
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Review of the National Park Plan

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to set out the context for reviewing the National Park Plan and preparation of the next version running from 2012-2017. It seeks board endorsement for the proposed approach to developing the next Plan and engaging others on it.

Recommendations

That the Board endorse:

- a) the proposed process for development of the National Park Plan; and
- b) the proposed approach to engagement

Executive Summary

The National Park Plan must be reviewed every five years. The next version of the plan is due in 2012. This paper highlights the context for preparing the next Park Plan, outlining some of the factors that we consider should influence the form and content. In response to this it sets out a process for developing the next Park Plan and proposes an approach to engaging others on its development.

We will not be developing the next Park Plan on a blank canvas. The board have had an informal discussion on how to use our experience of developing and implementing the current Park Plan to inform the development of the next version. Key themes from that discussion centred on how to improve our approaches to engagement with a range of stakeholders and how to ensure better integration of the Park Plan throughout delivery partners work programmes. In addition to our desire to design a better process for the development of the Park Plan, we also have a clearer understanding of the type and range of issues that the Park Plan is likely to need to tackle. Although its main purpose is to coordinate the collective delivery of the aims of the Park, we know that other factors such as the effects of climate change, changes in the population, economy and making sure it links effectively with other plans and strategies, will all influence the form it takes and what it tries to achieve.

We ask the board to endorse a proposed process for developing the next Park Plan that starts with engagement throughout 2010 to inform the development of a draft National Park Plan that will be consulted on in 2011. The development of the Local Development Plan is

tied into this process, with consultation on its Main Issues Report at the same time. The National Park Plan will be finalised later in 2011 and submitted to the Minister for approval in 2012. Following its approval by the Minister in 2012, a draft Local Development Plan can be consulted on.

We have also proposed a draft format for the next National Park Plan that is intended to provide a clearer framework for delivery and for monitoring of progress than we currently have. The proposed format places greater emphasis on the identification of long and short term outcomes as well as clear indicators. We suggest that instead of developing 5-year action plans intended to deliver those outcomes, we allow partners more flexibility to deliver them through work programmes, outcome agreements and the development of projects. We also propose to structure development of the Plan into three broad themes of "sustainable land use", "sustainable communities" and "a sustainable destination", that collectively address the range of issues that stakeholders identify with and also reflect the way that delivery partners address those issues.

The role of the board in the process is highlighted as one of formal decision-making and sponsoring, combined with clear leadership and promotion of the process, encouraging stakeholders to engage, and maintaining an overview of the process. We have set out some of the ways that we will support these roles.

The paper also asks the board to endorse the proposed approach to engagement. The approach draws a distinction between communities, partners and other stakeholders, seeking to identify the most effective mechanisms for each group. Of particular importance is the proposed approach to engaging communities and linking with the community planning process. We intend to contract much of the organisation of engagement to the established community development structure in each area, designing bespoke engagement sessions with them, using both established and new methods, and minimising fatigue by providing a single point of engagement on the National Park Plan, Local Development Plan, and Landscape Framework.

REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL PARK PLAN – FOR DECISION

Introduction

1. This paper sets out the context for developing the next Cairngorms National Park Plan from 2012-2017, the process and format we propose to follow, and our proposed approach to engagement on the Plan.

Summary of Progress in Delivering the First Park Plan

2. The Board were given the results of the National Park Plan's mid-term Health Check in October 2009. The results of that stock-taking exercise showed that overall, 70% of the plan's outcomes are on track to be substantially achieved by 2012, with a remaining 30% where more work is required.
3. Real progress has been made in each of the seven priorities for action, with many different partners leading work and many successful projects. In some areas progress has been slower, or the coordination of action more difficult, often because of external forces on the Park or on partners.
4. There are still 2 years of delivery on the current Park Plan to go and we expect further significant progress to be made in delivery. However the experience of developing the first Park Plan and implementing it has been a steep learning curve for the CNPA, partners and stakeholders in the Cairngorms National Park. As much as we have achieved, most of those involved in the delivering Park Plan can see that there is capacity to improve. This process of improvement and refinement is ongoing, but the review of the Park Plan gives us an opportunity to step up coordination and delivery.

