

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: Corporate Plan 2005-2008 Update: Theme 5

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Purpose

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

Recommendations

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

Executive Summary

The Board agreed the Authority's Corporate Plan for 2005 to 2008 at its February 2005 meeting. The Corporate Plan was framed around 5 themes, setting the overarching framework for the Authority's plans over the next three years. The fifth of those themes is:

“to be an open, innovative and professional organisation that engages effectively with the public and behaves with integrity”.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a sixth update on progress made and plans in place to deliver this strategic theme of the Corporate Plan. This paper seeks to complement the more detailed papers providing regular quarterly updates on delivery of the 20 goals set out in the Corporate Plan through actions and tasks developed in the operational plan, by providing an overview of activity within this general theme.

CORPORATE PLAN UPDATE: THEME 5 – FOR INFORMATION

Background

1. Theme five of the current Corporate Plan is:

“to be an open, innovative and professional organisation that engages effectively with the public and behaves with integrity”.
2. This theme relates both to the internal workings of the organisation and its relations with the general public. The wording of the theme reflects the outcome of work to identify our core organisational values. These are as follows:
 - a) **Integrity** - Honest, trustworthy, fair, reliable, consistent, clarity of vision, good leadership, prudent.
 - b) **Open & inclusive** - Transparent, clear, approachable, accessible, accountable, responsive, listening, user-friendly, public-focused, fun to work for and with.
 - c) **Innovative** - Dynamic, bold, willing to take risks, supportive and trusting atmosphere, learning from mistakes, embracing new technology, high environmental standards.
 - d) **Professional** - Committed, competent, knowledgeable, responsible, efficient, getting things done.
3. Everyone in the organisation - staff and board - is responsible for ensuring that we live up to these values. However, specific work to deliver this theme is largely the responsibility of two Groups with an organisation wide responsibility – Strategy & Communications and Corporate Services. This paper therefore primarily focuses on the work programme being taken forward by these two groups.
4. This paper aims to complement the regular, more detailed, quarterly updates on delivery of the operational plan, by providing an overview of activity within this general theme.

Open and Inclusive, Engaging with the public

5. The Communications Strategy prepared in June 2004, identified four principles that underpin our communication - openness, clarity, pro-activity, and responsiveness and four target audiences - local people; opinion formers; the people of Scotland; and visitors and potential visitors to the area. Our objective has been to develop our reputation as an ‘enabling’ organisation that is trusted and respected and to keep people informed about our work through our communications activity.
6. In January 2007 further work refined these target audiences to help prioritise our activities by focusing on – local communities; local businesses; land managers within the Park; and our public sector partners. In addition, work would need to focus on opinion formers including politicians, NGOs and the media. It was agreed that these

target audiences all play a vital role in helping us deliver the National Park Plan and the aims of the National Park.

7. Effective communication is needed to ensure all partners and interested parties understand why there is a Cairngorms National Park, what makes it so special and what needs to be done to protect and promote the Park for the benefit and enjoyment of everyone. Partners need to understand and support the Park aims and Priorities for Action set out in the National Park Plan and be aware of their role and contribution to achieve them. A Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Strategy Board paper approved by the Board in August 2007 sets out how we will achieve this objective and an opinion poll will be carried out during 2008/09 to measure the effectiveness of our activities since 2004. Progress to date includes:
 - a) the draft National Park Plan, deposit Local Plan, Outdoor Access Strategy and Core Path Plan consultations;
 - b) production and distribution of CNPA and Cairngorms National Park promotional materials including our annual reports, the finalised National Park Plan and Outdoor Access Strategy, deposit Local Plan and consultative Core Paths Plan;
 - c) production and distribution of *Parklife* and a National Park Plan Summary to all residents and businesses within the Park;
 - d) production of a monthly e-bulletin;
 - e) continued development of the CNPA website;
 - f) positive media coverage promoting the work of the CNPA;
 - g) various Ministerial visits to the Park and briefings with Ministers and Scottish Executive officials;
 - h) attendance at various events including all the Party Political conferences during Spring 2006, LINK's Scottish Environment Week at Holyrood in 2007, the Royal Highland Show in 2007 with plans to attend in 2008 and various local events such as the Balmoral Road Race, Outsider Festival, Grantown Show and the Lonach and Braemar Gatherings.
8. The Park has also set up a number of forums where issues can be raised and discussed with local communities and other interested parties. Three advisory forums meet regularly to focus on the development and now the implementation of the National Park Plan; the Local Outdoor Access Forum meets quarterly to advise on access issues; the Cairngorms Inclusion Group provides helpful advice on social inclusion so the Park Authority can meet everyone's needs and create a 'Park for All'. Staff representatives attend the Association of Cairngorms Communities meetings every quarter and give an update on our work and regular meetings are also held with the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce. In addition, all formal Board and Planning Committee meetings are held in public and pre-Board meetings are held around the Park and provide local residents with the chance to meet Board members.
9. Standards for community engagement for the Park Authority have been developed and tested and a final proposal will be presented to the Board in May 2008.

