

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
FINANCE COMMITTEE**

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**INFORMATION**

**Title: Point of Entry Marker Project**

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On behalf of the Project Team**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Finance Committee with final expenditure and outputs of the Point of Entry Marker Project as previously approved by the Board.

**Recommendations**

That the Finance Committee notes the successful completion of the Point of Entry Marker project within budget and recognises the significant contribution made to the project by partners.

**Executive Summary**

This paper concludes the Point of Entry Marker Project previously approved by the Board. Project outputs are detailed and the impacts of the project are discussed. A comparison between estimated and actual project costs is presented and discussed. The significant contribution made by partners is also discussed. Future works that will improve the experience of visitors entering the National Park are listed.

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## POINT OF ENTRY MARKER PROJECT – FOR INFORMATION

### Background

1. The development of Gateway signage was one of the earliest actions of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and in 2004 the Board agreed that:  
  
*“Entry point markers should be developed, in association with landscaping and other works, to provide a positive experience for people arriving at the Park, encapsulating the area’s essential character and, as far as possible, evoking the Park’s fundamental values of quality, welcome, integrity, respect, protection and progress.”*
2. Following detailed development work and the production of cost estimates the Board agreed in September 2005 to:
  - a) Install granite markers at 25 entry points to the Park;
  - b) Upgrade lay-bys and car parks at key sites adjacent to the entry point markers; and
  - c) Develop interpretation and visitor information at suitable entry points.
3. The Board also approved expenditure on **Phase 1** of the project - installation of 21 markers, on non-trunk roads, and associated works. At this time the estimated cost of delivering the complete project was £1.3 million.
4. In December 2006 the Board approved costs for **Phase 2** – installation of 4 markers and associated works on the trunk road entrances to the National Park. By August 2007 it had become apparent that the southern boundary of the National Park was likely to be reviewed and the Board agreed to delay the installation of a permanent marker on A9 at Drumochter but to continue support for the upgrade of the lay-by by Transport Scotland.
5. In January 2010 the Board approved costs for **Phase 3** – installation of five new markers, and relocation of a sixth marker, on the new National Park boundary in Atholl and Glenshee.

### Project Outputs

6. Since September 2005 the following outputs have been achieved:
  - a) Production and installation of 29 Cairngorms National Park (CNP) entry point granite markers
  - b) Upgrading of three car parks/lay-bys associated with entry points

- c) Development of a series of panoramic paintings for use in interpretation at entry points but with much wider application.

## **Project Costs**

7. Due to the intricate and changing nature of the project several estimates were produced over the five year period and revised when circumstances changed such as boundary changes. Table 1 below shows cost estimates approved by the Board for the work that was finally delivered and actual project expenditure:-

**Table 1: Comparison of Project Cost Estimates and Actual Expenditure**

	<b>Total (£)</b>	<b>CNPA Contribution (£)</b>	<b>Partners Contribution(2) (£)</b>
Project Estimates (1)	1,004,200	679,530	324,670
Actual Project Costs (3)	1,007,730	594,220	413,510

- (1) Cost and partner contribution estimates for Phase 1-3 as delivered.  
(2) Partner support is detailed in the Discussion section below.  
(3) These figures include £2,000 retention on final installation contract to be paid this year.

## **Complementary Works**

8. In addition to the works listed in paragraph 6 other signage has been installed to compliment the granite markers:-
- a) Installation of brown tourist pre-arrival signs on all trunk roads and other main roads leading to CNP (still outstanding but in hand on A93 from Aberdeen).
  - b) Installation of CNP branded signs at all six railway stations in CNP.

## **Discussion**

### **Outputs and Outcomes**

9. The project has been successful in achieving the physical output of installing permanent entry point markers at 29 entrances to the National Park with associated landscaping and upgrading of lay-bys/car parks at Drumochter (A9), Huntly's Cave (A939) and Dinnet (A93). In addition, the work at Drumochter encouraged Transport Scotland to upgrade south bound lay-by further improving the landscape at the pass.

