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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR DECISION

**Title: CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK DESIGN AWARDS  
2016 AND POTENTIAL FOR NATIONAL PARK DESIGN  
PANEL**

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### **Purpose**

To update members on plans for the second Cairngorms National Park Design Awards to held in 2016 and on planning service's work to investigate establishment of a Design Panel for the National Park.

### **Recommendations**

#### **That the Committee:**

- a) **Endorse plans for the National Park Design Awards 2016; and**
- b) **Note to the Planning Service's conclusions on establishment of a Design Panel for the National Park.**

### **Background**

1. In 2012 the Cairngorms National Park Authority held the first Cairngorms National Park Design Awards. They successfully engaged developers, communities, and the public in examples of good design across the National Park. The CNPA has promoted the best examples from the awards in the years since, and has had constructive discussions with developers and communities in particular on the importance of good design as well as challenges in achieving it in all development.
2. One of the outcomes of the first Design Awards competition was the investigation of establishing a Design Forum for the National Park. In 2013, the planning service discussed the potential for a Design Forum or Panel with a range of partners and with the Developers Forum. It was agreed that given the lack of control that the CNPA has over pre-application processes, wariness on the part of developers about seeking advice from a Design Panel, there was little to be gained from establishing one at that stage.

## Plans for National Park Design Awards 2016

3. The Scottish Government has identified 2016 as the themed year of Innovation, Architecture and Design in Scotland for the tourism and events sector. The CNPA planning service has committed to running the Design Awards competition again to make the most of the year and build a stronger portfolio of examples of good design in the Park. The Planning Committee Convenor announced the 2016 Design Awards competition at the Grantown 250 celebrations talk on Built Heritage and Design.
4. As committee members will know, achieving good design in development proposals can be a challenge for some applicants if they are unable or unwilling to consider the full range of factors that make for successful projects. In many cases, this is because people perceive good design to mean higher costs or simply the appearance of a product. However, good design comes from careful planning at an early stage, including setting realistic budgets, good understanding of the uses and needs of the occupants or users and the process runs from those earliest stages of scoping a development to its completion and ongoing use and management. We want to use the design awards to highlight how the process of design can lead to developments that people can afford, that create attractive and healthy places and enhance our communities and peoples' lives.
5. We all want to build on the success of the 2012 Awards. The objectives of the 2016 Design Awards will be to:
  - Showcase and celebrate the best examples of design within National Park
  - Promote the National Park as place where good design really matters
  - Raise awareness and understanding of the process of design and expectations of communities and the public in making it deliver places they live, work and enjoy.
6. One of the successes of the 2012 Awards was the simplicity of entry and breadth of potential entries allowed. We will continue that theme and have a short entry form that asks for specific information about the project entered and a limited number of good quality images. The basic criteria for entry will be simple:
  - Projects completed in the National Park since it was established in 2003;
  - No projects previously entered in the 2012 Competition;
7. There will be no specific categories for entry to the competition. Entries could win or be commended for a variety of reasons. As a guide, we expect the judging panel to look for the best examples of the following types of project:
  - Residential
  - Commercial
  - Community
  - Landscape Design
  - Sustainability
  - Public art
  - Craftsmanship

8. We propose to have a small judging panel of three judges; two from the architecture and design profession and the Planning Committee Convenor. We also intend to have a small advisory panel of experts to assist the short-listing process. This would include a planner, ecologist and landscape architect from the CNPA staff and we will invite a member of Inclusive Cairngorms to provide feedback on inclusive design.
9. We plan to invite entries over a six-week period from April 2016, preceded by promotion and awareness-raising from January 2016. The short-listing and judging will take place over the summer of 2016 with an Awards event/ceremony to announce and celebrate the winners and commendations.
10. An outline timetable for the work is shown below.

<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Sept-Dec 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure judges and shortlisting/ judging dates</li> <li>• Finalise entry details, criteria and forms</li> <li>• Create engagement and communications plans</li> <li>• Plan promotional material</li> <li>• Raise awareness with Developers Forum and Communities</li> </ul>
Jan-Apr 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote Awards and start engagement</li> </ul>
Apr-May 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 week entry period</li> </ul>
Late May- early June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check entries</li> <li>• Advisory Panel comment on entries</li> </ul>
Late June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judges shortlist entries</li> <li>• Shortlisted entries promoted in media</li> </ul>
July-Sept 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judges to visit all shortlisted projects and identify commendations/winners</li> </ul>
Sept- Oct 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed plans for and promotion of Awards Ceremony.</li> </ul>
Early Nov 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold Awards Event</li> </ul>
Nov 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the award winner's entries and good examples of design from all entries</li> </ul>

### **Wider engagement in the Design Awards**

11. The planning team want to use the Design Awards to engage with a wider audience than in through the 2012 Awards. We will be using social media and connections with the year of Innovation, Architecture and Design in Scotland to extend awareness of the awards and to generate more participation in the process. The team are investigating whether an online voting system or nomination system could be used to identify favourites with the public or whether other 'quirky' projects like Lego's 'Fill-the-Gap' competition could target different audiences.

## Financial Implications

12. The planning and running of the Design Awards will rely mainly on CNPA staff time committed through the Operational Plan. We are currently planning the Design Awards on a minimal funding scenario and are investigating options for scaling-up via additional funding or sponsorship.

## Investigating establishment of a Design Panel for the National Park

13. The Scottish Government has continued to promote the potential benefits of Design Panels across Scotland and has provided feedback on past CNPA Planning Performance Framework reports that a Design Panel would be seen as positive action. In agreeing the planning service priorities for 2015/16 in April this year, the Planning Committee agreed an action to investigate establishment of Design Panel for the Park.
14. Officers have reviewed the case for a Design Panel for the Park and consider that most of the factors which led us to postpone establishment of one in 2013 remain valid. Although we are now offering a significantly more joined-up pre-application advice service for the customer with the local authorities, the CNPA does not control the process as we are not the primary planning authority. There are no more incentives for applicants to use such a panel than before.
15. However, we know the Planning Committee want to be able to set higher standards of design and have more informed development proposals come through the planning system for approval. The planning service is undertaking a range of work intended to improve design of development in a number of ways. Clearly, the Design Awards competition is the main focus for raising awareness and the profile of good design in the National Park. The Planning Committee will obviously be kept informed of the progress of the Design Awards and involved in a post-awards review.
16. The planning services' other work in creating development briefs at Carr-Bridge and Aviemore, as well as the Town Centre Pilot Project in Grantown-on-Spey are also intended to focus more on good design than previous projects. This work will help staff develop their skills and experience. A number of planning officers are taking part in training over the year that will help them be able to provide clearer analysis of design issues and build confidence in explaining them to applicants and to the Planning Committee.
17. We are reviewing the templates we use for Planning Committee reports as the development management team make more use of our ePlanning systems and have identified design appraisal as an area we will strengthen in committee reports.
18. For all those reasons, we have concluded that there is still not a good business case for establishing a Design Panel for the National Park. We think that other work the planning service is undertaking will build the CNPA's capacity to promote good design, provide

clear advice and guidance on good design, and lead to stronger planning committee recommendations and decisions where design is significant issue in the short to medium term.

### **Next Steps**

19. The planning team will continue to plan in detail for the 2016 Design Awards, with invitations to judges and setting of judging dates as well as detailed engagement and communications planning. The Planning Committee Convener will be closely involved as part of the judging panel and Planning Committee will be updated on the Awards throughout 2016.

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**September 2015**

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