

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

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**FOR INFORMATION**

**Title: CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 2**

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**Purpose**

To inform the Board of our work to achieve the second strategic theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08.

**Recommendations**

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

**Executive Summary**

The second theme of the Corporate Plan for 2005-08 reads:

“To promote sustainable resource, land and water management; and to protect and enhance our wildlife and landscapes”

The main areas of work reported on are:

- a) Progress on National Park Plan Delivery Teams;
  - b) Scottish Rural Development Programme;
  - c) Sustainable Land Management Projects
  - d) Biodiversity Projects;
  - e) Landscape Management
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## CORPORATE PLAN REPORT: THEME 2 – FOR INFORMATION

### National Park Plan Delivery Teams

1. The Delivery teams are led and facilitated by CNPA and are a key means to deliver the Park Plan outcomes in relation to sustainable resource, land and water management and to protect and enhance wildlife and landscape. Three are particularly relevant to this theme:
  - a) Conserving and enhancing biodiversity and landscapes;
  - b) Supporting sustainable Deer Management;
  - c) Integrating public support for land management.

#### *Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscapes*

2. The Delivery Team has prepared an action plan to take forward this priority and identified those aspects on which action will be taken in the coming financial year. An early focus is on ways to bring together sources of information on biodiversity and the natural and cultural aspects of landscape so that good information is accessible to all involved. The group will also be taking an overview of work to develop a landscape framework – a means to bring together work on habitat networks, historic environment, forest and woodland framework and moorland framework – to take a more proactive role in managing the way in which these different influences on the landscape interact.

#### *Supporting Sustainable Deer Management*

3. Existing deer management structures are being used including Joint Working Committees, Deer Management Groups and the Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group. The Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group (CDAG) is making good progress in working towards a more inclusive approach to deer management, improving communications and enhancing the economic potential of wild deer, particularly through tourism opportunities.

#### *Integrating Public Support for Land Management*

4. To date this delivery team has focused on influencing the shape of the SRDP, particularly ensuring that the National Park Plan priorities are reflected in the regional priorities for Rural Development Contracts. Membership of the delivery team is now being extended in order that it can take an overview of sustainable land management projects and explore ways beyond the SRDP in which public funding can be better integrated and targeted more proactively at delivering outcomes for the National Park.

### Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP)

5. Members have recently had an update on SRDP in January 2008. CNPA has put a considerable effort into engaging with the three RPACs in the area to ensure that the National Park Plan priorities are reflected in the regional priorities. Our focus now is

shifting to ensuring successful implementation of the programme and making the most of it for the Park.

6. The programme is due to be launched in March. Two information sessions about the programme held in the Park were extremely well attended and have highlighted a significant interest among land managers, other businesses and communities. A communications programme for SRDP in the Park is now in place including promotional material, more detailed seminars in a range of locations and guidance on where to source information.
7. The Land Management Support Officers are expected to be in post during April (interviews are being held on 17<sup>th</sup> March). Their role will be to promote the opportunities to deliver outcomes for the National Park Plan through SRDP and work with land managers and their advisors to stimulate and identify potential applications.
8. The Delivery Team for 'Integrating Public Support for Land Management' will take an overview role for the way in which SRDP delivers for the Park, including the monitoring of outcomes delivered and the effectiveness of the support and communications programmes.

## **Sustainable Land Management Projects**

### *Partnerships with Macaulay Institute and Centre for Mountain Studies*

9. The development of the partnership with the Macaulay Institute is continuing successfully and will not only deliver the baseline report on the carbon footprint of the National Park, but will also act as a mechanism for knowledge transfer on current research being done on sustainable use of resources by developing demonstrations sites to promote sustainable land management.
10. Through this partnership we have stimulated a funding application led by the UHI Centre for Mountain Studies, the Macaulay Institute and SNIFFER (Scotland and Northern Ireland Forum For Environment Research) to carry out work on knowledge transfer in relation to climate change mitigation through land management within the National Park.
11. The Northern Periphery Programme 'Clim-ATIC' Project has been approved. Led by the UHI Centre for Mountain Studies this will explore the potential for rural peripheral communities to adapt to the likely direct and indirect impacts of climate change. The whole of the National Park will be covered by the project with the following three themes for development with communities:
  - a) Local transport demand project
  - b) Local community wood fuel supply project
  - c) New tourism ideas for snow sports venues

### *Green Farm Audits*

12. A pilot 'Green Farm' project has begun, which offers free carbon audits for sixteen farms within the Park. This is offered through a partnership between CNPA and SAOS and could offer a good model for engaging with farmers in a practical way about actions to mitigate climate change.