10. Initial informal feedback about the project was often negative largely focusing on the perceived high cost. However, as the markers have been installed feedback has become more positive with the markers increasingly being seen as both creating a positive sense of arrival and being an important way of raising the profile of the National Park and the National Park Brand.
11. The project is seen as a key action in helping to deliver the National Park Plan outcome, 'everyone will know when they have arrived in the National Park and have a positive feeling about arriving in a special place.'
12. The 2010 CNP visitor survey produced some results that indicate that the markers are making a contribution to the outcome above:-
  - a) 8% of visitors first became aware that they were in a National Park by seeing a sign.
  - b) 82% of visitors were aware they were in a National Park, a 13% increase from 2004.
  - c) 44% of visitors could describe the CNP brand without seeing a visual prompt.
13. The development of panoramic images of the National Park as part of this project is another lasting legacy. These images have applications way beyond points of entry and they are already being used for interpretation and orientation in communities, schools, visitor centres and visitor attractions. They are also being sold as posters providing souvenirs for visitors.
14. The project team has reviewed and evaluated the risk assessment developed at the outset of the project, and compiled a detailed list of 'lessons learnt' so that the CNPA as a whole can benefit from the experience gained. We have also been able to share our experience with colleagues in Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority who are currently starting on a project to install permanent markers.

### **Partnership Working**

15. A project of this scale and complexity was only possible with the support of a wide range of partners. Nine partners listed below provided financial support amounting to 40% of the implementation costs. Without this support we would not have been able to deliver the project. Partners:-
  - a) European Regional Development Fund
  - b) Scottish Government
  - c) Transport Scotland
  - d) Rees Jeffrey's Road Fund
  - e) Highlands and Islands Enterprise
  - f) Scottish Enterprise Grampian

- g) Moray Council
- h) Highland Council
- i) Perth and Kinross Council

16. In addition, the roads and transportation sections of the five local authorities, Transport Scotland and their contractor, Scotland Transerv, all provided valuable technical advice.
17. We are also grateful to the support and advice of the 20 landowners who own the sites occupied by the markers and the communities close to the markers.
18. Finally, the successful manufacture and installation of the markers was delivered through the skilled efforts of four main contactors; Aaron Lawton Associates (marker design), Ian White Associates (landscape architects), Fyfe Glenrock (marker manufacture) and Hunter Construction, Aberdeen (marker installation).

#### **Project Costs**

19. The project was delivered on budget and with a larger partner contribution than initially anticipated.
20. The project has been successfully audited twice by CNPA internal auditors, and once on behalf of the European Regional Development Fund.

#### **Recommendation**

21. **It is recommended that the Finance Committee notes the successful completion of the Point of Entry Marker project within budget and recognises the significant contribution made to the project by partners**

#### **Policy Context**

22. The Point of Entry marker project contributes to the National Park Plan outcome: *'Everyone will know when they have arrived in the National Park and have a positive feeling about arriving in a special place.'*
23. It is a specific action in the Plan: *'Install point of entry markers on all remaining roads entering the National Park.'*
24. The project is also in line with Scottish Government Policy on national gateways as articulated in the 'Milligan Report':

*“Scottish Ministers and gateway operators should develop 20-year visions for Scotland's points of entry to realise the ambition to be among the world's best. The plans should ensure that development is for the long-term and not confined to coping with the demands of the next 2-3 years, and should encourage the use of inspiring high quality design.”*

## **Next Steps**

25. The project as agreed by the Board is now complete. However, there are still a number of works that could be undertaken with partners to improve the experience of visitors entering the National Park. These include:-
- a) Landscaping of unsightly, informal pull-off near the marker on A95 – already agreed by Transport Scotland but not undertaken.
  - b) Realignment of BT cables at A93 Lair to move them away from the marker.
  - c) Installation of CNP panorama at Huntly's Cave (A939) and Kinloch Laggan (A96).
  - d) Installation of additional signs and interpretation at Aviemore Station.
  - e) Upgrade of two poor quality lay-bys on in Glenshee on A93 in Perth and Kinross.
26. We will continue to work on these projects in the current financial year.

**Pete Crane**

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