Context for Developing the Next Park Plan

5. In developing and implementing the Park Plan, we have learnt a lot about the process and how we engage stakeholders, work with partners; maintain motivation and demonstrate progress. Board members will recall our informal discussion on 27 November 2009 about how we have learnt from the National Park Plan process to date and how we can improve it in future. Kirsty Blackstock from the Macaulay Institute also attended that session and provided feedback from her research into the Park Plan process. Key themes from our discussion that day included:
 - a) the distinction between different stakeholders – partners, communities and people living in the Park, communities of interest;
 - b) the need to minimise duplication of engagement and consultation on the Park Plan and other plans or initiatives;
 - c) Using existing evidence and structures such as the community planning process
 - d) the need to provide clear terms of reference for different stakeholders – setting out the process, what they can get from it and how they can get it;
 - e) engaging on issues that are real to each stakeholder;
 - f) Providing honest and direct feedback;

- g) Be transparent about the roles that delivery partners have on the final Park Plan and on the nature and scale of change that can be achieved.
 - h) Making stronger and explicit links between implementation of the Park Plan and Single Outcome Agreements
6. The proposals in this paper are intended to reflect and to build on our discussions that day.
7. The experience of implementing the current Park Plan has also given us a clear insight into the range of issues that the next Park Plan is likely to need to address or consider. Firstly and obviously, there are those factors that come from the Park itself, such as the management of its various special qualities, the needs of communities and visitors. Then there are forces that act upon the park such as changes in the climate or national economic trends, and other issues are the linked to government policy and direction that the Park Plan and the delivery partners are compelled to implement.
8. We intend to use our experience and the knowledge built up over the past 5 years to provide a clear structure for engagement on and development of the next Park Plan. We know for example that:
- a) The aims of the Park will remain the same;
 - b) climate change, both the need to reduce our contribution to it, and the need to adapt to it, will be increasingly higher on the political and social agenda;
 - c) our population is likely to grow a little, become older;
 - d) the economy of the Park will continue to be challenged by different forces and that public sector spending will contract;
 - e) the Park Plan needs to provide a clearer context for the Local Development Plan in future;
 - f) Existing and new policy drivers such as the need to halt biodiversity loss, requirements for a national land use strategy, or support for food production may provide challenges and opportunities in the Park.
 - g) We need to ensure the Park Plan provides a clearer link to the Scottish Government's national outcomes and provides an explicit way for public sector partners to deliver their own single outcome agreements.
 - h) We want to use the Community Planning Partnerships to identify common aims with partners' strategies and where combined funding and resources can be accessed so that the Park Plan becomes embedded in community plans.

Links with Local Development Plan

9. The Local Plan Inquiry into the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan has clarified the relationship between the Park Plan and Local/Local Development Plan. Of most significance has been the Reporter's acceptance of the Park Plan as the primary strategic plan that sets the context for the Development Plan, and of the Park Plan as a material consideration in the development management process.
10. This means that the Park Plan will play a greater role in the planning system than was anticipated when it was originally prepared. It also means that in future, the Park Plan should provide clearer strategic direction on land use and development related

issues that the Local Development Plan can transfer directly to planning policy and land use requirements.

11. In practice, this means that the Park Plan should provide clearer guidance on the likely requirements for development and land use in the National Park, along with a strategy to deliver them. This will mean more decision and direction about future population, housing and economic needs will be set out in the next Park Plan than was included in the current plan, but it does not mean that the Park Plan will appear as a development plan. The Park Plan will still be the strategic management plan for the Park and will continue to set out a clear framework for action over its five year period.