#### *Demonstration Sites*

13. We are currently working with a number of estates including Rothiemurchus, Glenlivet and Mar Lodge to establish opportunities for demonstrations of sustainable land management. This work is also connecting with the catchment management processes in the Dee and the Spey to identify opportunities to demonstrated good catchment management measures.

#### *Rothiemurchus Interim Agreement*

14. Through the Rothiemurchus Concordat Steering Group, the interim agreement with Rothiemurchus Estate for delivery of public benefits has been extended until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008. The estate has agreed to seek future funding through the SRDP once it is launched and the extension will allow time to prepare and submit an application, while ensuring that the benefits delivered over the previous agreement period are not lost.

#### *Forest Habitat Network*

15. The Forest Habitat Network Project has commenced with dedicated staff time to establish the partnership. This aims to improve the quality and connectivity of the forest habitat and will be a significant means of targeting support at areas that will offer significant habitat benefits.

#### *Wild Deer*

16. Initial work on establishing the baseline for bringing the Cairngorms SAC into favourable condition is currently being taken forward through the joint working process and CNPA is seeking to ensure this process is as inclusive as possible.
17. The Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group is currently discussing ways in which a more strategic and inclusive approach could be taken to deer management in the Park. It is also stimulating activity to increase the value of the deer resource through tourism. CNPA is currently arranging a seminar in partnership with Wild Scotland to engage interested estates in exploring the potential for deer-related tourism business.

#### **Biodiversity Projects**

##### *RaptorWatch Project*

18. CNPA continues to support this successful partnership in the Grampian Police force area in which nineteen estates are engaged. The co-operation of these estates means that the populations and breeding success of golden eagles, peregrine falcons and hen harriers is now being monitored by the project officer, members of the local raptor study group, and some estate personnel over a large area of north-east Scotland, much of it in the Aberdeenshire and Moray portions of the National Park.

Future work will seek to extend the project over the remaining areas of the National Park covered by Northern Constabulary and Tayside Police.

### *Water Vole Project*

19. The three officers are continuing the work of surveying the remnant colonies, evaluating their viability and collaborating with keepers and other land managers to deploy mink control apparatus and positive habitat management. Results to date have been encouraging. Water vole populations first surveyed in 2002 appear to be maintaining their viability, and no signs of mink have been found in the upper catchments near the main colonies so the predation pressure upon them at the moment is not as great as feared. This has allowed the mink trapping effort to be concentrated on the main stems of the rivers where most breeding occurs. The reduction of mink in these lower areas will reduce the opportunity for mink to spread up the hill, and conversely will create more favourable conditions for water voles to re-colonise lower ground.

### *Aspen Survey*

20. The CNPA is supporting a project being run by Scottish Native Woods to map the stands of Aspen in the Forest of Spey area. This involves aerial photography, converted to GIS and establishing the potential for enhancing the habitat network for aspen dependent species.

### *Golden Eagle Tracking*

21. The CNPA has funded the purchase of satellite tracking devices for two eagles nesting in the National Park. One is currently being monitored and offers significant potential to engage people in finding out more about this iconic species.

### *Cairngorms LBAP*

22. The CNPA's contribution to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan project officers and Biodiversity Grant scheme is helping to ensure that the grant scheme gets spent right across the National Park. The total grant spend for the period exceeded the original allocation to biodiversity projects. The focus is on encouraging community based projects on priority species and habitats. Several projects are underway including twinflower, woolly willow, pine hoverfly, etc. and various themes are being promoted through awareness raising and training e.g. swifts, dragonflies, butterflies, amphibians.

### **Landscape Management**

#### *Wildness*

23. An investigation into public perceptions of the value of wild places and landscapes is being carried out with a specific Cairngorms focus as part of a national survey being undertaken by SNH to be completed by the year-end.
24. A project to identify and map qualities of wildness is also underway, focusing on wild land attributes including remoteness, apparent naturalness and ruggedness.

This work will highlight areas of the Park that are particularly valued for these qualities in order to inform landscape management and planning.

*Landscape Scenarios*

25. This project will provide CNPA and other partners with information as to how people will react to various potential landscape changes in the National Park while also helping to develop a revised methodology which can be applied throughout Scotland. (This work builds upon a pilot Scenarios project run by SNH with Ayrshire Council).

*Hill-Tracks Survey*

26. Jointly with SNH and the North East Mountain Trust we have initiated a pilot study to assess the current extent and condition of vehicle hill tracks in the NE Cairngorms. The detailed data is currently being collected by volunteers and will be placed onto GIS.

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