10. Considerable work is going into the National Park Plan priority for action (led by Murray Ferguson) which focuses on developing awareness and understanding of the Park and a delivery plan agreed with our partners has been prepared.
11. It should be remembered, given the limited resources of the Strategy & Communications Group, much of the success of the communications programme depends on the support and active involvement of the Board, CNPA staff and other partner organisations. A CNPA Board working group is focusing on how the Board can play a greater role in engaging with our stakeholders and encourage them to help us deliver our key messages about the Park and the Park Plan.

Professionalism and Integrity

12. The Strategy & Communications and Corporate Services Groups continue to work together to deliver our joint objectives. The "Building the Organisation" project has seen improvements to our internal communications, IT, support services, training and the way in which staff and Board works together. A review of our organisational structure was also completed with the involvement and support of the staff consultative forum which resulted in a minor re-structuring of the organisation.
13. Continuing the practice of annually reviewing and challenging our service delivery and the effectiveness of it, an organisational away-day will be held in the autumn and will focus on how we can most effectively fulfill our role to lead and co-ordinate the collective delivery of the Park Plan.
14. We continue to coordinate training opportunities, while supporting individual training requirements identified as part of the appraisal review process. We have put general programmes in place covering project management, customer service, health and safety practice and procedure, equality regulations and developing effective staff and board working. We have also commenced the roll out of the organisation's leadership and management development programme, building on the work previously undertaken by the Management Team, to develop the key leadership and influencing skills of staff primarily in the second tier of the organisation.
15. Training and development of staff continues to be a key element of our approach to ensuring the Authority develops and retains a professional staff group. The leadership and management development programme referred to above will continue into 2008/09. As always, we will also review the training and development needs identified during the March and April staff appraisal cycle in order to identify both organisation-wide needs and specific individual development requirements. We will also continue to use the wide range of skills and experience available within the organisation through using the Authority's staff to provide training workshops for others.

16. Supporting the appraisal and staff development process, we have developed and are in the process of introducing a competency framework. This sets out in some detail the key skills, behaviours and competencies required of each role in the organisation, in order to help staff and line managers reflect on strengths and weaknesses, identify training requirements and support career development.
17. We are also in the process of remodelling the Grantown reception area, improving the professional image of the organisation, working towards making the reception area more customer friendly and dealing with access issues.

Retention and Reward

18. We have worked closely with the Staff Consultative Forum (SCF) on the development of the Authority's pay remit for 2008/09. We are very grateful to the time and effort invested in the Forum by staff and Board representatives on behalf of their colleagues on this and other matters that come to the SCF for discussion and consultation.
19. The pay remit and business case were submitted by the end of December 2007, in line with the timetable set by the Scottish Government. The pay remit, once agreed with the Scottish Executive, sets out the Authority's permitted maximum levels of increases to salaries to cover changes in cost of living, and staff progression through established salary scales. The pay award and salary progression based on the approved Performance Related Pay system is clearly an important aspect of the Authority's retention policy, in which we aim to retain a high quality, professional staff group, while the consequential impact of pay awards on our salary scales will impact on our ability to recruit.
20. Pay is, of course, by no means the sole focus of the Authority's recruitment and retention strategy. A benchmarking exercise has demonstrated that we compare reasonably well with comparable organisations, while being able to identify areas for further discussion with staff representatives.
21. Over the course of 2007/08, we have implemented a childcare voucher scheme to support staff childcare costs, and support for bicycle purchase through a cycle to work scheme.

