

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR INFORMATION

**Title:** CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 1

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### **Purpose**

To inform the Board of our work to achieve the first theme of the Corporate Plan 2005-08 and plans for future activity.

### **Recommendations**

- a) That the Board note the progress and plans for achieving the first theme of the Corporate Plan 2005-08.

### **Executive Summary**

The first theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 is:

“To enable current and future generations to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the Park in a way that fosters those qualities and supports the activities of others.”

This report follows on from the last report in November 2007 and has been structured around key policy areas. A brief progress report and consideration of future plans is given under the following headings:

- a) Progress on National Park Plan Delivery Teams;
  - b) Outdoor access
  - c) Ranger services
  - d) Visitor information and interpretation
  - e) Entry point markers and other signage
  - f) John Muir Award Project
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## CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 1 – FOR INFORMATION

### Background

1. The first theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 is:  
 “To enable current and future generations to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the Park in a way that fosters those qualities and supports the activities of others.”
2. Delivery of the first Corporate Plan theme is primarily the responsibility of the Visitor Services and Recreation Group and the Economic and Social Development Group, although many other members of staff also make substantial contributions. The work associated with delivery of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy runs across two Corporate Plan themes. The work that is not covered under the headings below is reported on under Theme 3.

### Outdoor Access

3. The Park Authority has been the access authority for over three years now,. Good progress has been made in fulfilling each of the four key statutory duties (shown in italics below):
  - a) The Cairngorms *Local Outdoor Access Forum* (LOAF) is fully established and working well. An internal review of the Forum, undertaken in August 2007, indicated a high degree of satisfaction amongst LOAF members and CNPA staff. The Business Report for the Forum was published in autumn 2007. An exercise refresh Forum membership will be undertaken in Quarter 1 of 07/08.
  - b) The *Draft Core Paths Plan* was prepared and submitted to Scottish Government in early February, in advance of the statutory timetable. The proposed path network is overwhelmingly on existing paths and tracks, as shown in the table below. The biggest advantages for the public will therefore be the provision of information (including signage) about the paths and the protection of the paths from future development or obstruction.

| Type of proposed core path | Total Length (km) |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Existing path or track     | 702               |
| Existing pavement          | 8                 |
| Existing road              | 58                |
| Water                      | 89                |
| Proposed new path          | 22                |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>879</b>        |

The Draft Plan will now be subject to public consultation for 12 weeks between April and end of June. The timetable beyond that point will depend on resolution of objections and a possible Public Local Inquiry.

- c) A considerable amount of work has gone into *publicising the new Scottish Outdoor Access Code*. Activity has included running courses under the Land Based Business Training Scheme and hosting the Spey Users Group. A Spring campaign using press releases about the need to keep dogs under close control is planned.
- d) The Park Authority has a duty to *uphold access rights*. Detailed reports are routinely made to the LOAF on the number and type of issues that are reported. The caseload has stabilised at around 50 live cases. Generally issues have been successfully resolved through discussion and reaching consensus on a voluntary basis but, in last two months, CNPA has, for the first time, resorted to use of our formal powers. A legal notice was served on Aviemore Highland Resorts to remove the obstruction caused by a fence across the Laurel Bank Lane in Aviemore. The land managers have appealed the notice and an initial court hearing will take place on 26 March in Inverness.
4. *Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust*: Good progress has been made with the transition to form the new Park-wide Trust which is due to commence work on 1 April. The necessary legal papers have been approved by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and a new, highly experienced Trust Manager has been recruited. David Green chaired a meeting of partners in February 2008 to progress discussions about the Business Plan. There are, however, significant challenges ahead as a number of public bodies (including SNH and the Enterprise network) who have been supportive of this kind of work in the past, are now drawing back. Further papers will be tabled for the Board in due course to approve expenditure from CNPA and nominate Directors.
5. A number of specific projects have moved forward in recent months, as summarised in the table below:

| <b>Project</b>                                | <b>Progress report</b>   | <b>Future plans (next six months)</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| Proposed Speyside Way extension to Newtonmore | CNPA has advised SNH on the line of the route extension.   | SNH to seek Ministerial approval.   |
| Aviemore to Glenmore Off-road Route           | Work has commenced and is due to be completed in mid-May.  | Completion of the works and launch.   |
| Upland path repair and bridges                | Stakeholder workshop on upland path repair priorities to be held in late March.                        | Programme of works to be agreed to through Trust Business Plan and SRDP applications. |
| Low ground path repair/enhancement            | Upper Deeside Access Trust have completed a number of low ground path improvement projects in Deeside. | Programme as agreed through Trust Business Plan.                                      |
| Community Investment Programme                | Nine community-led path development projects supported and budget fully                                | Further round of projects in discussion with community representatives.               |

| Project   | Progress report                               | Future plans (next six months) |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
|   | committed                                     |                                |
| Events Guidance for event organisers and land managers. | Successful workshop held at Lecht in November | Production of guidance         |