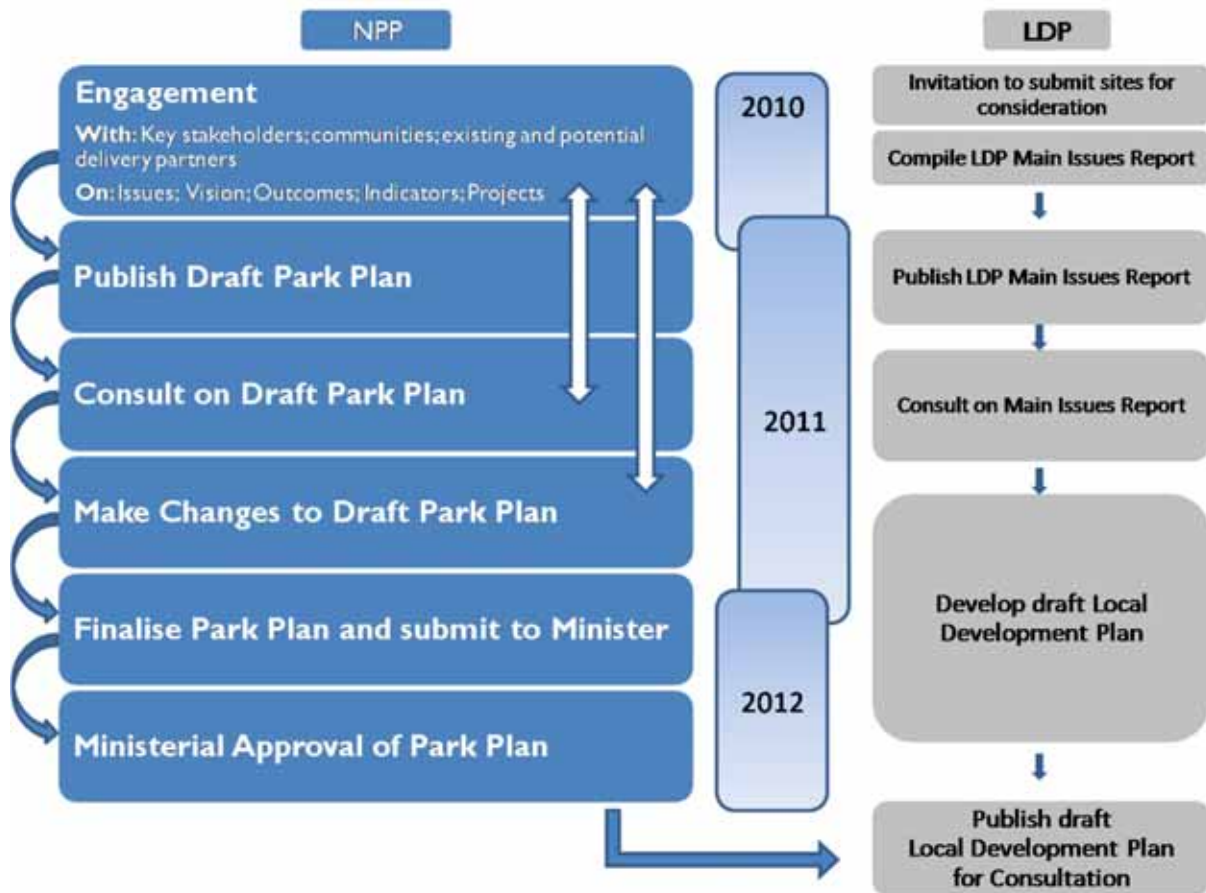
Evidence Base

12. We have used the past 2-3 years of implementing the National Park Plan to identify many information gaps and to start to fill them, and we expect to continue to do so throughout the next Park Plan's life as well. For example, we have added to our understanding of the landscape character of the Park, of how we experience wildness in it, and will use this to help inform the development of the landscape framework. We also now have an economic baseline study that tells us more about the characteristics of the economy in the Park and about its distinctiveness and pressures on it. This work will help us target support at particular sectors more accurately and with a clearer evidence base in future.
13. However, because of the need to provide a more direct link between the National Park Plan and the Local Development Plan, there are a number of pieces of work required to draw together evidence for both during 2010. They are broadly linked to the state of population, housing and the economy, and the extent to which change should be accommodated, sought or restricted. The strategic principles and more direction will be developed through the National Park Plan, while the detail of implementation (in development terms) will be a result of the LDP. The areas of work are:
 - a) Up to date small area population forecasts and school roll forecasts that inform;
 - b) Preparation of a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) for the Park area to provide (accurate/ non-challengeable) numbers for overall housing need and affordable housing need by settlement.
 - c) Research that identifies the most appropriate and viable means of providing affordable housing and how to target open market housing at local need.
 - d) Employment land requirements.
14. We are developing a work programme to access this information.

