

**Cairngorms Tourism Emergency Response Group**  
**Meeting Note**  
**18/05/2020**

Present: Janet Hunter, Heather Trench, Grant Moir, Murray Ferguson, Pete Crane, Mark Tate, Chris Taylor, Colin Simpson, Chris Foy, Rhona Fraser, Laura Delaney, Geva Blackett

Apols – Laurie Piper, Alistair Reid, Belinda Miller

**1. Welcome and introductions**

Janet welcomed Laura Delaney and Francoise van Buuren to their first meeting.

**2. RESPOND:**

**Business Support update**

Highland Council have now given out over £50 million in funding.

HIE have re-opened the paused Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund but it will close tonight at 5pm for good along with Creative, Tourism & Hospitality Hardship Fund. Some businesses have been told that they've not been successful in applying for PERF and should instead apply for the CTHHF, but that doesn't mean others have been successful, as applications are still being assessed. Local Authorities are liaising with HIE over funding to check that double support isn't given. DMOs flagged an issue whereby PERF funding of £25k was declined as a £10k grant had already been issued by local authorities. Discussions are ongoing to try to resolve this issue, perhaps by authorising payment of the additional £15k where appropriate.

**DMO update** (not covered elsewhere on agenda)

Visit Aberdeenshire have run sectoral workshops on key issues which particularly flagged up the need for clear consistent advice esp around hygiene, and reassurance to visitors. They have also run a webinar on customer motivations looking at the 3 'M's – money, motivation and means to travel. Chris will circulate the slide deck from the event later this week.

**VisitScotland Overview**

Conversations are ongoing about re-opening and hygiene advice for businesses and STERG are looking at other existing advice such as provided by UK Hospitality. VisitScotland advice should be available soon. Riddell Graham's webinar last week was filmed and is available on [visitscotland.org](http://visitscotland.org). There is also discussion about the need for another survey about business impacts but that is unlikely at this stage as there have been many surveys already. Instead, other localised surveys are being passed to, and analysed by VisitScotland's Insights team

**3. RESET:**

**Visitor management planning & land manager discussions**

Last Friday saw a meeting with key land managers and public sector partners, and good feedback was received on CNPA's Scenario planning document. Follow up work is now happening, and meetings should be taking place this week to discuss practicalities of traffic, visitor management and facilities in two particular geographic areas – Deeside & Glenmore. Seasonal ranger recruitment is going ahead and will be advertised tomorrow. A STERG countryside group Q&A has gone out to key partners and a follow up meeting will take place this afternoon with a range of environmental NGOs. Ideally there would be a significant lead-in time to plan issues such as facilities, hygiene, furloughed staff etc., but this is not likely and may be a maximum of 7-10 days. There is no clear message from government yet around travel restrictions and when they may be lifted.

It was agreed that messages need to be simple, clear concise and positive, and consistent at a national and local level. National Parks in England have already had to put out messaging, asking potential visitors to give communities time to prepare for visits.

## **Overview of consumer insights and other research**

Heather flagged up recent research, in particular the new Scottish Tourism Index which will gather data in the first week of every month going forward. It echoes previous research about the return of close domestic visitors for day trips initially. VisitAberdeenshire are planning a webinar with the survey consultants.

[VS marketing intelligence 13/05](#)

[Scottish Tourism Index](#)

## **4.RESTART**

### **Communications discussion**

Francoise gave an update on CNPA communications which have been reinforcing the initial government 'Stay at Home' message, and offering ways to experience the Cairngorms from home eg. through the Cairngorms Nature 10 days at home.

Now looking at the 'reset' phase, the focus needs to be on how to access the outdoors safely. National Parks UK have a simple 4 point message:

- Know and follow the latest government advice
- Plan ahead – check the latest local information
- If it feels too crowded, it is too crowded.
- Be kind out there

But each park has its own issues and needs its own messages that echo the above in a way that addresses local issues. CNPA is also trying to work with SNH, forestry, and LLTNPA to ensure that messaging is not fixated on National Parks and includes other parks and countryside areas.

In discussion it was agreed that:

- Changes in restrictions could happen very suddenly and we need to be ready with consistent messages. Already there is anecdotal evidence of people travelling more locally, and 190 people were dispersed by police in LLTNP this weekend.
- We cannot focus only on the outdoors but need to link businesses to messages about a safe visitor experience in the widest sense.
- There are lots of good examples of clear visual communication of the issues, we shouldn't re-invent the wheel.
- We need very practical information about eg. toilet facilities and in what order they are likely to re-open, capacity of car parking at visitor hotspots etc. Re-opening of public toilets will be challenging in some cases, and there could be a role for local authorities to work with businesses and landowners to identify other appropriate toilet facilities.
- The priority for any communications is communities, staff, and then visitors. It is likely that initial visitors will be very local, probably won't see themselves as visitors and are unlikely to check visitor channels of communication. A small paid social media campaign, in conjunction with local media stories is probably the best way to get messages across. This can be targeted depending on the geographical easing of lockdown, but as it's a community / regular visitor audience, the tone must be right.
- There is also an opportunity to target specific messages to communities of interest through relevant websites and groups, as regular activity participants are likely to be keenest to return. However, we may also find that the current circumstances open up the countryside to new audiences who may require more safety information. It is reasonable to expect most visitors to have a more cautious attitude to risk.
- Francoise would work with the DMOs to get draft press releases and social media messaging agreed in advance of a likely announcement of some changes by the government on Thursday, and likely changes at the next lockdown review on 28/05. These will be circulated and discussed at next week's meeting.

## **Update on CBP working groups**

Working groups are up and running, including:

- Sector groups to consider 1) national guidance for sector, 2) gaps in national guidance, if anything 3) business co-operation to provide good visitor experience.
- 'Code of conduct' group which will circulate a draft document for discussion his week.
- Visitor questionnaire group – to discuss the questions forming the visitor research planned for the next couple of weeks.

## **5.RECOVER**

No business was discussed.

## **6. Any Other Updates**

CNPA have been approached by researchers from Cambridge University on a potential project looking at models for Covid economic recovery in National Parks including 1) models for responsible social distancing 2) capacity of countryside areas 3) work with stakeholders on management tools. CNPA has agreed to be a partner but there is no financial commitment and limited time commitment. Also included are Loch Lomond, Snowdonia, New Forest and the Broads. Murray will circulate proposal and a meeting is scheduled for Wednesday. If funding is allocated next week, it will be an 18 month program.

Rhona has circulated the first Tune into Tourism podcast, featuring Simon Calder.

## **7.Date of next meeting.**

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May

RESPOND (March 2020 – May 2020) Immediate provision of information and support to businesses

RESET (June 2020 – September 2020) Support, planning and preparation for restart

RESTART (June 2020 – February 2021) Support and guidance for safe re-opening

RECOVER (September 2020 – December 2022) Guidance and support for operating in a new post COVID-19 environment

*Remit of Group: The group has been set up to provide consistent and comprehensive analysis of the implications of Covid-19 for tourism, to coordinate communications with the tourism industry, ensure close working between key agencies and the private sector, to gather, share, facilitate, interpret and disseminate information and agree relevant actions and delivery plans.*

*Membership: The Group consists of representatives from Cairngorms Business Partnership, VisitAberdeenshire, MoraySpeyside, VisitScotland, Aberdeenshire Council, The Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and CNPA (Chair).*