### Ranger Services

6. The Board decided in November 2007 to take on the role of grant aiding rangers within the Park, subject to confirmation of detailed matters by the Finance Committee. SNH Board decided in February 2008 to conclude ranger policy review. A meeting is planned for mid-March with SNH to agree final steps to give effect to the transfer arrangements.

### Visitor Information and Interpretation

7. Since the last update significant progress has been made in the development of the website portal about the Park aimed at visitors. The Steering Group comprises representatives of the two DMOs, VisitScotland, the Chamber of Commerce and visitors to the Park. The basic structure of the site has now been agreed and soon there will be a phase of uploading content and user testing. In general terms the website will be as "thin" as possible, referring users on to other websites (where they already exist), only containing significant content where it adds value to the overall visitor experience or where content is lacking on other sites. Some difficulties have arisen in relation to how best to work with the emerging DMOs and their associated websites and with visitscotland.com whose site is changing significantly. It has been decided to delay the launch slightly until end of April to allow the Aviemore and the Cairngorms DMO site to become established and to review options for how to deal with business listings.
8. The development of Park-wide Interpretation Guidance has also moved on significantly and is due to be launched in late Spring 2008. The guidance is targeted at the many deliverers of interpretation in the Park and aims to encourage people to communicate their messages and stories within the context of the Park. The consultant has worked with a wide range of interested parties on this innovative project and, generally, the feedback on what has been produced to date has been very good.

### Entry Point Markers and Other Signage

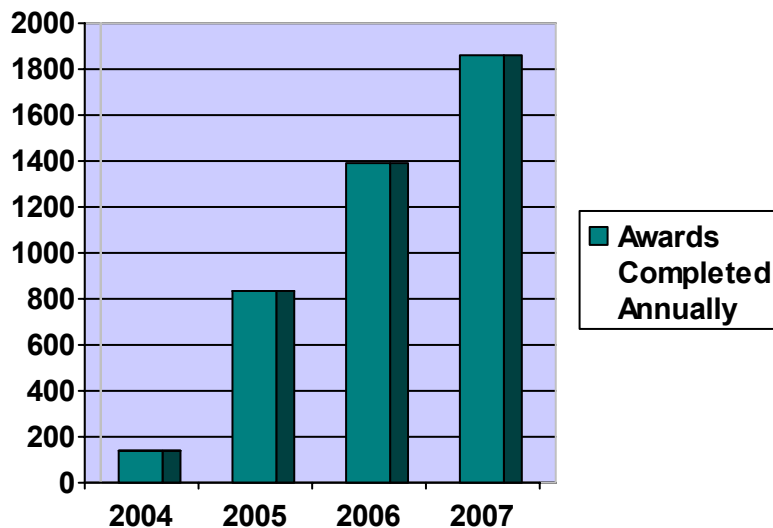
9. All markers with brand image are now in place at stations, on non-trunk roads and the Speyside Way. Work is currently under way at Drumochter lay-by to improve landscaping and provide interpretation. The development of five painted panoramic maps of the Park, to go along with the entry point markers at suitable sites, has had a very good reception. The first map is due to be installed at Dinnet and work is underway to explore other uses of the panoramas.

10. A scoping study of brown tourist signs to Park has been completed. Funding has been allocated for re-signing the Highland Tourist Route in line with this study. Installation of the signs in a cost effective way requires close working relationships with roads authorities but good relations have been built.

### John Muir Award

11. The John Muir Award Project, run in partnership with SNH and John Muir Trust, has exceeded its targets annually and continues to grow (Figure 2) both in terms of total participants and in the number of partner centres delivering the Award (58 active providers in 2007). Participants are predominantly young people and nearly 12% of participants were identified as coming from groups that find it challenging to get outdoors and experience a sense of wildness. In a survey of participants, 96% agreed that the John Muir Award had given them the chance to do something for wild places and 74% said that it had positively changed the way that they behaved toward the environment.

Figure 2: Annual number of John Muir Awards, 2003 to 2007 (by calendar year)



12. The Board have approved, in principle, a three year extension of project to link to the development of junior rangers. An international Junior Rangers Camp is planned for July 2008 at Glen Tanar.

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