

**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 update on 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 a comparison between estimated and actual project costs is presented and discussed. The significant contribution made by partners is discussed.

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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 the first phase 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 the second phase – 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.

### Project Outputs

5. Since September 2005 the following outputs have been achieved:
  - a) Production of 25 Cairngorms National Park entry point granite markers
  - b) Installation of 24 Cairngorms National Park entry point granite markers
  - c) Upgrading of three car parks/lay-bys associated with entry points
  - d) Development of a series of panoramic paintings for use in interpretation at entry points but with much wider application.

6. A small amount of work on interpretation at two entry points is outstanding but we anticipate that this will be completed in the by Easter.
7. The informal pull off close to the entry point on A95 still requires landscaping to improve its appearance. We will continue to encourage the owner to undertake these works.
8. One four metre granite marker and a quantity of granite cobbles are in storage for use once the boundary extension to the National Park has been approved by Scottish Government.

### **Project Costs**

9. Table 1 below shows, for comparison, cost estimates approved by the Board and actual project expenditure:-

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

|   | Total (£) | CNPA Contribution (£) | Partners Contribution (£) |
|---|-----------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Total Project Estimates (Sept 05, Dec 06, Aug 07) | 1,014,200 | 656,530               | 357,670                   |
| Revised Project Estimates (1)                     | 896,200   | 581,530               | 314,670                   |
| Actual Project Costs (3)                          | 912,940   | 609,433               | 303,507                   |

- (1) Cost estimates were revised down when the installation of a marker on A9 southern entrance was postponed and the location of the marker on A83 was moved west of the car park at Kinloch Laggan.
- (2) Partner support is detailed in the Discussion section below.
- (3) These figures include a contingency of £12,000 for outstanding interpretation work, payment of one outstanding management agreement and for final payment of retention to the installation contractors. Income includes £9000 of claimed but outstanding income.

### **Discussion**

#### ***Outputs and Outcomes***

10. The project has been successful in achieving the physical output of installing permanent entry point markers at 24 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.

11. 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.
12. 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.' The effectiveness of the project, and other associated works, will be assessed when visitors' awareness of the National Park is questioned in the 2009/10 visitor survey. Car counts at Drumochter before and after the upgrade already indicate that visitors using the lay-by have increased from 16,000 to 23,000 per annum.
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 and visitor attractions.
14. The project team have 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.

### ***Partnership Working***

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

16. In addition, the roads and transportation sections of the four 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 16 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 final cost of the project marginally exceeded the estimates for a variety of reasons:-
  - a) Delays in reaching agreement with one landowner significantly delayed the installation of three markers.
  - b) The location of two large markers was changed after the production of estimates and this resulted in both time delays and additional design costs at the new sites.
  - c) Additional works were undertaken at Dinnit car park to improve the drainage and repair the car park wall.
  - d) The late decision to not install a marker at Drumochter saved a large unnecessary cost but reduced some of the economies of scale on the installation of the three remaining markers that comprised Phase 2 of the project.
  - e) Removing the installation of the Drumochter marker and changing priorities for partners meant that we were not able to obtain all the funding support for the lay-by upgrade that we had anticipated.
  - f) Unforeseen reflection problems with three markers required additional works to be undertaken to make these markers more visible.
20. Taking into account the above changes and the three year time span of the installation phase we consider that an increase in expenditure of 1.9% over estimates is acceptable.
21. The project has been successfully audited twice by CNPA internal auditors, and once on behalf of the European Regional Development Fund.

### **Recommendation**

22. 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

23. 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.'*
24. It is a specific action in the Plan:  
*'Install point of entry markers on all remaining roads entering the National Park.'*
25. 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

26. The outstanding work to the interpretation installations at Dinnet and Drumochter will be completed this spring. We will continue to press the landowner to landscape the unsightly informal lay-by on A95.
27. We will also look at the opportunities to install information and interpretation about the National Park at, or close to, points of entry at Huntly's Cave (A939), Kinloch Laggan (A96) and Tomnavoulin (B9008).
28. Once Scottish Government approve the boundary change to the National Park we will prepare proposals and cost estimates for installing a permanent marker on A9 at the new southern entrance and on any new road, long distance route and railway station entrances. On current timescales it is likely that we will seek Board approval for these in autumn 2009 or later, depending on the boundary review.

**Pete Crane**

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