is shown at Annex I to this document and the themes identified mirror those in the National Park Plan Priority for Action on Developing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access. The themes are shown below:
 - a) Community path networks;
 - b) Upland paths;
 - c) Walking to Health; and
 - d) Promotion marketing and development.
11. Whilst the upland work has already been approved and is now in hand there remains a considerable amount of work to do on community paths with, at present only 43% of the core paths network is fit for purpose and a target of 70% requires to be achieved by the end of March 2012. A funding bid for community path works is currently being assessed by Cairngorm LEADER and, if fully funded, will enable the path works shown in Table I to be completed. A short commentary is given against each planned path improvement.

Table I

Path No.	Name	Area	Comment
UDO 5	Strathdon Bridge	Strathdon	Bridge over the River Don linking Lonach Hall with settlements on the south side of the River Don. Integral to the Strathdon network, linking both sides of the Don, and allowing return loop for Health Walks group.
UDE9b	Braemar Glenshee road loop	Braemar	Loop back to Braemar from Highland Society Bridge to Glenshee Road path, high value for Health Walks scheme
UL30	Minister's Path	Angus	Path upgrade and repair on Angus Route
UDO3b	Strathdon School path loop	Strathdon	New path beyond timber footbridge heading north through woodland, linking to the School Path at the back of the school. Good return link for Health Walks

UDO10	Bellabeg Circular	Strathdon	North section – path upgrade and repair.
UBS2	Wildcat	Newtonmore	Construction of Bridge & short section of path. Bridge is now dangerous and further deterioration likely to lead to a significant hole in the Newtonmore network.
LBS 75	Golf Course Circular	Kingussie	Popular route through birch woodland but very wet in places, very rough and overgrown in summer. Would need full build along length. Would link to loch Gynack path. Upgrade would allow Health Walks to use it.
LBS 78	Gynack Bridge 2	Kingussie	2 nd Gynack Bridge needs replacing as refurbishment of existing steel beams too costly and difficult. Loss of this bridge, which is likely from the engineers report, would put a significant hole in the access network
LBS 58	Cemetery path	Carr Bridge	Circular path could be upgraded to all-abilities. Would link to Riverside Path & existing Ellan Woods paths. Possibly LBS57, providing linked routes for Health Walks
LBS 124	High Burnside	Aviemore	Route linking Aviemore to Craigellachie NNR, and providing missing link in Aviemore Orbital. Fantastic potential for Health Walks scheme

12. Walking to Health will continue to build on the very real achievements that have been made over the last 2 years and an Active Cairngorms programme is in development which will enable a broader range of activities to be brigaded under this banner.
13. Promotion, marketing and development will continue in the same vein over the next 4 years with the role out of the suite of community path leaflets, the creation of new and replacement information panels and the improvement in path signage and way-marking for all of the community networks.
14. To assist the Trust, it has been agreed to provide a range of financial services including payroll, management accounts and annual report which is valued at £16,000.

Recommendation

15. **That the Board notes the close fit between the outputs in the future Business Plan for 2011/15 with the Priority for Actions contained in the National Park Plan and approves a total CNPA contribution of £185,000 over the 2011/12 financial year.**

Policy Context

16. There is a very close fit with the proposed business plan and 'Developing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access' – The relevant Priority for Action with in the National Park Plan. At a Scottish level, the development of improved access around and between communities and the development of health walks contribute directly to targets relating to improve the nation's health and wellbeing.

Delivering Sustainability

17. Providing better quality paths that are useable by a broader range of people can assist in encouraging sustainable transport and reduction in the use of fossil fuels.

Delivering A Park for All

18. Good quality paths, close to where people live, catering for multi-use, can assist in expanding the range of people who are presently excluded from enjoying the special qualities of the National Park.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

19. The Board recognised that a Trust, operating at arms length from the Park Authority, provides the best model for being flexible and able to quickly react to changing needs. The Trust is well placed to attract external funding and this is starting to prove the case with the regard to the future business plan.

Implications

Financial Implications

20. The financial implications are detailed in the expenditure justification form which is shown at Annex 2.

Presentational Implications

21. The business plan builds on the excellent work done to date and will continue to show actual delivery on the ground to a wide range of communities. There are presentational benefits to the Trust to demonstrate delivery and to the Park Authority and funding partners in working towards common goals for the good of both residents and visitors to the National Park.

Implications for Stakeholders

22. The delivery of the business plan will meet the needs of a number of stakeholders including funding partners and communities.

Bob Grant
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bobgrant@cairngorms.co.uk