The Process for developing the Park Plan

15. There are a number of stages for developing the Park Plan. Figure 1 illustrates the process and shows how the Local Development Plan process will run at the same time, leading to publication of a draft Local Development Plan after the Park Plan has been approved by the Minister.

Figure 1: Development of the National Park Plan & Local Development Plan



The Format of the Next Park Plan

16. The CNPA can help stakeholders and partners understand how the Park Plan will work by outlining the structure we would like it to follow. This will provide clarity over the roles that the Park Plan has, and will help comments on it to be structured as constructively as possible.
17. The proposed draft structure for the next Park Plan is shown below. In developing it we have used our experience of developing and then implementing the first Park Plan. We propose a similar structure to that of the current Park Plan, based on a refined vision and long term outcomes, short-term outcomes, but with a greater emphasis on the identification of measurable indicators of progress. There are three main reasons for the increased emphasis on measurable indicators:
 - a) It will provide a more comprehensive and robust monitoring framework for the Plan;
 - b) by identifying indicators at the same time as we develop outcomes, we can improve and refine those outcomes, making them as realistic as possible;
 - c) The early choice of indicators will allow them to be collated as an integral part of work to achieve the outcomes.

Figure 2: A Draft Structure for the Park Plan



18. In the current Park Plan, we focused the delivery of change and management on seven priorities for action. For each priority for action an action plan was developed prior to the Park Plan being finalised that was intended to deliver the short term outcomes.
19. In implementing the Park Plan we have found that the action plans have been less effective than hoped for, both because it has seemed more difficult to adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities, and because different organisations' priorities or ability to deliver those actions changes over a period of time. We've also found that although we notionally prioritised delivery into the seven priorities for action, in reality, we tried to tackle as many issues as possible within those priorities, and many priorities are tackling different parts of the same problem. This has meant that in delivery terms, the distinctions between the priorities have become a bit artificial and we have increasingly joined delivery structures together to improve work.
20. Because of this, we propose to change the way that the Park Plan structures delivery of those short term outcomes. Instead of producing a five year action plan in advance of the Park Plan being approved, we want delivery partners to focus attention on the delivery of the short term outcomes through whatever means is most appropriate. This may be through work embedded in community planning partnerships, or through the identification of projects that deliver those outcomes such as the current LBAP project or development of community action plans.
21. We do not expect to be able to set out all the work that would be expected to happen over a five year period, so envisage work changing and projects adapting and being established throughout the five-year Park Plan timescale. This will mean that

our reporting of progress throughout the Park Plan's life will be based on the explicit framework of outcomes and indicators in the Park Plan, and can be supplemented by updates and highlights on the types of work and projects that are being pursued to deliver them. It should also be easier for delivery partners to be creative about how new to tackle new challenges and opportunities that are encountered over the life of the Plan whilst continuing to deliver the short term outcomes.

22. We also consider our priorities for action approach should be revised. We have found that there has been more work needed and done in the Park than our priorities for action would imply; in a sense there have been more priorities for action than we anticipated. We have also found that in tackling different priorities for action, we frequently tackle the same or interlinked underlying problems.
23. All groupings of topic and issues that we construct will have interactions and overlap. However, we need them to provide order, organise and simplify the many diverse issues we deal with. For those reasons we intend to stream our development of the Park Plan into three themes that reflect different broad issues in the Park and the way that we manage them:
 - a) **Sustainable Land Use**
Dealing with how we use and manage land for natural and cultural, economic, social and other public benefits
 - b) **Sustainable Communities**
Dealing with how communities develop, access services, housing, employment etc
 - c) **A Sustainable Destination**
Dealing with the economic, social and educational effects of how we manage the Park as a destination for visitors.
24. Each of those themes is related to the others and to a greater or lesser extent, all of the National Park aims. However, under each of those themes there are a range of distinct issues that different stakeholders can identify with and we can engage on. From the perspective of the main delivery partners, the themes provide a more functional structure that reflects how we manage those issues.

