

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: Cairngorms Business Partnership – Future Support

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Purpose

To outline progress with future support arrangements for the Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP).

Executive Summary

The CNPA has provided substantial support to the CBP during its early formative period. Funding for the past two years has been tied to specific project activity, aligned with the National Park Plan. Additional support with legal advice and a staff secondment from autumn 2009 to spring 2011 has helped deal with the complexities of the formal merger and formation as a company limited by guarantee.

A provisional funding allocation is in place in the 2011/12 CNPA Operational Plan however detailed negotiations on funding and support arrangements are continuing with both the CBP and other key partners. Significant progress is being made to better align the support from all public organisations but more time is required to complete these discussions. A detailed funding and support paper will be brought to the CNPA Board in May 2011.

CAIRNGORMS BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP – FUTURE SUPPORT FOR INFORMATION

Introduction

1. The development of the CBP is a significant step forward in helping the business community benefit from, and contribute to, the management and development of the National Park. Maintaining momentum is important and it continues to be a priority for CNPA. A detailed brief on the rationale behind our support for the CBP and on their current activity was provided at the 21st January 2011 board meeting.
2. A formal Board decision paper on the future funding and support arrangements for the CBP was due for 18 March 2011 but detailed negotiations with the CBP and key public sector funders are still taking place. These negotiations have so far been very positive and it makes sense to get the support from all public organisations aligned in a more coordinated way. The aim of this short information paper is to update members on the financial provision already in place and with progress to date on the negotiations. A decision paper will be taken to the May board meeting.

Past CNPA Support to CBP

3. In 2009 the CNPA provided grant funding of up to £70,000 to support the development of the CBP and delivery of priority projects. Since October 2009 CNPA has also provided support through the provision of legal advice and the loan of a full-time member of staff to the CBP (in place until March 2011). A package of £40,000 was provided for the 2010/11 financial year as support for the delivery of projects contributing to National Park Plan outcomes.

Other Funding Sources

4. Additional financial support has been provided by Highlands & Island Enterprise (HIE) with further business support as an account managed business. Highland Council has provided smaller contributions in previous years. Scottish Enterprise and other local authorities currently provide no funding support to the CBP. Public funding is important to the CBP but most income to the organisation is actually private (membership fees, advertising and sales revenue) and the CBP assess that they could sustain the organisation without public grant funds (although severely restricting their ability to deliver project activity). Growing the membership base is key.

2011/12 CNPA Operational Plan

5. An allocation of £50,000 for the CBP has been made in the 2011/12 Operational Plan within PfA 5, Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable. This is broadly in line with funding in previous years. Additional funding may also be available from other programmes, in particular Raising Awareness and Understanding and Communications, although this depends on the detail in the CBP Business Plan.

Ongoing Discussions

6. The development of the CBP is progressing well, but it is recognised that support from CNPA and other key partners will still be required during these early stages, both to consolidate capacity and enable key project activity. CNPA support will, as with previous years, remain based on the following principles:
 - a) Delivery should be Park-wide;
 - b) Delivery must be contributing to the National Park Plan and associated strategies, for example the Sustainable Tourism Strategy;
 - c) The work of business organisations should be co-ordinated and collaborative – ie our funding is for Park-wide delivery, rather than individual organisations;
 - d) There must be broad-based public sector support.
7. Importantly, the financial contributions from CNPA should ideally be used in a way to lever and maximise the contributions from other partners. Continued development of the relationship with key partners and detailed discussions on funding priorities has been a key commitment over the past few months and, although it has been slow, some significant progress is being made.
8. Positive meetings have been held at various levels with both HIE and Scottish Enterprise. Additional discussion is ongoing with Highland Council (tourism and Business Gateway). Visit Scotland have also committed to support the CBP's marketing activity. The key public sector funders have agreed to jointly discuss our respective approach, funding contributions, common outcomes and monitoring arrangements. More time is required to complete negotiations. The CBP Business Plan clearly fundamental to this and is being finalised for approval at the Interim CBP Board on 8 March 2011.
9. We are confident that a better long-term support arrangement for the CBP is beginning to emerge, including more consistent and settled support commitments. It is anticipated that we can complete the key discussions by late March/early April.

Policy Context

10. The development of the CBP and the projects it delivers are key to delivering outcomes in the National Park Plan, specifically:

Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable

- a) The visitor experience in the National Park will consistently exceed expectations and will drive repeat visits/more business opportunities. The Park will compare well against the rest of Scotland and other National Parks;

- b) There will be a more even distribution of visitor numbers throughout the year;
- c) A greater percentage of visitors will contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the Park;
- d) A greater percentage of businesses will meet the quality standards and environmental management criteria of the Park brand and achieve commercial advantage through its use.

Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park

- a) More people across Scotland will be more aware of the National Park, what makes it special and the opportunities it offers them;
 - b) More people who have visited the Park will have high quality experiences and will tell positive stories about the area.
11. The CBP is helping to deliver the following Corporate Plan achievements –
- a) Businesses within the Park provide a high quality, environmentally friendly service and benefit from using the Park brand;
 - b) A voluntary contribution scheme for visitors is in place to collect funding for initiatives within the Park;
 - c) A National Park web portal is in place and working effectively to meet customers/users needs;
 - d) Cairngorms National Park is well signposted and promoted across Scotland.

Delivering Sustainability

12. The CBP enhances capacity to deliver the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Delivering A Park for All

13. The CBP will build in equalities commitments to its work.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

14. The CBP directly improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of public funds in the Park.

Implications

Financial Implications

15. The financial implications are outlined above with a decision paper in May 2011.

Presentational Implications

16. The development of the CBP is a significant step forward in terms of the collective management of the National Park, and as a key opportunity for wider economic and social benefits. Much interest has already been generated and strong connections are maintained with the CNPA communications team.

Implications for Stakeholders

17. For public bodies that are potential funding partners for project delivery, there are implications to consider in how best to co-ordinate and get best value from funds invested in the Park. This is particularly important given the current public funding situation and is the focus of ongoing discussions.

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28 February 2011
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