Innovation

Risk management

22. Risk management processes are intended to support rather than obstruct innovation. We seek to develop and advocate new ideas and methods of delivery, and our risk management processes are intended to highlight potential issues which may arise in implementing new projects in order that staff can take appropriate action. Our risk management processes are now relatively well embedded, taking the lead from the Authority's risk management strategy and strategic risk register,

which are considered by the Management Team and Audit Committee on a regular basis. Operationally, delivery risk is evaluated as part of our Operational Plan delivery review and within expenditure justification processes.

23. The Authority's strategic risks will be substantially reviewed following adoption of the new Corporate Plan. We will seek to arrange a joint Audit Committee and Management Team workshop to consider and prioritise the strategic risks around delivery of the 2008/11 Corporate Plan.

Efficient Government

24. The Finance Committee has received a report in February 2008 setting out the Authority's intended response to the Scottish Government's budget requirement to find 2% per annum cash releasing efficiency savings. Over the course of 2008/09, we will be monitoring our delivery of those plans, while considering forward plans to realise the additional 2% savings required in both 2009/10 and 2010/11.
25. We continue to collaborate with partner organisations in seeking improved working methods and collaborative arrangements to deliver services, particularly in Corporate Services areas:
 - a) The use of SNH's IT helpdesk as the first point of contact for all IT assistance requests started in autumn 2007. We hope to have completed the movement of our IT servers into SNH's Wide Area Network by June 2008. This will greatly improve the communication capacity between Ballater and Grantown offices, and support future improvements to the helpdesk function through supporting remote access to systems.
 - b) We will consider the use of some of SNH's office systems, such as their financial software and electronic records and document management system.
 - c) We have initiated a project to receive procurement and facilities management support from the SEPA Facilities Management team.
 - d) We have initiated a longer-term review of our accommodation requirements, which will consider co-location opportunities with SNH and other potential partners as part of the generation and evaluation of options.
 - e) We have initiated a project with The Highland Council to develop a "single service point" covering the Council's and Authority's services, planned to be based from the Council's service point in Grantown.
26. We are fully involved in the development of the Scottish Environmental And Rural Services (SEARS) project. The initial launch for this project will take place at the Royal Highland Show in June. The project seeks in the first instance to provide a single service under a single banner by 9 rural organisations including both National Park Authorities; and reduce, through integration, the burden of regulation and compliance on customers. Work on the delivery and further development of the project will continue well beyond June.
27. In the first instance, the main impact on the Authority is likely to arise from the "one door, any door" ethos of SEARS, whereby a customer should be able to lodge a

question or information request with any member of the SEARS family of organisations and receive the response without themselves having to go through multiple contacts.

Technology and Environment

28. We continue to support the work of the Authority's Greening Committee since the Board's approval of the Greening Strategy and action plan. In accordance with the Board's recommendation, the early work of the Greening Committee has been to focus on prioritising potential improvements on a cost:benefit basis. The Committee has focused on seeking to reduce carbon emissions from travel (which is now set out as one of the key priorities and basis of measurement within the new Corporate Plan), promoting the use of public transport when appropriate (e.g. use of trains for travel to the central belt) and replacing pool cars for more efficient / lower emission vehicles.
29. We have also put in place additional HR policies to support greening activities. This includes an occasional home-working policy to both support work-life balance for staff and reduce carbon emissions from commuting. Consideration is to be given to additional mileage allowances for car sharing.
30. The Greening Committee has established a prioritised action plan, and staff time for officers involved in delivery of the Group's activities has been built into our proposed Operational Plan for 2008/09.
31. We are also working on the development of a Sustainability Fund, the aim of which is to work with corporate partners and others to develop a unique Carbon Offset Scheme with environmental, biodiversity, and community benefits. A business plan for the project has been drawn up and reviewed by an officer working group. Work is now underway to speak with a range of public and private sector organisations about their interest in participating in the Fund, and we plan to bring a paper to Board on this project around June.

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