Recommendation:

25. **That the Board endorse the proposed process for development of the National Park Plan**

The Board's Role in the Park Plan

26. The CNPA are responsible for the preparation of the Park Plan and the board will take formal decisions on the final content and form of a draft Park Plan and later finalised Park Plan. However, the Park Plan is a vision of a shared future and an agreed route map of how the many partners and stakeholders will get there. The Board therefore has a clear leadership role to play to engage the groups with an interest and tackle the issues that need to be addressed, the content and direction comes from those other stakeholders and partners.

27. There are three particular strands to the Board's role:
- a) **Leadership: fostering shared ownership of the National Park Plan**
This is about more than the formal endorsement and approval of process and content – CNPA will need to make use of the wide range of skills and contacts in both our staff and board to engage and establish a sense of shared ownership for the plan and the National Park, and secure genuine commitment to deliver for the Park.
 - b) **Encouraging and promoting engagement in the process**
Members will have a particular role to play in engaging communities and other stakeholders and partners. To assist this, board members and staff will be provided with briefings on the process and opportunities.
 - c) **Maintaining an overview of the process and issues**
This is about providing the overall direction and context for the collective contributions and efforts of partners, ensuring they add up to making a significant difference for the Park, as well as ensuring a transparent and robust process. The Informal Discussion days scheduled during the remainder of 2010 will be used to explore key strategic issues needed to provide the direction for the plan, particularly around the three themes set out above.

Engagement on the Park Plan

28. There will be two distinct phases of engagement on the National Park Plan. The first phase is one of engagement during 2010 on the issues that need to be addressed in the short and long term, as well as the ways in which they should be tackled. The second phase is the consultation on a draft Park Plan from May 2011.
29. These phases of engagement are complicated by the range of stakeholders who have an interest in the Park Plan and in the Park. For the purposes of this paper we will draw a distinction between stakeholders who have a lot of interest in the Plan, but little direct capacity to implement changes, and those who have power and ability to implement change. In other words, there are stakeholders who can express what they want to happen in the future but can't achieve it themselves, and then there are stakeholders who could help them achieve what they want.
30. This is clearly a simplistic distinction, but it reflects the range of stakeholders from a small community or interest group to a local authority or other public agencies. The key to making the National Park Plan work is making sure that these opposite ends, as well as the diverse groups between, are able to share a vision of where they want be in the future, and can continue to work together to achieve it.
31. However, in developing a plan with scope of the Park Plan, this does not happen by simply by bringing groups together. Different stakeholders' ability to think about and plan for the future varies, and time pressures constrain people and organisation's input. It is the CNPA's role to target engagement to get best results and to maintain the connections between different stakeholder groups. In a sense this is simply making sure that the most effective delivery partners align their work to outcomes that reflect what other stakeholders want, and making sure that those other stakeholders understand any practical or other constraints that will limit or change what they can reasonably expect.

32. This has implications for the way that we develop the Park Plan. Delivery partners and those stakeholders most able to make change happen will inevitably be involved for longer during the drafting stage of the plan than other stakeholders. They are the organisations and groups with most resources and knowledge about how those resources can be directed. The CNPA can ensure as transparent an interpretation of other stakeholders views as possible during drafting of the Park Plan. However, the real check on the validity of the plan comes through the consultation on the draft Park Plan, and the degree to which all stakeholders agree with it.

