

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY CLIMATE CHANGE

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### FOR DISCUSSION

**Title:** Response to Royal Society of Edinburgh Inquiry –  
“Facing up to Climate Change”

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#### Introduction

1. In the Autumn of 2009 the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) launched an inquiry on how Scotland can respond to climate change. Other RSE inquiries such as the recent “Future of Scotland’s Hills and Islands” have raised public and political awareness of issues in Scotland and have helped inform the development of public policy.
2. “Facing up to Climate Change” will run throughout 2010 and will report in early 2011. It has called for evidence to be given to it by 1 May 2010. A brief for written evidence is included as annex 1 to this paper. The following section sets out a draft CNPA response to the inquiry. The suggested response focuses on aspects of climate change that the CNPA and the National Park is best able to add value to.
3. The response will be sent to the RSE with any changes or additions agreed through the Board’s discussion of this paper.

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**19 March 2010**  
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## A Draft CNPA Response

1. The Cairngorms National Park was established in September 2003 and the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) became fully operational on 1 September 2003. The purpose of national park authorities is to ensure the coordinated and collective delivery of four statutory aims of Scottish National Parks:
  - a) To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area
  - b) To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area
  - c) To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public
  - d) To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities
2. The CNPA is designed to be an enabling organisation, promoting partnership working and giving leadership to all those involved in the Cairngorms. The Park Authority does not duplicate the work of other organisations, but is here to ensure there is a joined-up approach to projects and initiatives that help to meet the four aims of the Park. The main tool for ensuring this is the development and implementation of a National Park Plan – a strategic management plan with a long-term (25 year) vision and 5 year review period. The current National Park Plan runs from 2007-2012.
3. The CNPA itself is a small organisation, with around 60 employees. It is committed to reducing its own carbon emissions and adapting to climate change. In doing so it faces similar challenges to rural businesses and communities in many parts of Scotland.
4. In our response to the inquiry we have tried to highlight issues that we feel are particularly significant within the National Park or where we have particular experience. Both Scottish National Parks are ideal places to test Scotland's ability to adapt to climate change and to reduce emissions that contribute to it. We would welcome the opportunity to tell the inquiry more about some of the specific problems encountered here as well as the examples of work to address them in more detail.

## Climate Change and the Cairngorms National Park

5. The Cairngorms National Park contains a lot of stored carbon in woodland and forestry, peat land and soils. It is also sensitive to the effects of climate change:
  - a) Nearly 40% of the Park is designated for nature conservation, and 25% is designated as being of European importance. It holds 25% of the UK's rare and threatened species. Many of the important species and habitats in the Cairngorms are significant because they exist at the margins of their natural limits and are therefore vulnerable to changing climatic factors.
  - b) Around 16000 live in the Park in dispersed rural communities. As elsewhere in rural Scotland, much housing is poorly insulated, requiring significant energy to heat, and much social and business activity requires the use of motor transport. Settlement in the Park is frequently within the main river valleys and can be at risk from extreme flood events.

6. The National Park Plan provides a focus for the public sector and other partners to work in the National Park. There are already many projects aimed at improving awareness of the effects of climate change and the ways the individuals and businesses can adapt as well as reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The review of the National Park Plan will help to embed more action and will prioritise action to reduce emission of greenhouse gases. Because the Park Plan is implemented by many partners and is with significant support from the public sector, this should be integrated throughout the public sector. How the land of National Park is managed to maximise carbon storage will be a key theme in our development of the next Park Plan.

## Energy Generation

7. Public acceptance of increasing investment in renewable energy and its infrastructure appears likely to hinge on the transparency of the decisions made to provide it. Land-based wind energy generation has so far been the most obvious manifestation of renewable energy and can be divisive because of the inherent landscape and visual effects.
8. Within the National Park, consent for the upgrading of the Beaully-Denny transmission line was recently made in order to facilitate future renewable energy generation in the north of Scotland. The CNPA was one of many objectors to the proposed route for upgrading not on the principle of upgrading but because few alternatives had been seriously considered. Press reporting of the decision served to further give an impression that the route was based on economic reasons and that other concerns were secondary. There appears to be a risk of alienating some of the public who live where the main generating and transmission infrastructure is located because of a need to supply the UK's main population and energy use centres.
9. The use of renewable heating in buildings is likely to be made in a variety of ways. Solar, geothermal and woodfuel sources are all used within the Cairngorms National Park. With a clear supply of managed forestry, it is likely that woodfuel will play an increasing role in heating supplies in the Park as technology becomes cheaper and the cost of oil and gas rises. more information on the promotion of woodfuel in the National Park can found on this website: [www.lowcarboncairngorms.org/woodfuel/](http://www.lowcarboncairngorms.org/woodfuel/)
10. The development of microrenewables is constrained by the capital costs of installation. Although not the only factor, the cost of housing in the Cairngorms National Park is amongst the highest in Scotland when compared to the incomes in the Park, so investment in microrenewables by householders may be limited.
11. In the National Park, as across many parts of rural Scotland, the greatest barrier to cutting energy use is the energy efficiency of the current buildings and particularly housing stock. Few buildings are insulated adequately and many are constructed in ways that mean innovative insulating materials or techniques would be required to achieve improved insulation. A wide variety of tenures also mean that improvements to properties are not always the responsibility of the resident who pays to heat the building. It is also worth noting that the National Park reflects other parts of rural Scotland in relying heavily on use of the private car.