Engagement with Communities

33. As noted in the Board Information Paper on 22 January 2010, we are contracting the community engagement on the Park Plan to existing community support structures around the Park. In doing so, we will be using the local experts, with local connections and networks, who can help design and facilitate bespoke programmes of engagement in different parts of the Park in collaboration with CNPA officers. We expect to use a range of techniques to support engagement and are likely to make use of electronic voting systems at some sessions.
34. It is important to note that our approach to engagement is intended to deliver a single point of engagement for a number of plans and initiatives. From the CNPA's perspective we will be using the engagement for the development of the National Park Plan, the Landscape Framework and Local Development Plan in the first instance. However, we expect engagement events to be incorporated with other meetings and initiatives as far as possible.
35. The first phase of work will take place between May and October 2010. We will evaluate the phase of engagement after October 2010 and this will inform how we support the second phase of consultation with communities on the draft Park Plan and on the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report in 2011.
36. The main output of the community engagement will be "community visions" for each main geographic community in the Park. These visions will serve a range of purposes:
- a) they will be referred to in the Park Plan and provide a reminder of what future work in the community should build on;
 - b) they will inform the Local Development Plan and how the planning system supports those communities;
 - c) they will inform community planning partnerships and the outcomes that are developed in single outcome agreements; and
 - d) they will be a focus for action plans in each community that the community and public sector can work together to deliver.
37. In developing these community visions, we, and the contractors we appoint will be draw on existing information and previous consultation exercises. For example some communities have already taken many steps down the road of their own visions as well as developed their own action plans through the "Our Community a Way Forward" scheme and "Ballater One Voice Our Future".

38. Our approach to community engagement is intended to link directly to the Community Planning partnerships in each local authority area. In doing so, we will be using the most effective current mechanism for bringing agencies and many delivery partners together with communities.

Engagement with Delivery Partners

39. Engagement with existing delivery partners will take place at a variety of levels, from the National Park Strategy Group to individual officers developing detailed projects. We will start by high level contact with each partner organisation at chief executive and/or head of group level and will provide briefing material and opportunities for in person briefing.
40. The next stage will be for a CNPA nominated officer to lead and coordinate ongoing discussions with each organisation through long term outcomes, short term outcomes, and the identification of projects (shared with other partners as appropriate) to deliver them. The CNPA's role is to demonstrate and help each organisation deliver their own outcomes and implement their wider outcome agreements through the National Park Plan.
41. This process is slightly complicated by the fact that we expect a number of partners to be involved in the engagement with communities and to be contributing to discussions about community visions and developing action plans. The CNPA will maintain the link between any of these on the ground discussions with other departmental or sectoral discussions with the same organisations.

Engagement with Other Stakeholders

42. Our engaging other stakeholders will vary depending on their own needs, abilities and objectives. There is a very rough line between stakeholders who may also be delivery partners and/or communities or community organisations. Equally, some may be focused interest groups with opinions about how the Park should be managed but little influence in the Park.
43. No single method of engagement will work here. For some organisations, the same approach as for delivery partners may be effective while for others less formal methods may be more appropriate. The approaches to, and level of effort that the CNPA put into engagement with different groups will be steered by our stakeholder analysis.

The National Park Plan Engagement Pack

44. To support engagement on the Park Plan and to help brief stakeholders, we are pulling together a pack of documents that can be adapted to help all groups. There are three main components to this:
- a) A summary of the process, timetable, and how people can be involved
 - b) A summary of progress in delivering this Park Plan
 - c) An issues paper that highlights what we think the main issues will be over the next 5 to 20 years and why

Recommendation:

45. **That the Board endorse the proposed approach to engagement**

Next Steps

46. The focus of current work is on preparing for engagement. Key tasks for the next 2 months include:
- a) Providing verbal and written briefings for staff and board members on the National Park Plan process
 - b) Completing the National Park Plan engagement pack
 - c) Conducting stakeholder analysis internally to identify key stakeholders
 - d) Appointing agents to conduct community engagement and devising engagement methods
 - e) Identifying CNPA nominated officers and partner contacts
 - f) Develop an internal and external communications plan on the Park Plan

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