## Land Use

12. We have used land in Scotland for a variety of purposes in place and time. Providing a clear strategy for the use of land for a variety purposes is the key to using it efficiently. This is exactly the approach that we are trying to develop in the Cairngorms National Park because it allows us to coordinate the delivery of the aims of the Park. It is worth noting that so many rural land uses (and land area) are supported by the public sector that it is both the biggest barrier and biggest opportunity to changing rural land use activities.

## Buildings

13. Adapting building and housing stock to better cope with extreme weather events is often a relatively simple procedure, but as in changes to make them more energy efficient, relies on people's and government's willingness to pay for the changes needed. Clearly this is more straightforward in the planning and development of new buildings, where measures can be designed from the outset. However, even for new buildings, knowledge and expertise on how to adapt is patchy across the regulatory authorities, professional planning and design services, and development industry. In addition, while the public are aware of the some of the problems associated with extreme weather events, there does not yet appear to be a mainstream understanding of their own role in adapting to them or avoiding the consequences.
14. Government can ensure business/domestic energy efficiency measures are met by taking a long term view of how they are financed and the incentives that will encourage them. For many organizations and individuals, the one-off costs of improvements or changes appear high. Although there are some incentives and loan schemes to help, they are targeted at a very small proportion of the total number of buildings where change is needed.
15. The obstacles to implementing the measures envisaged in the Climate Change Act in the planning and building regulations are linked to the knowledge and understanding of the subject by the regulators and the customers. Neither part has sufficient understanding of the problems, the most appropriate responses or the significance of the longer term environmental, social and economic justification.

## Transport

16. The CNPA's own transport emissions can be cut by 30% by 2020 through a range of measures such as minimising travel, using more fuel efficient transport and making better use of information technology. Nevertheless, there is a clear tension for any organisation with a remit over a wide geographic area with limited viable public transport links between different parts. However, the difficulties faced by the CNPA or any other public sector organisation are minor compared to those of individuals or businesses in the same area for whom realignment of resources to reduce emissions may be more difficult and more significant.

## **Annex I. Facing Up to Climate Change – Brief for Written evidence**

Climate is changing and the trends in statistics on flooding, precipitation and temperature in Scotland over the last 40 years have already required changes in our approach to risk and uncertainty. Legislation has now been set in place, notably the UK Climate Change Act with a statutory target for the UK to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050, and the Climate Change (Scotland) Act with a reduction target of 42% in Scotland by 2020. At European Union level, Member States have agreed to increase the share of renewable energy to 20% by 2020 and the Scottish Government has set itself a target of 50% of Scotland's electricity from renewable sources by 2020. In order to reduce emissions, the Scottish Government's Climate Change Delivery Plan includes targets of:

- A largely de-carbonised heat sector by 2050 with significant progress by 2030 through a combination of reduced demand and energy efficiency, together with a massive increase in the use of renewable or low carbon heating
- Almost complete decarbonisation of road transport by 2050 with significant progress by 2030 through wholesale adoption of electric cars and vans, and significant decarbonisation of rail by 2050
- A comprehensive approach to ensure that carbon (including the cost of carbon) is fully factored into strategic and local decisions about rural land use

However, the gap between the necessary policies and where we are now, is large. Certainly the capacity of a government to implement changes, particularly where great uncertainty or long timescales are involved, depends fundamentally on public engagement and effective institutional structures. In order to inform the work of the Inquiry, the Committee would welcome views on some of the following issues where people/organisations have experience or expertise:

### **Individuals**

- Do you perceive the changing weather patterns in Scotland and globally as affecting you and/or your organisation?
- What are the impacts of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act on you and/or your organisation?
- What do you plan to do in response to these factors over the next 5 – 10 years?
- What are the main barriers to change for you and/or your organisation?
- If you own or run a business, what are the barriers preventing you from exploiting the opportunities in the move to a low-carbon economy and society?
- How could your transport emissions be cut by 30% by 2020, and what are the barriers to achieving this?
- How will you improve the energy efficiency of your building?

### **Organisations**

- Do you perceive the changing weather patterns in Scotland and globally as affecting you and/or your organisation?
- What are the impacts of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act on the goals and activities of your organisation in terms of investment and exposure to risk?
- What do you plan to do in response to these factors over the next 5 – 10 years?

- How integrated is your response with other organisations in similar or related fields?
- What are the main barriers to change for you and/or your organisation?
- What are the relative merits for your organisation of a carbon tax; emissions trading; energy regulations for performance standards; or incentive schemes?

### **Energy generation**

- What do you see as the issues with public acceptance of increasing investments in renewable energy and its associated infrastructure?
- How do you see 1 in 10 buildings being heated by renewable heat technologies by 2020?
  - What are the institutional, organisational and financial barriers to meeting the 50% target of renewable energy by 2020?
- Is there sufficient action to exploit the potential of microrenewables?
- What are the obstacles to cutting energy use?

### **Land use**

- How can we use our land most efficiently for energy, agriculture, and forestry to reduce carbon emissions and increase carbon storage, while providing food security, public amenity, and wildlife habitats?
- What do you see as the major barriers to changing rural land-use activities in this way?

### **Buildings**

- What is your view on how we can adapt our building/housing stock to cope with a greater incidence of extreme weather events?
- How should Government ensure that business/domestic energy efficiency measures are met?
- What are the current obstacles in the current planning and building regulations to implementing the measures envisaged in the Climate Change Act?

### **Transport**

- How could your organisation's transport emissions be cut by 30% by 2020, and what are the barriers to achieving this?

### **Submissions**

It would be helpful if submissions were kept to 4 pages or under, and sent **by 1 May 2010** to [mrand@royalsoced.org.uk](mailto:mrand@royalsoced.org.uk). Alternatively, hard copies can be addressed to:

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